Feminist Mobilization, Claims Making and Policy Change

Insights from Asia

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prepared for the UNRISD project on
When and Why Do States Respond to Women's Claims?
Understanding Gender-Egalitarian Policy Change in Asia

September 2016

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Acronyms

ACWF	All China Women's Federation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
ILO	International Labour Organization
JANKGA PKTP	Jaringan Advokasi Revisi UU No.39 tahun 2004 tentang Penempatan dan Perlindungan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia di Luar Negeri (Indonesian Advocacy Network for the Revision of the Protection and Placement of Indonesian Workers Abroad Bill)
LBH APIK	Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Asosiasi Perempuan Indonesia untuk Keadilan (Women's Association for Justice and Legal Aid)
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and intersex
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NU	Nahdatul Ulama
UN	United Nations

Abstract

This paper aims to understand how policy change for women's rights occurs, and what factors and conditions facilitate non-state actors' influence over policy processes. It argues that policy change is a complex and iterative process, and explores the range of actors that mobilize for/against gender equality policy change, with a particular focus on women's movements. The paper provides insights on how women interact with other actors and how they articulate their claims to effectively influence the policy process. It also explores why certain domains of women's rights remain at the margins of political agendas, while others receive more attention. The analysis is based on a comparative research of women's claims making processes in three Asian countries (China, India and Indonesia) and on three different issues: violence against women, domestic workers' labour rights, and unpaid care work. The paper sets out the rationale, aims and theoretical framework of the research, and discusses the key insights.

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Introduction

The last three decades have witnessed slow but significant policy changes in women's rights globally, from legislation on domestic violence to quotas for women in national parliaments and local councils. Alongside the rise in democratic regimes, the dynamism of women's movements have played a crucial role in fostering such changes, critical for enabling women to claim their rights. However, it would be naive to limit the "politics of policy formulation" (Mazur, 2002: 13) to women's movements and assume that they are always the main, or most important, agents of change. In fact, existing research suggests that women's movements are crucial in making visible inequalities and injustices, and in challenging discriminatory norms and policies, but in the realm of policy change, they interact with and support other key actors, including the political elite, social movements and transnational forces. Once issues are placed on the political agenda, the initiative for policy change may indeed come from political elites, wanting to project a modern image of the state (Kandiyoti, 1991), strategically positioned women's machineries within the state, or individual "champions" of women's rights. Further, not all issues of public concern, debated in various social forums including the media, find their place within policy agendas; the conversion of a public issue into a policy agenda depends on institutional backing, but could also reflect political expediency and opportunity, such as forthcoming elections, international rankings, or other events with possible political fallouts (Beland, 2005).

Yet the processes of change in gender equality policies are not straightforward or linear. While the Chilean democracy legalized divorce, abortion remains criminalized; in post-conflict Uganda, women have held high positions in parliament and local government, yet discriminatory provisions continue to govern their rights to land and property. These anomalies underline the importance of seeing gender equality policy not in unitary terms, but as operating differently across issues, some more controversial than others. While one could assume male bias across institutions (Elson, 1991), this takes on different manifestations—forms of passivity or resistance—across different issues. What is needed is a more nuanced analysis of policy change not just as an iterative process, but as an arena where multiple interests, whose construction is mediated by cultural norms, values and beliefs, are negotiated between different institutions, agents and discourses—as small steps contributing towards the realization of a vision of social justice and gender equality.

Important questions then arise about the nature and diversity of actors who have raised and represented women's interests in the policy process, and the issues that get prioritized and debated by institutions of the state. In other words, when and why do states respond to women's claims? What are the factors and conditions under which non-state actors can effectively trigger and influence policy change? What are the mechanisms necessary to ensure that issues get on the policy agenda? This paper seeks to contribute some insights into the complex processes through which advocates for women's rights articulate their demands, and strategize with other actors both within and outside the state realm, and transnationally, to bring about policy change; the proactive role of other actors, nationally and transnationally, in triggering policy change; and the "blind spots" or issues on which there has been little advocacy, or where advocacy does not enter policy debates, despite their centrality to women's lives and well-being.

This paper is based on a research project coordinated by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development,[1] which focused on unpacking the processes of gender-egalitarian policy change, the contestations and negotiations involved, the gains and losses, with a specific emphasis on Asia. The project combined regional analysis through country studies in China, India and Indonesia, with thematic studies on the overarching issues confronting women's movements—recognition of women's rights as workers, their rights to resources, to bodily integrity and the implications of democratization for women's voice. The three countries were selected to capture the diversity in both governance systems and socio-political contexts across the region. Their size, different political systems, with varying levels and degrees of democratization and decentralization, and other forms of diversity in terms of ethnicity, religious beliefs, agro-ecological and livelihood contexts, suggest that understanding what happens in these countries potentially has enormous significance for understanding gender equality policies and obstacles to change more broadly. Further, to capture potential contextual differences within each country, the research was conducted at national and subnational levels, with two or three states/provinces being selected in each country.

To explore why some issues get put on the policy agenda and others do not, the research focused on two broad issue areas: (i) physical/bodily integrity with a specific focus on violence against women; and (ii) economic rights with particular attention to domestic workers' labour rights, unpaid care work and rights to land and property. These two issue areas were selected not only because they address strategic dimensions of women's subordination, but also because women's rights advocates have in recent decades demanded policy change and innovation in these areas—against hegemonic understandings of the gender order that sees domestic violence as part of the "private sphere", and at the same time allows women little reproductive choice; and for equal wages, improved employment opportunities and inheritance rights. While violence against women has gained considerable policy traction and can be seen as a "successful" case in terms of feminist mobilization, the same cannot be said about the rights of domestic workers, the recognition of unpaid care work, or even the rights to land and property. Yet a lot can be learned from an analysis of these "less successful" cases too—in terms of the diversity of actors, the power struggles between them, the multiplicity of identities and interests, and their different understandings and framings of needs and rights in terms of both their legal and socio-cultural legitimacy (Bergqvist et al., 2013).

The research project adopted a comparative case study approach, focusing on the complexity and particularity of each issue and its context. The unit of analysis was the development of a particular policy, or policy debate. In order to do justice to the complexities of change processes, the individual case studies used "process-tracing" (George and McKeown, 1985) and "analytical narratives" (Bates et al., 1998) to reconstruct the unfolding of a particular set of policy decisions and ideas over time, including key events and actors, their framings and strategies, and the obstacles they faced. They also mapped critical moments in the process of policy change, when alternate worldviews were brought into the policy space, the ways in which framing facilitated the formation of new political coalitions (Padamsee, 2009: 428), and the interface between particular configurations of actors and structures that made change possible, or not. Interviews with key informants (policy makers, movement actors, bureaucrats, lawyers) provided most of the data, but this was supplemented by archival

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research (parliamentary debates, policy documents, judicial reports, speeches, media coverage). This methodological approach is visible in the country reports from India and Indonesia (Chigateri et al., 2016; Eddyono et al. 2016). In the case of Indonesia, the research was partly auto-ethnographic, as the lead researchers had also played a central role in the advocacy around the domestic violence legislation in the country.

This conceptual paper seeks to contextualize the research findings emerging from the project within the current debate on gender equality policy change, highlight emergent themes and lessons, and point to the questions that remain unanswered. Having set out the overall rationale, aims and approach, the next section presents the theoretical framework that guided the research. Using some examples from the research, we then illustrate how the context and its peculiarities influence the processes of claims making across countries and issue areas, the different strategies adopted by women's movements and organizations and their effectiveness in influencing policy change. We conclude with a few observations on the possible explanations for the differences in progressive change in gender equality policies across countries and issue areas.

Deconstructing Gender-Egalitarian Policy Change: Theoretical Background

The policy issues

While acknowledging that progressive change will not occur without grassroots (feminist) mobilization, more so in the case of gender equality policies, it is equally important to interrogate the reasons for the uneven progress across different domains of women's rights. One explanation is that gender equality is not one policy issue, but many (Franceschet, 2010). It has different dimensions, but also different meanings and interpretations, depending on particular ideological standpoints or social locations (Padamsee, 2009). Gender equality may look very different for a poor, non-literate, rural woman compared to an educated, middle-class, professional woman.

Htun and Weldon (2010) unpack different dimensions of gender equality policy, categorizing and classifying them in terms of their contributions to the realization of women's rights in different domains. Focusing particularly on the cultural and the economic, they distinguish between:

i.   gender status policies, which seek to empower and give women recognition as equal citizens, addressing inequalities and injustices that affect women because they are women, such as family law, violence against women, abortion, reproductive rights, gender quotas; and

ii. class-based policies, which adopt a more redistributive approach to addressing the inequalities experienced by women due to their particular class position, including maternity leave, government-funded childcare, funding for abortion and contraception.

They further classify both the above categories in relation to how far they conflict with established practice and tradition. While doctrinal policies "contradict a doctrine, codified tradition, or sacred discourse of the dominant religion or cultural group" (Htun and Weldon, 2010: 210), non-doctrinal policies are those centred on issues that do not challenge religious doctrines or codified cultural traditions. They argue that an issue gets more or less attention from policy makers depending on the category in which it falls.

This classification has analytical value and highlights how strongly values and ideologies—especially those linked with religion—interact with institutional factors within the policy-making process. Nevertheless, it presents several limitations. First, and importantly, meanings and values attributed to issues vary across contexts, rather than being universal. The legality of abortion, for instance, is classified as a gender status policy, as it addresses issues of women's empowerment and bodily rights. This might be valid for most of the Asian countries, but it is not for those contexts where the Catholic Church is a powerful social and political force, and abortion is a doctrinal issue. Further, meanings and values are also embedded in nuances and details, which call into question the levels of aggregation or disaggregation of gender equality policies. For instance, violence against women, while a single issue at a normative level, includes different forms of violence (physical, psychological, sexual, economic), involving different actors, from intimate partners, to unknown individuals to an employer or person in a structurally powerful position. These varied contexts and nuances evoke different responses in terms of levels of acceptability/legitimacy and resistance. For instance, the rape of a woman by an unknown individual in a public space seems easier to condemn than rape perpetuated within marriage or indeed by institutions with special powers such as the police or army, in the case of India.

Second, since women's claims are mediated by class, race, ethnicity, caste and religious identity (Menon, 2000), a policy issue can actually be at the intersection of two or more categories. Domestic workers' labour rights, for instance, are usually seen as class-based, as it involves the employment of a lower class of workers, largely women, by upper-class households. The regulation of domestic work can then have a potentially redistributive effect between two classes of people. However, domestic work is also socially and economically undervalued as it is considered a women's "natural" occupation. Challenging the undervaluation of domestic work would contradict the culturally defined division of labour between women and men. In this sense, in asking the question why domestic work is only, or largely, performed by women, and why it is undervalued, gendered status is called into question Similarly, violence against women, while classified as a gender status policy, can equally be class-based. Rapes of low-caste, poor women are accepted as a reality of their everyday lives and normalized in India, for example, while the rape of a middle-class woman is seen as exceptional and evokes greater outrage, and hence more stringent sanctions. The same is true for Indonesia, where policy attention focused on sexual violence following some high-profile cases of rape, and their exposure in the media. High costs of justice alongside long and complex procedures further inhibit lower class women from seeking justice.

Third, from a social justice perspective, the categories of "class" and "status" miss the complexity and interlinkages between the different dimensions of people's, especially women's, needs and rights, what Fraser (2009) calls redistribution, recognition and representation. While redistribution relates to economic injustice—the unequal distribution of resources resulting from the intersections of class and patriarchy, and thus moves beyond Htun and Weldon's "class-based" classification, recognition corresponds to a cultural dimension—the problem with the status order, or issues of identity. It refers to injustices that affect women as *women* (though these do not necessarily affect all women in the same way), but also the multiple, overlapping injustices shaped by women's particular social position of age, class, ethnicity and caste, to name a few. Of interest in each of these policy domains is the process of who sets and shapes the agenda, who participates in negotiations and takes on leadership roles, and the mechanisms through which different voices are heard or represented (Cornwall, 2003). How far are women's organizations able to represent their issues in

the policy arena? Concerned with issues of membership and procedure, this third dimension of justice—the political—addresses the theme of representation, unpacking issues of belonging and boundary setting (Fraser, 2009: 17). Such analysis helps deepen insights into the processes of gender-egalitarian policy change, and the potential trade-offs between universal rights and more targeted entitlements (social protection or welfare), especially in a context of marketization and the erosion of solidarity, what Fraser (1989) calls the "reprivatisation' of needs. It also offers possible explanations for the uneven progress across different domains of women's rights.

The policy process

The "stage-ist" and linear interpretation of the policy process is more an analytical tool than a representation of a far more complex reality (Keeley and Scoones, 1999). Policies are outcomes of complex interactions between a multitude of actors—within and outside the state—who represent different political interests and ideologies.[2]

If viewed as tools for regulating and solving specific problems, then it becomes clear that there are different ways to understand and frame policies, based on the moral and political ideas of each actor involved in the policy process (Birkland, 2001; Leach and Scoones, 2007). For instance, while microfinance is often presented as a tool for women's empowerment and clearly has some positive outcomes in terms of strengthening women's agency, it can also become oppressive when it becomes the only channel for women to access credit, or when it is used mainly as a tool to keep up repayment rates (Duvendack et al., 2011). The actors involved are driven by a range of ideologies, based on cultural ideas about appropriate roles for men and women in the domestic economy, from empowerment to a focus on increasing productivity, or attaining other development outcomes. These ideas feed into the content of policy and consequently have a bearing on both implementation and outcomes. In fact, many feminists have bemoaned the hijacking of the "feminist project" by neoliberal and conservative forces (Molyneux and Razavi, 2005), especially over the last decade, and have called for a rethinking and "re-politicisation" of the "gender myths and feminist fables" (Cornwall et al., 2007).

The policy process can then be reconceptualized as non-linear and incremental, with policy content emerging through a process of negotiation and bargaining.[3] It is a continuous process of struggle over needs and interests, but these too change over time (John, 1998), particularly with shifts in context. While women's equal participation in employment was a key demand of the women's movements globally in the 1970s, there is today an issue with the quality of such employment, of confronting low wages and poor working conditions, in an increasingly globalized and flexible market (Molyneux and Razavi, 2005). One also finds an evolution in the meanings of particular words and phrases, even within the legal framework, which need reflection and reform, for laws too are socially embedded, and made in particular contexts (Moore, 1986). In India, the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013, for instance, sought to redefine the conception of rape beyond penile-vaginal penetration to include a range of sexual offences including stalking, voyeurism and the sexual abuse of children and homosexuals. This reflected the active engagement of child rights and LGBTI groups in the recent mobilizations for legal reform than in earlier periods (Chigateri et al., 2016).

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[2] Gaventa and McGee, 2010; Hill and Ham, 1997; Fraser, 1989.
[3] Keeley and Scoones, 1999; Gaventa, 2006; Eyben, 2008.

The dynamics of the policy process can be seen in two key variables, the nature of the policy actors—the alliances they make and their framing of claims—and the nature of the policy space itself—its openness to different voices. Actors advocating for gender equality policies include women's movements in all their diversity, as well as their feminist allies in academia, the NGO community and professional associations. Feminist agents can be found in parliaments where they sometimes organize across party divides, and also within the state, be it in national women's machineries or other parts of the state apparatus (Goetz and Jenkins, 2016). In Indonesia, feminist activists and scholars included in the National Commission on Violence against Women, along with women Members of Parliament, organized a cross-party women's caucus, decisive in the approval of the Domestic Violence Law (no. 23), 2004 (Eddyono et al., 2016).

But for all the actors who support progressive change, there are those who resist it. While there are feminist supporters within national machineries and parliament, state actors can also adopt contradictory positions that reflect their own particular interests and ideologies in the process of negotiating the policy content. This was visible in the Indian Parliament's rejection of several key amendments to the Indian sexual assault laws recommended by the Law Commission, popularly known as the Justice Verma Commission. Marital rape and the immunity granted to the armed forces in cases of sexual assault were left out of the amendment. While the Law Commission was a professional body, appointed by the state, and made its recommendations after widespread consultation, Parliament still reflects views and positions that support both male privilege and institutional power and patronage. Although it was a body set up by the Indonesian government, the National Commission on Violence against Women spent almost a decade advocating for the law on domestic violence because it had to confront the resistance of most Members of Parliament.

Similar tensions exist between different tiers of governance—national-level actors and subnational/state-level authorities, especially in the context of federal states as represented by our case studies. Few Indian states have amended their inheritance laws to grant women equal rights to inherit property, despite the amendment to the nationally applicable Hindu Succession Act in 2005 (Rao, 2011). The case of labour rights is similar—while states such as Karnataka in India have sought to regulate the rights of domestic workers, it remains an exception rather than the rule. In China too, Hunan province was the first to have a law on domestic violence in 2000, followed by 21 other provinces. The national government has only recently passed a legislation to criminalize domestic violence in December 2015 (Du et al., forthcoming[4]). Apart from women's groups and state actors, there are other players involved in the policy process, such as the private sector and conservative coalitions, who often block progressive change. Women's labour rights, for instance, often go against the economic interests of the private sector, who therefore oppose them. In their desire to attract global capital, states often sell out on women's rights, as has happened in China (Ngai, 2004).

In order to help at least destabilize the given constellations of meaning and bring a new set of discourses to the table, a key strategy used by women's organizations is to build alliances with other progressive organizations, such as those advocating for human rights or child rights, and trade unions. This is important for reinforcing societal support for their claims and enlarging the base for consensus. In China, the Anti-Domestic Violence Network, established in 2000, recognizing the importance of political and cultural acceptability for its ideas, sought to establish alliances with the provincial Women's Federations, often tailoring its action agenda to this purpose (Du et al.,

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[4] This refers to the China country report.

forthcoming). The main strategy of LBH APIK Jakarta, the key actor in the advocacy for a law on domestic violence in Indonesia, was to build a network (JANKGA PKTP) across the country with women's organizations, civil society—in particular, human rights organizations—political parties and even religious leaders. Champions within the Christian Alliance of Churches and the Muslim Fatayat-NU invited feminist activists to provide information and evidence in support of the law, and help overcome scepticism and disagreement within their organizations (Eddyono et al., 2016).

However, during the mobilization against the approval of the Pornography Law (no. 44), 2008, some of these same Islamic organizations, including women's groups, and their political networks were successful in defeating feminist advocacy, indicating the hidden, though strong, cultural ideas around gender roles and identities that resurfaced during this mobilization (Eddyono et al., 2016. During the outrage following the rape of a young student in Delhi in December 2012, feminist discourses and claims were undermined by conservative discourses demanding protection for women, read as synonymous to increasing patriarchal control over their bodies and mobility. Organized religion or other traditional bodies (for example, Islamic fundamentalism in Indonesia or the *khap panchayats* in India), with the capacity to veto or shape national debates and policies, are likely to be potential opponents to gender-egalitarian policy change.

The second key variable in the policy process is the nature of the policy space itself. Gaventa (2006: 26) conceptualizes the policy space as "opportunities, moments and channels where citizens can act to potentially affect policies, discourses, decisions and relationships that affect their lives and interests". Fraser (1989) defines the policy space as going beyond official arenas to include the terrain of social interaction, or the "social arena", wherein multiple "publics" representing different interests—oppositional, status quoist and bureaucratic—engage with each other to establish the legitimacy of particular needs. Within this space, discursive contestation between different actors, articulating specific positions to negotiate their interests, is central to the process of defining and framing the issue at hand (Bergqvist et al., 2013; Beland, 2005), and for how the issue is ultimately resolved and implemented in policy (Fraser, 1989). Several examples of both conflict and collaboration have been presented above.

We need to recognize that the policy space is embedded in power relations and does not offer equal access, voice or influence to different social actors; it is deeply structured by all the familiar forms of inequality, dominance and hierarchy (Cornwall, 2002). Power within the policy space is visible in institutional mechanisms that can obstruct the participation of certain actors (Vene Klasen and Miller, 2002), for instance, women's organizations may not have direct access to parliamentary discussions. In such instances, they may need to use other "public" spaces for engagement, such as the media, street demonstrations, workshops or written material such as posters and pamphlets. In fact, all these approaches were used by the Indonesian mobilization in the run-up to the Domestic Violence Law (no. 23), 2004.

But power is also hidden, it goes beyond the visible, so it becomes important to uncover what is valued or devalued by particular actors (Padamsee, 2009): who defines the issues to be included or excluded from the policy agenda, and how they are framed? For instance, domestic workers' rights are not central to the agendas of Indian and Indonesian trade unions, as domestic work is not considered on par with other forms of paid work. Rather, it continues to be seen as a private transaction between women, often constructed as "help" rather than "work". Since the trade unions are largely dominated by male interests, it is not a high priority issue in their negotiations with the state, even on matters

of social protection, such as pensions or employment benefits including paid leave or maternity entitlements (Eddyono et al., 2016; Kabeer, 2015). The invisibility of unpaid care work in national policy agendas across countries is similarly attributed to its lack of recognition as a legitimate form of work, deserving support (Eyben, 2008; Rao, 2016).

Policy spaces, when understood as arenas where claims are discussed and negotiated, are highly dynamic. They open and close constantly following struggles over power and participation (Gaventa, 2006). Closed spaces can open to certain actors and once they are included, they may close again, as in the case of women's machineries. But the state may also open a previously closed space, although temporarily, inviting women advocates to enter and influence the policy process (Rao, 2013). For instance, the Justice Verma Commission in India, in response to its call for contributions, received more than 80,000 submissions from a host of individuals and groups within and outside the women's movement over one month. It was an opportunity to express their views and perspectives (Chigateri et al. 2016). However, despite their recommendations, the final outcome was adjusted to the interests and claims of the political elites (Friedman, 2000; Howell, 2002).

As evident from the discussion above, policy content is ultimately the result of negotiation and interpretation of interests. Such "interpretation is itself a political stake, indeed sometimes is *the* political stake" (Fraser, 1989: 145). Different conceptions of women's interests are always politically constructed through a process where a plurality of actors talk about needs, build their own discourses, articulate different claims. The policy space is ultimately the space for negotiation over claims between state and non-state actors, but also among non-state actors themselves.

Claims Making Strategies: Key Elements of "Success"

In the previous section, we have provided both a conceptual framework and empirical evidence to demonstrate that claims making and progressive change is an iterative process; therefore, rather than seeing the outcomes of feminist mobilization as "successes" or "failures", it is useful to see them as steps in a continuum of change. Htun and Weldon (2010) identified the convergence of two sets of factors as central to the larger process of gender-egalitarian policy change: the growth and strength of women's movements within countries, and support from transnational activism. However, the effectiveness of these two factors is mediated by state capacity, policy legacies, international vulnerability and the degree of democracy (Htun and Weldon, 2010). We explore the relevance and nuances of some of these variables in explaining uneven progress in terms of gender equality policies in Asia.

Women's movements and their strategies

Although the literature offers contrasting perspectives (Goetz and Jenkins, 2016), democratic regimes appear to support women's movements by providing spaces for organization and mobilization, as in India and Indonesia. The transition from an authoritarian to a democratic regime at the end of the 1990s in Indonesia opened spaces for feminist and women's rights advocates to channel their claims within the state, not least through the newly constituted National Commission on Violence against Women. Freedom of the press and of expression and association for civilians changed the way citizens interacted with the state. In the new democratic legal framework, citizens have the right to propose bills directly to the Parliament or through political parties, at both national and subnational levels. The national networks advocating for regulations on domestic violence and domestic work employed this mechanism (Eddyono et al., 2016).

While democratic spaces support progressive, public discourse on gender equality, they are at the same time open to conservative and regressive discourses and actors. Building consensus among women's groups and organizations in framing their claim then becomes crucial for resisting conservative alliances, both within the state and outside it. Consultations have often been used as a tool to reach consensus in India, given differences of caste, class, religion and ideology. The All Indian Democratic Women's Association drafted a bill on sexual assault in 2001–2002. The first version of the Bill was contested by LGBTI groups for focusing exclusively on heterosexual abuse. Women's groups pushed for keeping the definition of sexual assault specific to women, while LGBTI groups advocated for gender neutrality, to enable inclusion of same-sex abuse in the Bill. The issue of gender neutrality was controversial and discussed in successive meetings at the national level. It was only in 2010 that an agreement was reached on two proposals: (i) gender neutrality for the victim and gender specificity for the perpetrator; and (ii) the introduction of two sets of offences—one against a woman, and the second, "a person other than a woman" (Chigateri et al., 2016: 42). This agreement was confirmed at a consultation with activists, lawyers and practitioners, especially from women's and LGBTI organizations, called by the National Law University of New Delhi after the rape of a student in Delhi in December 2012, and fed into the recommendations made to the Justice Verma Commission (Chigateri et al., 2016: 44).

Inability to reach consensus can weaken the claims in the policy domain. This is evident in the case of unpaid care work (Rao, 2016), but also the mobilization for a law to ensure the rights of domestic workers (Eddyono et al, 2016; Chigateri et al. 2016). Indian domestic workers' organizations were unable to reach consensus regarding the regulation of placement agencies at a series of national and subnational consultations, both during the process of drafting the Domestic Workers Bill proposed by the National Commission for Women (2007–2008) and the consultations around the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention on Domestic Workers no.189/2011 (2010–2011). Some groups argued that placement agencies cannot act as unions for the domestic workers they recruit because of their contradictory position between the employer and employee, while others argued against any conflict of interest. The clash on this issue led to the establishment of a separate national network called the Domestic Workers Rights Campaign.

Consensus among women's groups is not enough, bridges need to be built with other constituencies too. The Indonesian experience of seeking the support of customary and religious leaders has been effective in some instances, but not in others. For instance, it helped disband the misuse of the customary practice of *merariq* or elopement by consent in the province of Lombok, after women's and child rights' activists found young girls being forcibly kidnapped and raped, under the guise of merariq (Eddyono et al., 2016). However, as already mentioned, these alliances turned hostile when it came to mobilization against the Pornography Act of 2008. Male support is also crucial, and in Indonesia, links with the New Men's Alliance has paid off in terms of its participation in the national network formed for the promulgation of the law on domestic violence. The Alliance has also been supporting the demand for recognition of the rights of domestic workers, as well as the equal sharing of unpaid care work within the household.

Apart from building broad-based alliances, framing claims in compelling narratives, which appeal to actors with the institutional power to act on those claims, is a key

strategy for success.[5] While advocating for a national law on domestic violence, Indonesian Muslim women activists were able to bring together the women's movement and religious leaders, by framing domestic violence as an affront to the "ideal family" as described in the Quran. In China, when in 2003, the Anti-Domestic Violence Network launched a campaign popularly called "zero domestic violence community" using the language of protecting women's human rights and preventing prejudice against them, they evoked strong resistance from the Changsha Municipal Women's Federation. The network then changed its strategy and framed the issue as promoting family harmony and social stability, making it a matter of concern for the Federation and for the state. Given the success of this strategy, a similar narrative was used by the network at national level in 2010 to frame its advocacy against domestic violence (Du et al., forthcoming). While these examples point to the strategic deployment of certain ideas, selected from competing discourses in order to make them more acceptable to a wide range of policy actors—state and non-state—and thus further the claims at a particular political moment, such framings can also go against further claims for equality or recognition of women's rights to bodily integrity.

Professionals like lawyers and scholars help women's movements across the three countries to frame their demands in the legal and technical language used by state actors (Goetz and Jenkins, 2016), including drafting bills and recommending amendments—as policies often build on what exists already—adding or removing clauses and sections. The feminist lawyers of the JANKGA PKTP in Indonesia drafted the first bill of the national law on domestic violence and submitted it to the National Commission on Violence against Women. Feminist scholars and activists, who established the Chinese Anti-Domestic Violence Network, collected rigorous academic evidence on the impact of domestic violence across the country, which they then disseminated through training workshops, mass media and public awareness campaigns. The recent approval[6] of the Domestic Violence Law by the Chinese government is the outcome of over a decade of pressure on the state from both the All China Women's Federation (ACWF) and other women's organizations, based on this evidence. In India, four lawyers sent an open letter to the Indian Supreme Court that released the policemen accused of raping a young girl called Mathura in 1978. The letter, written in technical terms, argued against the final verdict of the Supreme Court, and formed the manifesto of the national mobilization.

Transnational activism

Transnational activism on women's rights does play a role in advancing the gender equality agenda, but its influence varies across issues and countries. This is because the national and transnational diffusion of ideas, norms and policy instruments can happen through different channels and modalities, including intergovernmental organizations (in particular those of the UN) and donor circuits (with their proclivity for "best practices"), as well as in more diffuse forms through "epistemic communities" and NGOs. The rise of the movements against women workers' exploitation in global value chains (Kabeer, 2015), the building of international networks such as the International Domestic Workers' Network, and the rising influence of transnational NGOs working on issues of health and reproductive rights have been crucial for sharing ideas and strategies across countries, helping to shape and progress these agendas. However, there is no consensus in other areas, including interpretations of violence and pornography.

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[5] Beland, 2005; Kabeer, 2015; Goetz and Jenkins, 2016.
[6] China's Cabinet approved the Domestic Violence Law in December 2015. Despite being based on a public consultation with organizations and experts (that is, lawyers and scholars), the feminist autonomous organizations criticized the bill as it aimed at strengthening state control, and in particular police power.

Interestingly, within an (semi-)authoritarian state such as China, women's mobilizations for change have been supported not only by transnational and international actors but also by normative frameworks. Following the fourth International Women's Conference at Beijing in 1995, engagement with transnational actors—especially a range of UN bodies—the organization of interaction visits to women's organizations in countries such as the Philippines and also across Chinese provinces, brought new ideas and strategies for mobilization (Du et al., forthcoming). Resources became available for research and advocacy from international foundations and NGOs such as Oxfam, the Asia Foundation, Ford Foundation, among others. However, an excessive dependence on external resources can at times also limit women's ability to effectively stake their claims. This was evident in the case of the Indonesian mobilizations around domestic workers' rights (Eddyono et al., 2016). Difficulties in raising resources for mobilization on broader issues of rights meant that the focus got restricted to particular regions and locations, or issues such as those of child domestic workers, which evoked donor interest.

Women's organizations in China chose to use international frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) reporting system as a resource to make the Chinese state accountable (True, 2016). A group of Chinese women's organizations presented a shadow report on domestic violence to the CEDAW Committee in November 2014, claiming the need for a specific legislation to criminalize such violence. The recommendations of the CEDAW Committee were used to intensify their advocacy, leading to the passage of the national law at the end of 2015.

Other frameworks such as ILO's Convention on Domestic Workers no. 189/2011, while becoming a key instrument for generating global awareness on the issues confronting domestic workers as well as supporting their ground-level mobilization, however, has not had much purchase in policy circles. In India, the consultation process for the ILO Convention created spaces for debate, and after its approval has been used as a tool by domestic workers' organizations to demand the amendment of the existing labour legislation to recognize and regulate domestic work. What this demonstrates is the need to unravel the complex nuances of the processes of change, the gaps as well as gains, which go beyond the presence of women's movements and transnational activism. Authoritarian or semi-authoritarian states such as China may seek to curb the independence of such constituencies, yet respond selectively to some of their demands, as seen in the recent Domestic Violence Law. They are not lacking in capacity, even though the degree of democracy is low.

State Responses Across Contexts and Issues

In this section, based on the evidence from the research, we review our original hypothesis, namely, how far do context and the nature of the issue matter in processes of policy change.

Does the "local" matter?

While our focus in the country research has been on comparing strategies and resistances across issues, the three countries also present differences across administrative and political levels. China and India are federal countries, in which legislative power is divided between the central and the provincial/state governments, while Indonesia represents a decentralized state. Scholars have contradictory opinions on the impact of multilevel governance systems on women's claims making (Goetz and Jenkins, 2016), while opening up spaces for women, as witnessed in all three countries,

they strengthen political clientelism, reinforce the power of local, conservative elites, and fragment claims around larger issues. For instance, in Hunan province, China, women's groups preferred working with police personnel and judicial officers at the local level to raise awareness on domestic violence and build their capacities to handle cases of violence, rather than pushing for stronger laws (Du et al., forthcoming). In Gujarat, India, domestic workers' organizations negotiated domestic workers' conditions of employment (wages and leave) with the employers, investing in the professionalization of domestic work rather than mobilizing around the legal regulation of the sector (Chigateri et al. 2016). While these are practical responses, crucial to immediate material well-being, they leave untouched more strategic transformations in gender relations.

Moreover, although provinces and states within the same country share the same democratic, and possibly legal framework, at least on some issues, the claims raised by women's movements vary across regions.. Comparing the states of Karnataka and Gujarat in India, the research found different priorities emerging across issue areas. In Gujarat, organizations focused on sexual violence perpetrated by the state, and state impunity for the perpetrators, especially in the context of communal conflicts. On the other hand, in Karnataka, sexual assault claims reflected the experiences of the LGBTI community, which worked closely with women's organizations in making these claims. Karnataka also has a long history of mobilization on domestic work due to the large presence of domestic workers' trade unions and Catholic groups that assist these workers in the state, compared to Gujarat, where the focus was more on professionalization than workers' rights (Chigateri et al. 2016).

The same is the case in Indonesia. In the province of East Java, mobilization against child domestic work and the sexual abuse of domestic workers are strong claims; in West Nusa Tenggara Province, a draft for a regional regulation on domestic work was submitted by women's organizations after a series of cases of violence against domestic workers. In the Regency of East Lombok, domestic workers joined the mobilization for the protection of informal workers as a strategy to channel some of their claims into the policy space. On the contrary, in West Sumatra, households (mainly matrilineal *Minangkabau*) consider domestic workers as "helpers" and part of the family, leading to a complete lack of mobilization around their rights. To some extent, these differences in claims reflect the nature of actors involved and the local cultures in which they are embedded. In West Nusa Tenggara, due to the presence of lawyers, the local branch of a national legal aid organization (LBH APIK) provided domestic workers the technical capacity to draft and submit a bill on the regulation of domestic work to the provincial government. In West Sumatra and East Java, NGOs working on community development led the mobilization, and while committed to helping these women, did not have the technical expertise to intervene in the policy-making process. What is clear is that specific cultural identities contribute to shaping actors' ideas about interests, and in turn contribute to particular action strategies; the construction of claims here ranging from rights in West Nusa Tenggara, to welfare in the other provinces (Eddyono et al., 2016).

Do issues really matter?

Feminist activists across the region have been more successful in addressing issues of violence against women, both in terms of mobilization and policy change. They successfully created networks of women's organizations, overcoming differences of class, caste, ethnicity and religion, expanding their alliances to include a host of human rights groups, child rights organizations, religious and customary leaders, and others. They secured support from actors within the state, whether from the national women's

machineries in India and Indonesia, the women's caucus in the Indonesian Parliament, the party-affiliated ACWF, and individual judges and police personnel in China. The media too proved a powerful ally, giving visibility to cases of rape, testimonies from survivors, as well as mass protests and demonstrations. Experts and professionals, such as lawyers and scholars, facilitated the translation of women's claims into technical and legal language. The outcomes of this mobilization were the Criminal Law Amendment Acts, 1983 and 2013 in India, the Domestic Violence Law (no. 23), 2004 in Indonesia, and the Domestic Violence Law, 2015 in China. The fact that policies on violence against women affect all women as women and therefore are a gender status policy (Htun and Weldon, 2010), is perhaps the main reason for the "success" of women's mobilization in this area, and their ability to build consensus and bring in actors ranging from human rights activists to religious leaders.

Nevertheless, in all the three countries *some* claims related to violence against women remain excluded from the policy agenda. The criminalization of marital rape is one such issue, but there are also others. In India, the immunity granted to military forces in sexual violence crimes has not been removed in either the 1983 or 2013 amendment to the Criminal Law, although, along with marital rape, this has been a claim raised by the women's movement since the 1970s. In Indonesia, there remains considerable resistance to a law on sexual offences and rape as these concerns bring into question issues around women's sexuality and morality. It was only after a case of sexual abuse against a child in an "international", upper-class school in Jakarta that the issue entered political debate in 2014, despite the mobilization by feminist activists since the mid-2000s. As in India, it seems that issues of sexual violence only get attention when they are seen as exceptional, and this happens when an incident occurs among the middle and upper classes, rather than the poor. Class seems to matter, and perhaps this is one reason that the issue of sexual violence and assault has been harder to address. Interestingly, these claims do not only concern women as women, but question the very foundations of patriarchy and male control over women's bodies and sexuality. In this sense, they fall in the category of "doctrinal" policies (Htun and Weldon, 2010), challenging as they do social norms, aimed at preserving male privileges (that is, the right of the husband to use his wife's body even without her consent).

Despite the above nuances, the mobilizations around violence against women have been more successful than those around domestic workers' labour rights. Comparing the three countries, it is evident that domestic workers still remain largely invisible, including in national accounts. Domestic workers' mobilizations are relatively recent, reflecting perhaps the fact that domestic work is not recognized as "work" not just by state and society, but also by domestic workers themselves, because of the peculiarity of their workplace—the private home. In India, given their structural isolation, domestic workers' issues were first framed and represented by Catholic organizations, in terms of discrimination by caste/ethnicity and the insecurities of informal employment, because many of the domestic workers were affiliated to the Church in their rural homes. In Indonesia, feminist activists working on issues of domestic violence also raised the issue of sexual harassment and violence against domestic workers, getting them recognized as members of the household in the Domestic Violence Law, 2004. In China, feminist academics and lawyers have raised the issue of domestic workers, but more in terms of securing support for migrant women workers in urban areas. Despite the different entry points, the key claims are similar: recognition of domestic work as "work" and its regulation through labour legislation.

The reality that domestic work is not accorded importance in the state's political agenda or those of women's and workers' movements might be explained by the fact that domestic workers, usually women belonging to lower caste or lower class, often migrants from rural areas, are marginalized in both movements. The workers' movements, largely male-dominated, do not recognize domestic work as work. The resistance among women's rights advocates could be because they see domestic work as a class-based issue, where regulation can lead to redistribution of resources from upper-class households to the lower-class workers. The resistance from Indonesian female politicians similarly reflects a class-based conflict, as any legislation on domestic work could potentially damage their own household interests. This is visible in the distinction between the discourse based on labour rights used by the National Advocacy Network on Domestic Work and the claims oriented to protection made by the National Commission on Violence against Women. However, there is also a status issue involved, with domestic work mirroring the intra-household divisions of labour between women and men. Gradual shifts are visible following the mobilization and consultations around the ILO Convention 189/2011 (Eddyono et al., 2016; Chigateri et al., 2016).

Unpaid care work is an issue that remains outside the policy space across the board (Rao, 2016). It emerges in discrete parts, as claims associated with the rights of the child to adequate, high quality care in India and Indonesia, and the demand for the care of older persons in China. It is only very recently in India, that national campaigns on the right to social security and food have expanded their constituency to include women performing unpaid care work. While women's movements recognize unpaid care work as an additional burden on women's time, and an obstacle to empowerment, this is not prioritized or reflected in their mobilization and claims making (Eyben, 2012). Using Htun and Weldon's (2010) framework, unpaid care work can be seen as both a class-based and a gender status, if not also a doctrinal issue. As a gender status issue, it affects all women, but the redistribution of unpaid care work outside the household has a class-based feature—upper- and middle-class households can transfer it to paid domestic workers and caregivers, but for the poor, this is not an option; state provisioning is required (Rao, 2016). As in the case of domestic work, mobilizing for the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care work requires modifying the existing gender division of labour within households (Elson, 2008). It is not just physical work, but also private affective relations between women and men in the household. In this sense, unpaid care work is an issue that challenges us to rethink intra-household relationships.

The evidence from the primary research in China, India and Indonesia suggests that gender-status policy issues perhaps have more policy traction than class-based issues, though customary and religious doctrine can become confounding factors in both instances, as can the intersections of class and patriarchy (as seen in the mobilizations around sexual violence). Issues of gender status appear to facilitate alliances and consensus-building, based perhaps on a somewhat essentialized notion of "women's experience". Class-based policy issues, on the other hand, point to differences among women from different classes, making the creation of alliances that can strengthen mobilization more difficult. Yet, what the research points to in the ultimate analysis is the complexity of each of these issues, whether status-based or class-based, as they end up challenging patriarchal norms on women's sexuality, intra-household relations and the gender division of labour, and hence encounter resistance from those with power and authority.

Some Concluding Thoughts

Fraser's (1989) ideas around the processes of contestation involved among multiple actors in legitimizing particular needs or interests as policy priorities is clearly the first step in ensuring that a particular claim is brought to the policy table. Several strategies around alliance building across state and non-state actors and framing claims in politically acceptable language have been discussed in earlier sections. The very presence of organized women in various forms (Kabeer, 2015) appears central to processes of claims making around women's rights, in the domains of both labour and sexuality.

In line with the idea of multiple "publics" acting in the policy space, we need to recognize that women's movements, while critical, are not the only actors. Women's rights advocates face resistance from patriarchal elites, who often dominate the state (Goetz and Jenkins, 2016; Kelkar, 2016), as well as "status quoist" groups, including religious leaders and transnational corporations,[7] with interests, social and economic, in resisting change. Patriarchal elites within the Indian Parliament, while accepting some recommendations of the Law Commission, opposed the criminalization of marital rape or removal of the impunity to military forces in case of sexual violence crimes (Chigateri et al., 2016). While there have been gains, they stopped short of meeting feminist claims for structural reform.

However, women are not a homogenous category either; different interests and ideologies shape the meaning of gender justice and the role women should play in society.[8] In India, during the first national mobilization against rape in the late 1970s, Indian women's organizations emphasized their common concerns in relation to gender-based violence, leaving at the margins specific nuances of their class, caste and religious identities. Their aim was to build consensus and solidarity around the priority claims to be addressed to the state. The emergence and articulation of identity-based interests within the women's movement since the 1980s, especially by the Dalit and LGBTI groups, perhaps weakened the anti-rape movement, as they were no longer able to offer a single, coherent narrative to interpret the rise in numbers and brutality of gender-based violence across the country. Yet it also led to a growing maturity, creating a "differentiated solidarity (among women), a solidarity built on awareness of both common and different interests" (Jonasdottir and Jones, 2009: 18). In Indonesia, the content of the Pornography Law (no. 44), 2008 caused a fracture within the women's movement, with women within religious-based organizations largely supporting a discourse of protection (and morality), versus a discourse on the rights to bodily integrity proposed by other feminist actors (Eddyono et al., 2016). Such differences, while a reflection of the complexity of lives and identities, can weaken women's claims in the short-term and slow down the process of policy change. The choice of issues and their framing in the policy space then reflect the positioning of particular actors and their relationship to the state.

Despite the breadth of advocacy on a wide range of gender issues that culminated in the Beijing Platform for Action, the post-Beijing policy responses within and across countries tended to focus on specific issues such as gender budgets and violence against women. Others such as women's labour rights and the demands of the unpaid care economy failed to achieve serious policy traction. There was silence on reproductive health and sexual rights, gender-based violence and labour rights in the Millennium

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[7]   Razavi and Jenichen, 2010; Eddyono et al., 2016; Kabeer, 2015,
[8]   Eddyono et al., 2016; Goetz and Jenkins, 2016; Chigateri et al. 2016.

Development Goals. The recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals do have a separate goal on gender equality which focuses on freedom from violence, strengthening women's capabilities and resources, and enhancing decision-making power and voice in public and private institutions. Responding to earlier criticism, suggested targets and indicators include sexual and reproductive rights, good health, decent work, access to productive assets and reducing women's time burdens, among others. It is yet unclear how they will be translated into action, as several of them are hugely contentious, directly challenging normative social and religious practices, "doctrine" in Htun and Weldon's (2010) terms.

The three country case studies evidence this uneven progress across issue areas. Violence against women is currently on the political agenda of all three countries, although with different claims, narratives and resistances. However, claims related to paid domestic work and unpaid care work, or even rights to property, remain relatively invisible. While it seems true to say that different policy communities or "issue networks" ,[9] interact with a range of actors, they do not necessarily coordinate or join forces across issues. Indonesia appears to offer a partial exception with the movement against domestic violence also taking on the issue of domestic workers' rights, though the alliances on the issue of domestic workers rights are not as broad-based as those against violence.

Progressive change in gender relations and structures is then the outcome of complex processes, with diverse and multidirectional causal influences. While progress has been made, the gains can only be seen as incremental. There is still a long road ahead to gender justice.

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[9]   Franceschet, 2010; Htun and Weldon, 2010; Kaufman, 2012.

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