**‘A PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN GIVEN TOO MUCH’: CANADIAN EFFORTS &
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES AT THE GATINA SELF-HELP HEALTH
EDUCATION CENTRE, KENYA, 1972 - 1975.**

by

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ABSTRACT

In January 1972, Canadian Topsy Ford initiated a small educational program aimed at the improvement of maternal and child health in Nairobi's Gatina slum community. In eventual funding applications to the Canadian International Development Agency and the Canadian Hunger Foundation, Ford conceived of her small project growing into a multiple service center, facilitating women's access to basic education, a medical clinic, and other welfare services, to be sustained in the long-run by community self-help. Skillfully, she applied the principles of the Women in Development model to her project, demonstrating a keen awareness of important development discourse changes to affect women throughout the 1970s. Ultimately however, Ford's project failed to reach its self-sustainability goals. This study considers the dominant paradigm shift in development discourse during the 1970s that recognized women as strong potential agents of their own development and how this was misappropriated in Gatina as a result of important implications in colonial and development rhetoric. It also makes a case for the utility of history in development studies as it considers the contemporary incarnation of Ford's project in The Gatina Primary School, a project currently supported by the Amsha Africa organization.

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INTRODUCTION

In November 1972, the Section Head for the Canadian International Development Agency's Anglophone Africa Division, Sheila Batchelor, traveled to Nairobi to meet with Vancouverite Topsy Ford. The meeting was arranged in conjunction with a grant application Ford had submitted to CIDA in August of the same year requesting support for a small but promising project initiated several months earlier aimed at the nutritional and health education of a group of women in Nairobi's Gatina slum district. On April 27, 1973, Batchelor wrote to the Canadian Hunger Foundation's Executive Director, Tim McCoy proposing partnered funding of Ford's project, stressing the originality of its 'self-help' focus and adoption of Kenya's *harambee* philosophy of development. Specifically, the project's purpose was "to serve the basic needs of poor people in an outlying squatter area of Nairobi" by instating and operating the following program: providing health education including mother and child care; simple anatomy, nutrition and family planning lessons; offer a medical facility with services including first aid and preventive services, pre-natal and ante-natal clinic; classes of general education including sewing and cooking, physical education, literacy and numeracy; and finally the project would facilitate accessible welfare services, particularly feeding for the elderly and infants, including home visiting and orthopaedic services.¹

In her original proposal to CIDA, Ford writes that a medical clinic and the welfare services centre were initiated in January 1972 "on a piece of open ground

¹ Sheila Batchelor, Letter to Tim McCoy, April 27, 1973. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200), 2. Henceforth, the Canadian International Development Agency and the Canadian Hunger Foundation will be referred to by their acronyms, CIDA and CHF.

donated by the village elders.”² Services would begin at the Centre, she estimated, by September 1 once building construction was complete. Ford explains that her ‘services’ were requested by the local people because of their familiarity with her work in nearby impoverished areas: mostly aiding new mothers in caring for their newborns.

Highlighting that among the twelve overseas volunteers (of which she is one), Ford states there are two nurses, one nutritionist with experience in Africa, and among others, a “child education specialist” who have been working on the project since its initiation.³

Similarly, eight African ‘working mothers’ have worked with Ford for the same length of time, though beyond ‘interpreters’ their responsibilities are not identified. Returning to the self-sustainability of the project, Ford states that “the gradual involvement of working mothers and paid teachers could make the project self-supporting from a staff point of view.” For this, she explains that City Council and Ministry of Health financing is “being sought for the future.”⁴ Under “Other Comments” Ford clarifies the particular significance of self-help, or *harambee*, projects in Kenya:

“Self-help labour is that given free or almost free by the local people. Government self-help funds is money to assist approved and recommended projects. Our project was directly favoured by the national Commissioner for Social Services. ‘Harambee!’ is the national motto ... Harambee collections is money raised locally usually for a self-help project of the people.”⁵

Rather skilfully, Ford presented her project well situated in both Kenyan and Canadian development concerns: the self-help focus of Ford’s project appealed to Kenyan officials involved, while the focus on women and children spoke directly to the changing trends in Western development efforts.

² Ibid., 3.

³ Ibid., 4.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Harambee development in Kenya

In 1963, Kenya's newly independent social and political climate was infused with the philosophy of *harambee*, a movement that emerged from a background of high, nationalist-based expectations regarding the country's social and economic development. Swahili for 'let's all pull together,' *harambee's* core philosophy reflected the cooperative participation of local communities in attempts to fulfill their collective needs through the use of accessible resources, or simply, self-help initiatives.⁶ Historically, self-help efforts in Kenya were largely voluntary in nature, with self-motivated groups of men and women opening and cultivating land, or helping neighbours to move or restore their homes.⁷ Small groups, usually made up of similar ages, same-sex, or members of a particular community, would coordinate to complete a project based on decisions made informally through deliberations amongst group members. Before contemporary systems of individual ownership and social organization, land in Kenya was communally owned, and as such *harambee* efforts, fundamentally, were forms of social exchange of labour and mutual assistance.⁸ Throughout the 1960s and 70s, education based projects were by far the most popular amongst *harambee* groups with economic and social welfare efforts a distant second and third.⁹ Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta, promoted *harambee* as a national mandate of sorts, a rallying self-help motto and slogan in the wake of colonial independence. On June 1, 1963, addressing the importance of Kenya's

⁶ Philip Mbithi and Rasmus Rasmusson, *Self-reliance in Kenya: the case of Harambee*, (Stockholm: Alqvist & Wicksell, 1977), 16.

⁷ Ibid., 14.

⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁹ Barbara Slayter-Thomas, *Politics, Participation, and Poverty: Development through Self-Help in Kenya*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1985), 30.

development thereafter, he declared to the public: “I give you the call: Harambee!”¹⁰ Six months later he reminded Kenyans again of the importance behind the philosophy: “But you must know that Kenyatta alone cannot give you everything. All things we must do together to develop our country, to get education for our children, to have doctors, to build roads, to improve or provide all day-to-day essentials ... Harambee!”¹¹

As the popularity of projects rose, the Kenyan government instituted and implemented various bureaucratic structures and regulations to control the increasing activities. For instance, the government’s 1964-70 development plans recommended that the supervision, planning and control, enhancement, and coordination of *harambee* activities should be overseen by government-appointed, local administrative chiefs and groups of community development staff.¹² Perhaps not surprisingly, these individuals eventually became the ‘professionals’ of the movement, working directly with local, community-established *harambee* committees, applying regulatory measures and enforcing government standards. By 1970, *harambee* activities became so popular that the government characterized it as “suffering from over-exuberance.”¹³ Local community *harambee* committees especially complained of increasing project abandonment and duplication; in response, the government blamed a lack of efficient planning at the community level as well as the politicization of *harambee* projects.¹⁴ While there are differing scholarly interpretations regarding the nature and importance of Kenya’s *harambee* development efforts, government instated regulations ultimately worked

¹⁰ Jomo Kenyatta, *Harambee: The Prime Minister's Speeches*, (Oxford University Press: Nairobi, 1964), 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹² Peter Ngau, “Tensions in Empowerment: The Experience of the ‘Harambee’ (Self-Help) Movement in Kenya.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 35, no. 3 (1987): 529.

¹³ Slayter-Thomas, 33.

¹⁴ Ngau, 531.

against the empowerment of the people.¹⁵ Regardless of whether or not they were meant to increase the efficiency of the movement, the bureaucratic impositions effectively distorted the nature of *harambee* projects, in so far as they became larger and more costly, and increasingly further removed from the 'grass roots'. While the philosophy of the movement was based on the meaningful participation of collective communities, individual and local agency suffered especially throughout the 1970s, in the wake of bureaucratic invasion.¹⁶ Of course, the politicization of the movement came largely at the expense of the empowerment *harambee* was meant to promote amongst Kenya's most impoverished citizens. Thus, as a form of community mobilization, *harambee* has roots not only in familial responsibilities, but also in Kenya's struggle for independence beginning in the 1920s. For political, economic, and social reasons, *harambee* has been an important and influential element of Kenya's development strategy: it is predicated on the philosophy of incremental change initiated by and for local communities.¹⁷ Barbara Slayter-Thomas argues that, as a form of community mobilization as well as a political phenomenon, *harambee* has been characterized by the dispersal of power it offers. Historically, the philosophy constituted a minimal threat to Kenya's government, and therefore she believes self-help in Kenya should be viewed as politicized but powerless.

¹⁵ For a selection of scholarly work on *harambee*, see Philip Mbithi and Rasmus Rasmusson, *Self-Reliance in Kenya: The Case of Harambee*, (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1977); B. Colnick, "Comparative Harambee: History and Theory of Voluntary Collective Behavior," (Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, Paper 139, 1974); Martin Hill, *The harambee movement in Kenya: self-help, development, and education among the Kamba of Kitui district*, (London: Athlone Press, 1991); Peter Ngau, "Tensions in Empowerment: The Experience of the 'Harambee' (Self-Help) Movement in Kenya," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 35, no. 3 (1987): 523-538; and, E. M. Godfrey, "The Political Economy of Self-Help: Kenya's 'Harambee' Institutes of Technology," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 8, no. 1 (1974): 109-133.

¹⁶ Ngau, 536.

¹⁷ Slayter-Thomas, 46.

Indeed, at the local level, the philosophy provided effective community based development while, at the national level, it did little “to jeopardize the status quo.”¹⁸

Eventually, *harambee* based projects would also include the utilization of external resources to help meet local community needs. The expansion of Kenya’s development ideology was largely embraced by the people and certainly by the government, which saw it as an opportunity to further their own goals in securing international donors for development projects.¹⁹ And although President Kenyatta spoke favourably regarding women’s involvement in *harambee*, there was little official encouragement from his government in order to support and facilitate women’s involvement in development in any meaningful ways. “Women of Kenya, A Review and Evaluation of Progress,” reveals that in between 1975 and 1976 only 0.54 percent of the total Ministry of Culture and Social Services budget was allocated for the direct support of women’s activities.²⁰ More often than not, Kenyan women were neglected in official government development policy, certainly during the 1960s and lingering still until the early 1970s. Arguably, the government saw little utility in addressing women or accounting for their contributions to national development, since any economic role they might have was considered unofficial and informal, and therefore of much less importance than Kenyan men’s contribution to development efforts; regardless of how crucial their involvement was to Kenya’s development, their activities were seen as peripheral.²¹ Scholars largely agree that rural Kenyan women became the backbone of the *harambee* movement in its prime,

¹⁸ Ibid., 59.

¹⁹ Lisa Aubrey, *Politics of Development Co-Operation: NGOs, Gender and Partnership in Kenya*. (London: Routledge, 1997), 61.

²⁰ Ibid., 63.

²¹ Aubrey, 64.

and as such their overall contributions to national development outweighed both domestic and international government contributions.

CHF Support for GSHEC

When Batchelor approached CHF with the opportunity to invest in Ford's project, its appeal lay not only in its focus on women and children, but surely in its adoption of Kenya's *harambee* development philosophy. Batchelor professed to CHF Director Tim McCoy, that she thought it was an excellent project to support since "it offers people-to-people contact" which larger projects often neglected to incorporate.²² She also highlighted the project's emphasis on "nutrition education and preventive medicine" and expressed to McCoy that it was "philosophically a good project for introducing development to a group."²³ Ironically, despite her obvious support for the project, Batchelor neglects to mention just *how* this project attempts to incorporate Kenya's self-help strategy.²⁴ She promotes Ford as a health educator whose "major concern [was] to improve the nutrition of the children of the area not only through feeding programmes but more importantly through teaching the Kenyan women the elements of basic nutrition and improved cooking."²⁵ In her first letter to McCoy, Batchelor attached Ford's original grant application to CIDA in which she describes the purpose of her project: to serve the basic needs of Nairobi's Gatina slum area by initiating an education program to teach Kenyan women basic elements of post-natal care, anatomy, nutrition and family planning, with elements of the intended curriculum including a "general education" in sewing, cooking, literacy and numeracy. Finally, Ford expresses that she intended to use

²² Batchelor, Letter to Tim McCoy, April 27, 1973: 2.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 3.

CIDA funds to build a medical clinic in order to provide Gatina women with pre and ante-natal care as well as a room which would house a feeding program.²⁶

Ford's project targeted urban women, a relative anomaly amongst the rural-focused development trend. Defined in Ford's report as an area of approximately six square miles hemmed in by highways and houses rented to expatriates, Gatina was (and is today) an area of extreme poverty in Nairobi's larger Kawangware slum. A major "barrier to development", she described the region as suffering from the exploitation of absentee African landlords and was widely regarded as "a problem area so difficult to deal with that, for lack of money to provide services, it has been forgotten by the government."²⁷ With an approximate population of 4000 people, Gatina was one of nine districts to compose Nairobi's Kawangware slum during this time.²⁸ The growth of Nairobi itself had historically attracted great numbers of women, pushed by the land scarcity as a result of land seizures by the British. As a settlement, Kawangware began after the East African Royal Commission recommended to the British government in 1953 that Africans should in fact be encouraged to own their homes.²⁹ Soon thereafter, conditions in Nairobi's African housing became increasingly overcrowded, forcing an expansion into areas surrounding the city center, but rather than individuals owning their homes there, most homes were in fact owned by Nairobi based landlords. Among areas

²⁶ Ibid., 2.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ While no single comprehensive history of the Gatina area exists, relevant information can be found in the following: Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990); Roger van Zwanenberg, *A history of population growth in Kenya & Uganda*. (Nairobi: Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, 1973); and, "Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Kenya." (Nairobi: UNICEF & The Central Bureau of Statistics, Government of Kenya, 1980).

²⁹ The East Africa Royal Commission was an investigative Committee responsible for reporting on the conditions for promoting the economic development of the British colonial dependencies of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika between 1953 and 1955. Also see, White, *The Comforts of Home*, 215.

Kenyans expanded into, Kawangware began to grow steadily beginning in 1958 and by 1960 was facing overcrowded conditions itself. Prior to 1953, Kawangware was mostly comprised of Christians and semi-skilled workers, but by 1961 the community had become almost evenly split between Muslim and Christians. Although the residents were closely-knit, Kawangware had largely become an overcrowded slum, increasingly attracting the infirm and unemployed.³⁰ Ford states that she initiated the project “after many requests from the people of Gatina” (though no mention is made about the details of these requests) and with approval from Kenyan government officials.³¹ Set up by the government as a response to the popularity of *harambee* projects, Kenya’s Ministry for Cooperatives and Social Services and Nairobi’s City Council of Community Development Department both approved of the project and recognized the project as a “people-based attempt at Health Education which could have an effect not only on the 4,000 people in Gatina, but on the 10,000 in the overall area, and beyond as a model for development.”³²

After visiting the eleven-month-old project, officially titled the Gatina Self-Help Health Education Centre (GSHEC), in December 1972 Batchelor’s first official assessment read:

The major weakness of the project lies in its reliance upon volunteer help, both Kenyan and expatriate. The Project Director, M.E. Ford, is well aware of the necessity of making the project as self-supporting as possible ... In spite of this weakness, the NGO division would unhesitatingly recommend support of the project for the following reasons: 1) The project has involved local people in identifying their needs and in seeking ways of meeting these needs; 2) The project is oriented toward that segment of the population which receives almost no assistance from any

³⁰ White, 220.

³¹ Batchelor, Letter to Tim McCoy, April 27, 1973: 3.

³² Ibid., 4.

other source; 3) The project is oriented toward nutrition education and preventive health facilities which will prove in the long run to have a profound effect on the lives of the people.³³

She also cautioned that Gatina and the surrounding Kawangware slum presented an intense conflict between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', but professed that she was aware of a core group of people in the community who desired a better way of living and were keen to do something about it.³⁴ Represented foremost by 'working mothers', Batchelor attested that their influence was "basic and crucial, as is that of the old women whose role is still important even in this crumbling society."³⁵ Finally, she notes that the project foresees that if it "can prove its worth to the community" it was Ford's hope that the Kenyan government will eventually be persuaded to provide full-time personnel and funding for salaries. In the meantime, to make any meaningful contribution to the community, it was noted that GSHEC would either have to rely on outside funds otherwise cut back its program to a very limited scale.³⁶ In the wake of Batchelor's report, CHF approved funding for GSHEC and, two months later, presented Ford's project with a cheque for \$11,764 (US) (£4,050 Kenyan Shillings) and a commitment to support Ford and the Centre through 1974.

The Development Project, CHF & CIDA: Historical Context

The 'development project' originated in the post-war period of the 1940s, when policy-makers and scholars affirmed that Third World people could indeed be helped to

³³ Ibid., 3.

³⁴ Ibid., 2.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 3.

achieve political and economic systems similar to those in the industrialized world.³⁷

Typically, development was explained as a linear and progressive process, in which nations could escape their underdevelopment, an affliction generally characterized as being backward and primitive, to modern development, perhaps unsurprisingly identified as industrialized and advanced.³⁸ European imperialism provided the necessary rationale for the advancement of the development paradigm, which assumed that European society was superior to its Third World counterpart. This sense of superiority was reinforced by a colonial discourse that pitted a Third World ‘Other’ against the enlightened West, necessitating their modernization at the hands of the imperial powers.³⁹ Thus, the problem of development became one of bringing ‘backward’ colonial peoples into the modern, developed world, and, rather than questioning the legitimacy of this goal in and of itself, the debates became logistical ones: just *how* and *when* could this be achieved?⁴⁰

Development critic Arturo Escobar recognizes the Second World War as an important turning point in the relationship between the West and what we have come to know as the Third World. He describes an entirely new strategy that emerged post-1945 for dealing with the perceived problems of countries that came to be known as underdeveloped. Industrialization, or in other words development like that of the West,

³⁷ I use the term Third World to concisely refer to the most densely impoverished areas of the world, namely Africa, Asia, and South America. In no way do I mean to homogenize the nations therein, or suggest that vast differences do not exist amongst them. ‘Third World’ was among the most common ways to refer to the newly independent African and Asian nations during this time, and thus it is used here for consistency and clarity.

³⁸ Jane Parpart, *Women and Development in Africa*. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), 53.

³⁹ See for instance, Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (New York, Vintage Books, 1978); Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1994); and Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 2004).

⁴⁰ For further readings regarding modernization theory and development planning, see the following: Bret Billet, *Modernization Theory and Economic Development: discontent in the developing world*, (Westport: Praeger, 1993); James Cypher & James Dietz, *The Process of Economic Development*, (New York: Routledge, 2009); and chapter 7 of, Todd Moss, *African Development: Making Sense of the Issues and Actors*, (Boulder: Rienners Publishing, 2007).

became the goal, necessitating the material and organizational factors to support such an advanced society.⁴¹ Based on a “fictitious construct”, Escobar recognizes a discourse that developed to support this goal and rationalize its place in these underdeveloped countries.⁴² The catalyst for this new strategy lay largely in post-war power transformations which drastically widened the proverbial gap between the world’s rich and poor nations. Ultimately, the historical roots of ‘development’ lay largely in a *political* rearrangement: the idea of underdevelopment and the Third World “emerged as working concepts ... by which the West and the East redefined themselves and global power structures.”⁴³ Scholars generally agree on certain historical conditions that paved the way for modern development strategies; these include the abolition of colonial systems, subsequent changes in populations of newly independent countries, the advancement of capitalism and threat of communism.⁴⁴ Where economics were concerned, the end of the Second World War also confronted Western nations with the need to establish investment opportunities overseas along with potential export markets; other important economic changes, such as trade liberalization and the launch of the World Bank, also supported the advancement of the new development strategy. The typical westernization that accompanied economic development tended to be presented by development planners through the 1960s as an inevitable, even self-evident process.

As previously discussed, a number of historical circumstances set the stage for modern development strategies: the abolition of colonial systems, subsequent changes in

⁴¹ Arturo Escobar, “Discourse and Power in Development: Michel Foucault and the Relevance of his Work to the Third World.” *Alternatives* 10, no. 3 (1984): 378.

⁴² Escobar, “Power and Visibility: Development and the Invention and Management of the Third World.” *Cultural Anthropology* 3, no. 4 (1988): 430.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 431.

⁴⁴ Gilbert Rist, *The History of Development: from Western origins to Global Faith*, (New York: Zed Books, 2002), 28.

populations of newly independent countries, the advancement of capitalism and threat of communism, for instance.⁴⁵ Several important economic changes, such as trade liberalization and the launch of the World Bank, also supported the advancement of the new development strategy. Development critic Arturo Escobar cautions however,

that development was not merely the result of these elements, or of their combination and gradual elaboration; nor was it the product of new forms of knowledge or institutions, nor the response to changes in the conditions of the dynamics of capital, or a reflection of a new sensibility to poverty internationally. It was rather the result of the establishment of a system that brought together all of those elements, institutions, and practices creating among them a set of relations which ensured their continued existence.⁴⁶

As such Third World countries became the recipients of countless projects aimed at their social and economic betterment: population, administration, natural resources, capital accumulation, agriculture and trade, and cultural values became the object of what Escobar calls the “explicit calculation” by Western experts.⁴⁷ For example, many early transactions between the West and Third World were largely focussed on accessing Third World resources, or evangelical missions meant to introduce Christianity to indigenous populations; ultimately, little priority was given to improving the welfare of Third World peoples. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), however, was among the earliest post-colonial efforts to play an important role in prioritizing the Third World’s increasingly detrimental food and hunger challenges. Their Freedom from Hunger Campaign (FFHC) was launched in 1960 with the mandate of facilitating dialogue between UN agencies, governments, NGOs, as well as private industry in order

⁴⁵ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁶ Escobar, “Power and Visibility,” 430.

⁴⁷ Escobar, “Discourse and Power,” 379. Also see, Irene Gendzier, *Managing Political Change: Social Scientists and the Third World*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1985); and, Peter Little and David Brokensha, *Anthropology of Development and Change in East Africa*, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1988).

to better address the mounting malnutrition problem of developing countries. Among the campaigns greatest successes, it helped to transform the FAO from a primarily technical organization to a legitimate development agency.⁴⁸ Canada was among more than 100 nations to support the FFHC at a national level, initiating a chapter in 1961. Public support for the campaign was strong; it gave common cause to “unify a broad but disparate voluntary movement in Canada, and contributed directly to a proliferation of Canadian NGOs and a corresponding increase in the number of ‘voluntary’ overseas projects.”⁴⁹

In 1964 the Canadian Hunger Foundation was created to continue the work of the Canadian Freedom From Hunger Campaign. In the early 1960s, CHF became involved in the development of a food technology training centre in Mysore, India. Known as the Canada-Mysore Project, it was among the earliest examples applying the concept of Appropriate Technology, a development strategy aimed at introducing technology that is designed with special consideration to the environmental, ethical, cultural, social, political, and economical aspects of the community for which it is intended.⁵⁰ By 1965, a fundraising committee composed of thirty Canadian companies and supported by more than eighty Members of Parliament raised more than \$500,000 (US) in support of the project. Formerly of the Canadian Department of Agriculture and the first executive director of CHF, Howard Trueman, was responsible for much of the success of CHF in the 1960s, and was personally involved in most of the organization’s operations.

⁴⁸ Matthew Bunch, “All roads lead to Rome: Canada, the Freedom From Hunger Campaign, and the rise of NGOs, 1960-1980.” (Ph.D Dissertation, Department of History: University of Waterloo, 2007): 11.

⁴⁹ Bunch, 6.

⁵⁰ Appropriate technology proponents claim the strategy requires fewer resources, is self-sustaining, and has less of an environmental impact. See, *Experience in Appropriate Technology*, (Ottawa: Canadian Hunger Foundation, 1980).

Trueman skilfully aligned CHF efforts with prominent politicians such as Lester B. Pearson, Mitchell Sharp, Paul Martin, and Tommy Douglas.⁵¹

Among other important efforts, CHF's experience with the Canada-Mysore project led to a fundamental shift at the organization from fundraising primarily for other Canadian NGOs to one that sought funds for its own development projects. In 1971, CHF became a registered charitable organization under the Canada Corporations Act, and eventually became responsible for the administration of more than 800 individual development projects.⁵² Throughout the 1970s, CHF's work was dominated by three themes: administration of individual development projects, Appropriate Technology application, and information and educational programs. In 1976, CHF collaborated with the Brace Research Institute to produce the *Handbook on Appropriate Technology*. The manual was part of the Tools for Development Project that CHF initiated in 1970, which explored new ways to provide economic and social assistance to developing nations, and sought to supplement larger development schemes with simple, small scale solutions and devices.⁵³

By the early 1970s, CHF began responding to important changes in Canadian international development trends and attitudes towards overseas' aid. By the end of the 1960s, Canada had completed a thorough review regarding their official development assistance (ODA) policies, and began to implement significant changes. Internationally, developing nations and industrialized countries alike were facing "painful adjustments,"

⁵¹ Founding Organizations of CHF included: the Agricultural Institute of Canada, the Alberta Wheat Pool, the Anglican Church of Canada, British Columbia Packers, the Canadian Council of Clubs, the Canadian Friends' Service Committee, the Canadian Home Economics Association, the Canadian Labour Congress, the Canadian Red Cross Society, the Canadian Save the Children Fund, Coady International, the Cooperative Union of Canada, the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada, Johnson Wire Works, Caritas Sherbrooke, Oxfam Canada, and the United Church of Canada. See, Bunch, 190.

⁵² Ibid., 194.

⁵³ Ibid., 204.

though the disparities between developing nations themselves were intensifying. The UN, for instance, designated a new acronym for ‘less developed countries’ (LDC), to better identify nations with the majority of their populations living in absolute poverty.⁵⁴ Most notably with regard to focus, the apparent urban and industrial bias favoured by development agencies came under fire.⁵⁵ These things in mind, CHF took influential cues from the Freedom from Hunger Campaign and the Food and Agricultural Organization in their recommendations that development organizations promote specific trends, including encouraging peoples’ participation in their own development.⁵⁶ Specifically, the FFHC and FAO outlined the objective as the “stimulation and assistance in the formation of self-development programmes for people in rural areas and channelling of requests for assistance to them in these fields.”⁵⁷

Most relevant to Ford’s proposal, the FFHC’s new campaign recommended that projects should consider their long term consequences and encourage the on-going evaluation of their effectiveness; likewise, new projects should use “supporting rather than directive techniques.”⁵⁸ The GSHEC project aligned nicely with these concerns: the self-sustainability mandate spoke to the long term community impact, while Ford’s

⁵⁴ In his efforts to popularize the concept of absolute poverty amongst government agencies and NGOs, Robert McNamara, president of the World Bank, said of absolute poverty in 1973: “Absolute poverty is a condition of life so degraded by disease, illiteracy, malnutrition, and squalor as to deny its victims basic human necessities ... It is a condition of life so limited as to prevent the realization of the potential of the genes with which one is born; a condition of life so degrading as to insult human dignity – and yet a condition of life so common as to be the lot of some 40% of the peoples of the developing countries. And are not we who tolerate such poverty, when it is within our power to reduce the number afflicted by it, failing to fulfill the fundamental obligations accepted by civilized men since the beginning of time?” Robert McNamara, “Address to the Board of Governors”, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTARCHIVES/Resources/Robert_McNamara_Address_Nairobi_1973.pdf, (accessed February 13, 2010).

⁵⁵ David Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide: A History of CIDA and Canadian Development Assistance*, (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1998), 99.

⁵⁶ Bunch, 219.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 220.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 221.

earliest proposals made it clear she intended to work with the community in a partnered and cooperative manner.

Appointed in 1971, CHF's first Executive Director, Tim McCoy and Program Director Jal Ghadially were strong supporters of FFHC's recommendations and initiated five specific programs meant to guide CHF through the next decade: appropriate technology, agricultural and food production improvement, applied nutrition and food technology, rural development training and, lastly, support to NGOs in developing areas.⁵⁹ In line with Ford's intentions at GSHEC, the applied nutrition and food technology mandate sought to promote projects aimed at food production, processing, and preservation, especially those with a nutrition education element. Ford's GSHEC project not only addressed these direct concerns, but also strongly reflected FFHC recommendations regarding the importance of people's participation in their own development. In their efforts to "give maximum assistance to developing countries ... and to help those countries help themselves," CHF campaigned to Canadians in both the private and public sectors throughout the 1970s to get involved in overseas development initiatives and support the general work of the FAO and FFHC.⁶⁰ With a strong focus on nutritional education during the decade, CHF made it clear that in the fight against hunger, that is, educating those affected by malnutrition, was the best defence for developing nations. CHF also acted as an important liaison between government bodies such as CIDA and other Canadian NGOs regarding important development trends and overseas projects. For instance, in both 1973 and 1974, CHF was the only Canadian

⁵⁹ John Wenzel, "Report by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Mr. John Wenzel, to the Annual Meeting, 14 June 1974." MG 28-I395, Vol 54, file 101.10. 'Policy-Periodic Reports Vol III,' June 14, 1974: 1.

⁶⁰ CHF, "Annual Report for the Financial Year 1 April 73 to 31 Mar 74," MG 28-I395, Vol 54, file 101.10, 'Periodic Reports Vol III,' June 27, 1973: 1.

representation at the Interstate Committee of the seven drought stricken countries in Africa's Sahel region, and was CIDA's main informant on the results.⁶¹

An important transition took place at CHF at the beginning of the 1970s: in moving away from its once primary role as a fundraising organization, CHF claimed a more direct and influential role in partnering with overseas development projects. The 1970s were characterized most strongly by CHF's promotion of the education and participation of Third World nations' people in their own development. Ultimately, CHF was an important trailblazer for modern development programs in Canada; in cooperation with the FAO and FFHC, CHF was an early, and steadfast, supporter not only of the education of those affected most by malnutrition and hunger, but also of participatory development strategies. Batchelor recognized the suitability of Ford's project proposal for CHF's new focus; her strategic suggestion of partnered funding between CHF and CIDA highlighted the originality of GSHEC's participatory opportunities and certainly the relevance of Ford's anticipated nutrition education program. It was enough to not only convince both McCoy and Ghadially that GSHEC was indeed near flawlessly aligned with CHF's new initiatives, but also with Kenya's own development ambitions.

CIDA was similarly responsive to changes in development discourse throughout the 1970s. In the wake of public doubts regarding the validity of western aid efforts (especially in drought and famine stricken areas), the department faced increased scrutiny under the direction of the newly appointed President, francophone Paul Gerin-Lajoie, appointed in 1970 by Pierre Trudeau.⁶² Arguably remembered foremost for his innovative thinking, Gerin-Lajoie began his tenure by backing a thorough evaluation of Canada's

⁶¹ Bunch, 234.

⁶² Morrison, 99.

role in the international aid scene. His drive to make Canada a prominent force in overseas development fuelled an early reevaluation of CIDA's governing policies; Gerin-Lajoie's foremost concern was bringing the social objectives of development to the forefront of Canadian policy, rather than continuing to concentrate on the economic ones. The department focussed more intensely on how Canada could respond to the problems of the newly named LDCs; Gerin-Lajoie spearheaded a policy investigation that resulted in the prioritization and categorization of developing nations that was meant to better determine the priority with which their needs should be addressed.⁶³ Nicely in line with Ford's ambitions at GSHEC, Gerin-Lajoie was also eager to reevaluate just how the people of developing nations could be seen as participants in their own development, rather than as the target of Western development schemes, which had traditionally been the overwhelming case. Predominant amongst the concerns of the department's 1973 evaluation was the geographical distribution of funds; in line with CIDA's new concerns for country eligibility, a task-force was assembled in order to "render more explicit and systematic the assumptions and logical processes underlying decisions on eligibility and allocations, to disentangle and examine their development, political and commercial elements, and, finally, to illuminate and systematize future decisions."⁶⁴ The task force's final report strongly recommended that CIDA redistribute donor funds to result in a greater concentration amongst fewer recipient countries; it similarly encouraged the department to reduce the number of recipient countries to fifty by 1980. Countries with

⁶³ Ibid., 100.

⁶⁴ Canada, Canadian International Development Agency, "Report of Strategy Task Force on Eligibility," Strategy 1975-1980 Key Policy Papers, Vol 1, [Ottawa], September 1974: 13-14.

low GNP per capita, little to no revenue from oil sales, and demonstrated effectiveness in planning and implementing projects would be favoured.⁶⁵

Where programming was concerned, while the department upheld commitments to large capital-intensive projects, it also made room for smaller-scale projects in line with rural development and aimed at the achievement of basic human needs, as encouraged by the World Bank. The report also determined that prioritizing the channelling Canadian funds into housing, population, health and rural development would “improve the quality of Canadian development expertise and allow for a more rational and efficient use of Canadian resources.”⁶⁶ Point 17 of the final report also commented on the “diversity of channels”, declaring CIDA’s support for NGOs and the increasingly important role they played in initiating projects overseas. Perhaps where Ford is most concerned, the department made a strong commitment to engage and support public participation in Canadian development efforts, both overseas and at home. The final report pledged to “implement an improved and expanded program to ensure that the relevant information on all dimensions of international development is made available to the public” and specifically mentioned “individuals and voluntary non-profit organizations” as key targets of the public sphere.⁶⁷ In her earliest correspondence to CHF where GSHEC is concerned, Batchelor speaks carefully to these very ideas: she stresses to McCoy the potential of Ford’s project, explaining the appeal of its small-scale approach and its concern for the fulfilment of basic human needs in the Gatina region. Likewise, Batchelor explains to McCoy that Ford has secured the support and

⁶⁵ Morrison, 112.

⁶⁶ Canada, Canadian International Development Agency, *Canada: Strategy for International Development Cooperation 1975-1980*, [Ottawa], 1975: 31.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 36.

cooperation of Nairobi's Ministry of Cooperatives and Social Services, a strong selling point given CIDA's new guidelines on eligibility: "a very high priority must be placed on concentrating Canadian development cooperation in countries where there is a demonstrated commitment by their governments to development and to the efficient and equitable distribution of the benefits of development among their people."⁶⁸

Approving of a project based in Kenya would also have likely been appealing to CHF and CIDA given the amount of international attention the country had been receiving. By the time Batchelor had contacted McCoy in April 1973, the World Bank had announced their annual Board of Governors meeting to take place in Nairobi in September, 1973. The pre-eminence of India on the development scene at the time began to rapidly decrease in the wake of questions of aid effectiveness there, as well as the country's lessened dependence on external aid, giving way to a greater focus at CIDA on Africa, especially Commonwealth nations there, including Kenya.⁶⁹ CIDA support to both Anglophone and Francophone Africa had reached \$100 million each by 1975, and by the same time, nearly half of the agency's core programming took place there. While Gerin-Lajoie worked tirelessly to promote the importance of the social objectives of development, the agency's report to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 1974 was discouraging: "At the present time, there is no explicit requirement that project analysis

⁶⁸ Morrison, 120.

⁶⁹ Morrison, 123.

take into consideration questions of income distributions, employment, the role of women, etc. However, there is increased awareness of these issues.”⁷⁰

African Women in the Historical Record

Although Ford’s interpretations of the GSHEC project are present within the historical record, recovering the perspective of the Kenyan women involved in the project is a far more difficult task. Admittedly, there are very few primary sources from the Gatina women themselves that allow for a thorough investigation into their lived experiences at GSHEC. Needless to say, this poses a particular challenge for the historian interested in accessing their voices. For postcolonial scholars, historian Simon Gunn argues that the “recovery of the [colonized] subject” is an exceptionally frustrating and difficult task. Practitioners of Subaltern Studies, a branch of postcolonial theory predominantly concerned with the Indian colonial experience, are mainly devoted to the recuperation of historically marginalized voices, namely peasant classes and women.⁷¹ Largely regarded as a ‘founder’ of Indian postcolonial theory, Gayatri Spivak acknowledges the disciplinary voids regarding subaltern voices, but also highlights the ideological and philosophical difficulties in recovering their voices.⁷² She contends that sources about the subaltern were almost always filtered through the colonizer, and even those preserved from the native elite were unrepresentative of the subaltern subject.⁷³ Subaltern women are of particular concern for Spivak who believes that if male subaltern subjects are beyond effective historical recovery, then the combined effects of

⁷⁰ Canadian International Development Agency, *Annual Aid Review 1974: Memorandum to the Development Assistance Committee*, [Ottawa], 1974: 19.

⁷¹ Simon Gunn, *History and Cultural Theory*, (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2006), 167.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 170.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

colonialism and patriarchy have placed subaltern women “even more deeply in the shadow” of history.⁷⁴ This is highly important to consider when evaluating the documents regarding GSHEC: other than a set photographs there exists little evidence of the experiences of Kenyan women involved at GSHEC, and it is important to keep in mind that even this evidence was selected and presented to CHF and CIDA by Ford.

For Spivak, the “silence of omission” in colonial documents especially reveals the gendered power of colonial imposition and imperialism thereafter.⁷⁵ Therefore, subaltern scholars use silences in documents to determine who mattered, and how, under colonial rule. Presumptions and ignorance about native women allowed officials, at best, to discount women in documents and, at worst, to omit them entirely. As such, the subaltern woman is “absently present” in history: represented by others but never herself.⁷⁶

Political scientist and historian Beverly Grier suggests that African women, both during colonialism and post-independence, have been equally invisible to social historians, with attention only being paid in the last quarter of the twentieth century: “most scholars did not see them, in part because they assumed women to be passive, dependent, subordinate, and lacking in human agency.”⁷⁷ Rather than Western ones, current approaches to the study of African women are alternatively rooted in African feminist ethnographies and theories. For instance, the University of Ghana’s Akosua Ampofo et al., argue that African scholars are familiar with postmodernist debates, but cautions towards an overreliance on discourses of difference, “stressing the need to generate systematic evidence around issues that unify and create space for dialogue rather than confrontation

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 171.

⁷⁷ Beverly C. Grier, *Invisible Hands: Child Labor and the State in Colonial Zimbabwe*. (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2006), 7.

and difference.”⁷⁸ Such studies are effectively integrated with political concerns and public debates about post-independent nation building.⁷⁹ This arguably more holistic approach takes into account imperialism, race, class, ethnicity, and geographical differences but, most importantly, it explores the interactions between these factors.⁸⁰ The approach relates to this analysis insofar as it recognizes the importance of accounting for the interactions between elements of difference, and does not privilege the differences themselves. An analysis of GSHEC based on the distinctions between Ford and the women of Gatina would likely reveal the obvious differences that existed: race, class, and cultural values for instance. But to gain a better understanding of the failure of GSHEC, we must consider the ways in which these distinctions shaped interactions and were consequential throughout the two years that the centre was in operation.

Where development comes into early post-colonial development studies, Third World women, if considered at all, were deemed an impediment to the development process. Colonial discourse represented Third World women “as exotic specimens, as oppressed victims, as sex objects or as the most ignorant and backward members of ‘backward’ societies.”⁸¹ Collectively, colonial era missionaries, officials, and settlers produced a wealth of information, often infused with imagination and influenced by self-interest, describing Third World women as savage-like beings, bound by traditions of

⁷⁸ Akosua Ampofo, Josephine Beoku-Betts, Wairimu Ngaruiya Njambi, and Mary Osirim, “Women’s and Gender Studies in English-Speaking Sub-Saharan Africa.” *Gender and Society* 18, no. 6 (December 2004): 686.

⁷⁹ Ibid. See also, Amina Mama “Women’s studies and studies of women in Africa during the 1990s.” Working paper series 5 (96), (Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA, 1996); and Takyiwaa Manuh, “Higher education, condition of scholars and the future of development in Africa. (CODESRIA Bulletin 3, 2002): 42-48.

⁸⁰ Tuzyline Allan, “Feminist scholarship in Africa,” in *Women in African Studies*, ed. Cassandra Rachel Veney and Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2001): 72.

⁸¹ Joanna de Groot, “Conceptions and Misconceptions: The Historical and Cultural Context of Discussion on Women and Development,” in *Women, Development and Survival*, ed. H. Afshar, (London: Longman, 1991), 115.

their primitive tribes.⁸² For the most part, development planners adopted these assumptions uncritically; Third World women became an impediment to modernity and thus to development. As a result, plans and recommendations were designed on the assumption that 'productive' work was performed entirely by men. Beyond the recognition that women were responsible for producing the next generation of workers, they were effectively ignored as contributors to society.⁸³ These assumptions reflected western patriarchal patterns of ownership, work and control, which, although assuming western women were 'modern', in the sense of developed, still relegated them to a subordinate role in society, particularly in regard to economic and political matters.

Ultimately, the aforementioned scholars agree on several issues, centering on women's labour in particular. First, African women have been, and continue to be, engaged in both productive and reproductive labour, which differed significantly in various historical periods and parts of the continent. Furthermore, a gendered division of labour exists between women and men that has important roots in both precolonial African societies and the colonial period. Broadly speaking, scholars recognize this division in the devalued and invisible nature of women's work. While women's labour, especially agricultural, was a major component of many precolonial societies neither they nor their labour were recognized as equally valuable as men and men's labour. Alternatively, during the colonial period many Africanists recognize that an ideology of domesticity combined with modern capitalism to effectively exclude African women

⁸² See for instance, Karina Eileraas, "Reframing the Colonial Gaze: Photography, Ownership, and Feminist Resistance." *Modern Language Notes* 118, no. 1 (2003): 829; Brian Street, "British Popular Anthropology: Exhibiting and Photographing the Other," in *Anthropology and Photography: 1860 – 1920*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 123.

⁸³ Margaret Snyder and Mary Tadesse, *African Women and Development: A History*. (London: Zed Publications, 1995), 23.

from the formal sector.⁸⁴ This is certainly relevant in 1970s Gatina; the paradox of Ford's plan at GSHEC, however, gave women the opportunity for an employment position that would ultimately have them teaching other Kenyan women these same ideas of domesticity.

Understanding GSHEC as development

In itself, the Gatina Self-Help Health and Education Centre is an important case study of development in Kenya for its unique, albeit sometimes ambiguous, partnership between Kenyan women and the Canadian actors who intended to support their 'self-help'. Ultimately, Ford's project recognized a need in the Gatina community for the improvement in women's lives, as well it emphasized the importance of creating participatory, or for the purposes of this study, 'self-help' opportunities for local women in order to achieve and sustain this improvement. Despite the intense planning and proposal stages, however, the GSHEC project failed to achieve its goals and came to an abrupt end in early 1975. This study analyses the development and execution of the project in order to reveal the ways in which Ford's self-help and participatory strategies were, in fact, limited by both her individual management and the organizational administration coming from CIDA and CHF. Ford may have initially believed that the Centre could one day be self-sustaining, yet she was the very one who effectively prevented the circumstances necessary to allow the self-sustainability of the Centre to flourish with the Kenyan women with whom she worked. This study sees Ford as an especially important actor for her complex and continuously negotiated role in directing

⁸⁴ See Charmaine Pereira, "Locating gender and women's studies in Nigeria: What trajectories for the future?" Paper presented at the 10th General Assembly of CODESRIA, Africa in the New Millennium, (Kampala, Uganda, December 2002), http://www.codesria.org/Archives/ga10/papers_ga10_12/Gender_Pereira.htm. (accessed February 27, 2010).

the Centre; her letters and reports not only reveal her personal and private struggles while running the project, but also the challenges that emerged between herself and the Kenyan volunteers during her stay in Gatina. Essentially, the aim of the study is to trace the project from its initiation through its end to reveal important implications in its conception and proposal stages to reflect the changing development discourse and trends of the early 1970s, and furthermore, the ways in which Ford's vision for GSHEC was subtly, and even at times unaware that it was ahead of its time. Ultimately, however, the self-help foundation of the project that Ford professed to support was fatally compromised as her management eventually came to reinforce colonial ideals and stereotypes, all the while maintaining a facade that she was there to challenge them. This study believes strongly in the legitimacy of historical contextualization in development, and by extension, in anthropological, studies. GSHEC as an exceptional case that serves not only to examine the significant changes in discourse and development trends during the 1970s, but to also consider the potential implications of historical ignorance, arguably even the *decontextualization*, to which so many development strategies continue to subscribe. Finally, development strategies at the present-day Gatina Primary School are considered in order to reveal the important connections and consistencies in theory and practice, shedding light on the importance of historical awareness in such closely related development projects.

CHAPTER 1: THE PROMISE OF GSHEC: THE WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT MODEL & PARTICIPATORY STRATEGIES

The 1970s brought about a general frustration with development efforts in Third World countries, leading development planners and agencies to search for alternative strategies to address the growing problem of poverty and food crises. By the late 1960s economists were perplexed by the fact that development was not occurring as easily, and certainly not as quickly, as they had assumed it would. A number of scholars were particularly concerned by the continuing underdevelopment of the Third World and its impact on women, and thus recognition arose that Third World women were largely peripheral to the development efforts of major aid planners. In 1972, for instance, with the intention of encouraging the involvement of women in issues of economic development, the United Nations declared 1975 the International Women's Year, and the subsequent ten years, the UN Decade for Women. In her seminal 1970 book, *Women's Role in Economic Development*, economist Ester Boserup determined that western development projects, rather than improving the lives of impoverished women, actually deprived them of economic opportunities.¹ Modernization development schemes attempted to remove women from their traditional productive roles, particularly in agriculture where their labour was largely 'invisible' even when it fulfilled important functions in food production. While her argument assumes development is synonymous with economic progress, Boserup was innovative in her appeals to development planners and policymakers to recognize and account for how women, in both traditional and untraditional roles, could impact economic development; only then, she argued, would

¹ See Ester Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development*, (London: Earthscan Publications, 1970).

development occur in the Third World. If they were not already undermining women's economic opportunities, she discovered that most development projects ignored women entirely. Since technological training opportunities were predominantly offered to men, most modern development projects addressed the alleviation of male poverty and, as a result, often reduced women's access to new technologies and, subsequently, employment opportunities.² Boserup's study effectively challenged the assumption that development project benefits would automatically trickle down to women in Third World nations.

GSHEC in the Changing Discourse of Development

The 1970s brought about a host of changes in development discourse, of which the effect on Ford's work is quite clear. On the heels of Boserup's research, a subfield of development studies emerged from her assertion that "the recruitment of women to the modern sector helps to accelerate the growth of the economy beyond the rate attainable by the use of male labour alone."³ It is clear that Ford had a keen awareness of development trends and the changes that were on the horizon in the early 1970s: many of the foundational principles of her original proposal to CIDA reflect the significant changes in discourse. Specifically, her proposal strongly resembles the strategies of the Women in Development (WID) paradigm, which sought to draw upon liberal and feminist thought in order to find opportunities to integrate women into Third World male-dominated power structures.

² Patricia Connelly, Tania Murray Li, Martha MacDonald, and Jane Parpart, eds., "Feminism and Development: Theoretical Perspectives," in *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development*, eds., Jane Parpart et al, (Ottawa: International Development Research Center, 2000), 71.

³ Boserup, 211.

WID proponents initially focussed on women's equality by way of improved access to education, employment and material benefits such as land and credit. During the same wave, development planners were becoming increasingly aware of impediments to their assumptions, such as the world population crisis and the failure of the assumed trickle-down approach.⁴ It was becoming clear that development projects needed to prioritize the poorest of the poor and shift their focus to supplying them with basic human needs. Since women were crucial actors in population control, and often disproportionately represented amongst the poor, they became the logical object of concern for policy-makers and development planners. Research on women specifically increased amongst development organizations, and professional WID experts gained legitimate status in the "development bureaucracy."⁵

In 1985 for instance, The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published *Women in Kenya in the Decade of Development*, highlighting Kenya's development successes, specifically featuring women's efforts during the 1970s. The report is concerned foremost with women located in rural areas and their development efforts; it appears these activities garner greater recognition based on the seemingly greater obstacles they face: distance from marketplaces, limited access to technology, fewer income generating opportunities, and etcetera.⁶ When describing the specific and most prominent challenges to development, the report outlines three main obstacles for Kenyan women: funds, technical personnel, and market conditions. In reference to the

⁴ Eva Rathgeber, "WID, WAD, Gad: Trends in Research and Practice," *Journal of Developing Areas* 24 (1990): 491.

⁵ Adele Mueller, "The bureaucratization of development knowledge: The case of women in development," *Resources for Feminist Research* 15, no. 1 (1986): 4.

⁶ Muthoni Likimani, *Women of Kenya in the Decade of Development*, (Nairobi: Noni's Publicity, 1985), 4.

informal groups organized by Kenyan women, the report states that “it is evident they are a viable medium of hastening rural development through income generating activities, better farming techniques, home improvement schemes, cultural and social welfare activities.”⁷ The report, however, speaks very little to urban women’s activities, and even less to the influence of gender roles in the challenges it highlights. Likewise, there is not a single mention of men’s development, whether for comparative purposes or cooperative suggestions, in the report’s 78 pages.

While it is an excellent example of the changes in development discourse to take place through the 1970s, the report essentially accepts the domestic role of Kenyan women, and arguably African women in general. WID policy rhetoric is well reflected in the report’s concern in encouraging Kenyan women’s participation in development activities; the problem, however, lies in the report’s assumption that it is sufficient to support women in projects that effectively perpetuate the very social roles that contribute to their poverty. To support their argument, early WID advocates pointed to the fact that Third World women were not only ignored in traditional development plans, but that their economic situation had demonstrated little improvement over the years. WID proponent researchers and organizations steadfastly promoted the integration of women into existing development practice, however, under more or less orthodox notions of development.⁸ Integration and participation became the buzzword of development discourse during the 1970s, supported largely by the assumption that women’s lives would improve once they were integrated into development schemes.

⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁸ Gina Koczberski, “Women in Development: A Critical Analysis.” *Third World Quarterly* 19, no. 3, 1998: 396.

WID Ambitions at GSHEC

In her first funding proposal to CIDA, Ford submitted journal-style records explaining that she opened the Centre, officially, on January 25, 1972 on a plot of community owned land with a group of six African women, all of whom were chosen to assist Ford by the Village Committee, a group of Gatina locals mainly made up of village elders. The Centre would be open two days per week, on Mondays and Thursdays. She professed that she and the volunteers were “anxious to start proper classes on Child Care, Health and Nutrition as soon as possible, but working outside, on rough ground with no table or anywhere to put visual aids makes teaching very difficult.”⁹ After the recommendation of immediate funding following a visit to the project by Mr. Magale, the Principal Youth Officer at the Ministry of Co-operatives and Social Services on February 8, 1972, the Commissioner to the same Ministry agreed to allow CARE to provide materials for “a building which would be built on a self-help basis, calling on the harambee spirit of the community.”¹⁰ On February 10, Ford transcribed the goals of the then called Gatina Self-Help Project as follows:

1. To build a simple building as soon as possible; 2. To build a simple hut for educational purposes, demonstrating the advantages of a high fire place, simple furniture, a baby’s cot, and simple food cabinet; 3. To hold classes in Child Care, Simple Anatomy, Nutrition, Health and Cleanliness; 4. To run a small clinic, where people can get immediate help, and to fight disease through inoculations as well as Health Teaching; 5. To introduce talks and films on Family Planning; 6. To have a doctor visit once a

⁹ M. E. Ford, “Gatina Self-Help Health Education Project Report,” 1973: 2. Attached to, Sheila Batchelor, Letter to Tim McCoy, April 27, 1973. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200). Ford signs her letters as M. E. Ford, but is exclusively referred to as Topsy or Mrs. Ford by those at CIDA and CHF.

¹⁰ Ibid., 3.

week.¹¹

Ford makes a strong appeal near the end of the report for any clothing or household goods that she and her volunteers might be able to sell for a profit, as they have no income; activities and toys for the children are requested. Professing her dedication, she concludes by promising that she will continue her efforts “whatever the odds because the friendship and trust that these people give is overwhelming, but if we can look ahead, knowing that our hopes may be realized it would be a wonderful thing.”¹²

Some challenges found in specific elements of WID discourse were also present at GSHEC. While many WID influenced development schemes began to incorporate women as specific actors in the early 1970s, the issue of women’s *participation* in these plans was among the most problematic of the strategies’ tenets. Social anthropologist Andrea Cornwall describes participatory development as a strategy aimed at creating various opportunities for participation in conventional development activities, largely represented by enlistment in consultation and implementation of policies and planning.¹³ During the early 1970s, the strategy essentially concerned “the exercise of agency in relation to development ... seeing participation [in development] as a right of citizenship, and as a means of challenging marginalization,” and was heavily influenced by critiques of mainstream development’s exclusionary and homogenizing tendencies.¹⁴ During the first operating week at GSHEC, Ford describes that she and the six African volunteers

¹¹ Ibid., 3-4.

¹² Ibid., 3-4.

¹³ Andrea Cornwall, “Whose voices? Whose choices? Reflections on gender and participatory development.” *World Development* 31, no. 8 (2003): 1325-1342.
1326.

¹⁴ Sam Hickey and Giles Mohan, “Towards participation as transformation: critical themes and challenges,” in *Participation: from tyranny to transformation?*, eds., Sam Hickey and Giles Mohan, (London: Zed Books, 2004), 9.

made *uji*, a dish consisting of cornmeal, high protein milk powder, eggs and sugar for 13 local mothers, 17 ‘old ladies’, and 60 children and infants on a very limited budget.¹⁵ The eligibility on which the volunteers were selected is never described by Ford, and beyond their residency in Gatina, a description of the six women is never provided. With special attention to women’s roles in development projects, Cornwall emphasizes the importance of recognizing their marginalization and exclusion, cautioning scholars and development planners to be aware of the limits placed on women’s project involvement. It is important to note here that Ford’s distinction between ‘mothers’ and ‘old ladies’ is among the very few references made to the different roles women had in Gatina, and although this points to Ford’s likely sophisticated understanding of the social relations in the region, it also effectively highlights the *absence* of any interrogation of gender roles within the community in the project’s conception or its execution.

The very participatory techniques proposed at GSHEC are not without critique. Cornwall recognizes that early participatory development strategies were all too often ignorant of opportunities to create genuine possibilities for individuals to gain an awareness of their rights and ‘be heard.’ Instead, there is a tendency, as in the case of GSHEC, for planners who use participatory techniques to assume the enlistment and mere involvement of women as a sufficient indicator of their contribution, regardless of whether or not they had any real influence in the project. The emphasis, then, is on the number of women involved, rather than the effectiveness of their involvement, and so gives little attention to opportunities for informed decisions. This neglect would become one of the most significant weaknesses of Ford’s planning at GSHEC.

¹⁵ Ford, “Gatina Self-Help Health Education Project Report,” 1973: 2.

Furthermore, we see important implications in the rhetoric of including ‘women’ under the umbrella concept of ‘the community’ at GSHEC: even attempts to distinguish the women based on age ignore important socioeconomic indicators that differentiate their experiences. Without describing, much less interrogating, the process in place at GSHEC for determining participation in the project, or who should benefit from the Centre’s services, in her first letter to McCoy, Batchelor explains that “The local people have been extensively involved in the conception and implementation of the project. The project is designed to serve those most in need of the services provided and it has been the Village Council which has selected the participants.”¹⁶ Regardless of who comprises the Village Council, Batchelor paints a picture of a participatory based project, a new and innovative idea; she assures McCoy that the project has invited the participation of the Gatina community and that the locals themselves have chosen who should benefit from the Centre’s services. Her comments reiterate that the project remains in Ford’s control, but is effectively informed by the local community, demonstrating the capacity for development in Gatina, *with* Western support. Bringing the focus back to the integration of the local women involved in the project, Batchelor describes to McCoy that “the staff, at present, is composed of African women and expatriate volunteers, with the exception of one part-time adult educator who is being paid by the Ministry of Cooperatives and Social Services of the government of Kenya.”¹⁷ In her own proposal to CIDA, Ford accounted for eight African ‘working mothers’ who were said to have been assisting her from the beginning: “the gradual involvement of working mothers and paid teachers

¹⁶ Batchelor, Letter to Tim McCoy, April 27, 1973: 2.

¹⁷ Ibid.

could make the project self-supporting from a staff point of view.”¹⁸ To prove the legitimacy of GSHEC in the eyes of not only the women involved, but the Gatina community at large, Ford explains that,

the project is approved by the City Council Community Development Department. The local administration supports the project and the District Officer for the area is the Chairman of the Management Committee which also includes the location Chief and Elders. The Elders jointly own the land which was donated for the Project and its building.¹⁹

In stressing the local support for project, Batchelor finally highlights the strengths the harambee philosophy is contributing to the Centre’s success. Indeed, she professes to McCoy a second time that “the involvement of Kenyans in all phases of the project is most impressive,” and borrows directly from Ford’s original funding application when describing “the terms self-help and harambee have a particular meaning in Kenya. Self-help labour is that given free or almost free by the local people ... This project was directly favoured by the national Commissioner for Social Services. ‘Harambee!’ is the national motto.”²⁰

Critiques of the Women in Development Model

Traditional modernization development approaches gave little consideration to the social and political impacts of economic growth and arguably much less to the interests of the communities which they were targeting.²¹ Yet WID advocates encouraged governments and aid organizations to devise strategies that would integrate women into this very framework. When integration strategies for women first emerged in the 1970s,

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 3.

²¹ Mueller, 7.

justification for the change was based on the belief that women would be able to participate in their development best through economic activities.²² However, integration strategies made the assumption that women were not already participating in development in any capacity, “thereby concealing and devaluing women’s existing roles in informal economic and political activities and household production.”²³ Development organizations saw women’s work in agriculture, informal markets, the community, and in the home as essentially outside the domain of what they considered development. Because modernization theory measures development based on a country’s Gross Domestic Product, it only accounts for formal sector activities. And since Third World women were not visibly contributing to the formal economy, they were effectively invisible in development. As a result, Third World women were considered both unproductive and under-utilized. As a result, women’s work and daily life was largely, and detrimentally, neglected even by WID rhetoric. In ignoring the value of women’s work in roles *outside* traditional economic spheres, WID practitioners effectively suffered from the very problem they were attempting to challenge: the on-going invisibility of women’s diverse roles.

More importantly, the use of the universal stereotypical image of Third World women as powerless and ignorant legitimized an approach that saw them in need of assistance, yet with little to contribute to development planning. In an effort to challenge this, WID integration strategies throughout the 1970s addressed the problem that Third World women had been denied genuine participation in development projects. However,

²² Elise Boulding, “Integration into what? Reflections on development planning for women,” in *Women and Technological Change in Developing Countries*, eds., Roselyn Dauber and Melinda Cain, (Boulder: Westview, 1980), 54.

²³ Koczberski, 399.

WID project planning aimed at integrating women into development projects continued to maintain women's restricted involvement as for the most part, projects remained externally operated and controlled. Typically, WID integration efforts were characterized on the assumption that, only through the administrative and financial assistance of Western donor agencies could Third World women be given opportunities to access economic self-advancement. Thus, WID integration efforts not only ignored the realities of women's lives, but Western stereotypes of Third World women fostered an approach that gave women little control over how, even whether, they were to be integrated into development projects.²⁴ Categorizing Third World women as an undifferentiated group fosters a view that they all have the same needs and are equally disadvantaged.

Development researcher Gina Koczberski reminds us that such assumptions ignore the diversity of women's lives and overlook differences in wealth, power and status between women that are attributable to factors such as class, caste, and marital status. Koczberski infers that it is possible that the reason why WID practice overlooked the important inequalities between women stemmed largely in part from its emphasis on integrating women, and its priority on gender inequalities over other inequalities.²⁵ Yet, by ignoring the inequalities between women, WID planning aimed at providing participatory opportunities for Third World women was flawed from the outset since it was based on the notion of common needs.²⁶ In this way, WID projects actually risked reinforcing inequalities between the women they were targeting.

²⁴ Ibid., 401.

²⁵ Ibid., 402.

²⁶ Linda Mayoux, "Beyond naivety: women, gender inequality and participatory development," *Development and Change* 26, no. 2 (1995): 244.

While highlighting diversity amongst women is an important consideration for development studies, this study recognizes that there are also socioeconomic characteristics common amongst them. Historically, African women especially have been responsible for the majority of burdensome domestic responsibilities, and comprise the majority of the poorest populations on the continent. Yet these generalizations cannot be assumed to apply in a similar way everywhere, nor should they serve to replace micro-studies even in small communities like Gatina. Koczberski cautions that while macro-studies are suitable to provide a general view of a particular problem, they often distort our understanding of specific contexts if accepted uncritically.²⁷ Therefore, in many ways WID integration efforts arguably never went beyond merely recognizing women in project planning rather than implementing policies that demonstrated evidence of more detailed analyses of women's circumstances in a variety of Third World countries.

Participation at GSHEC: The Problem of an ill-defined Self-Help project

Ultimately, many of the critiques of WID are also applicable at GSHEC. For CIDA and CHF, Ford's inclusion of women in a labour capacity at GSHEC was a sufficient participatory strategy, even if the selection of the volunteers and clients was never effectively interrogated. As development theorist Irene Tinker notes, studies by development agencies are typically foremost concerned with "influencing program directions or policy decisions," not necessarily with the intent to discover more about Third World women's needs and concerns.²⁸ In her early correspondence with CHF, Sheila Batchelor explained that GSHEC was "essentially an experimental project ...

²⁷ Koczberski, 401.

²⁸ Irene Tinker, *Persistent Inequalities: Women and World Development*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 12.

attempting to deal with a group of the most disadvantaged citizens in Nairobi.”²⁹ While she cautioned McCoy that the project’s success was not a guarantee, the risks associated were worthwhile since the benefits could be well repeated in similar situations. It is clear in her first letters to McCoy that Batchelor is careful in her presentation of Ford’s aspirations at Gatina; in describing the experimental nature of the Centre, Ford associates many of Ford’s principles to the changing trends in development at the time. In her description of the small team of staff at GSHEC, Batchelor paints a clear picture of a Centre aimed at, and run by, women. However, she is very careful to credit Ford as the foundation of the project’s success: Batchelor explains she “was impressed by [Ford’s] knowledge of the issues of development and by the amount which she has been able to accomplish on a very little budget by working closely with the local people.”³⁰ Batchelor professes to McCoy that GSHEC “I think this is an excellent type of project ... because it offers people-to-people contact which larger projects sometimes do not. Also ...it’s philosophically a good project for introducing development to a group.”³¹ Implicit in Batchelor’s persuasion is both the idea that Ford is an essential crux to this project’s success and also that the women of Gatina would be unable to initiate or sustain such a project without Ford’s and, by extension, CIDA’s and CHF’s intervention. In her suggestion that GSHEC is well suited to *introduce* development to Gatina, however, Batchelor overlooks the important aspect of Ford’s deliberate adaptation of Kenya’s harambee philosophy. In other words, the notion of improvement through self-help had a solid cultural foundation in Kenya, one that predated any attempts at Western development. Ford only considered the literal meaning of the movement, without concern

²⁹ Batchelor, Letter to Tim McCoy, April 27, 1973: 1-2.

³⁰ Ibid., 2.

³¹ Ibid.

for its sociopolitical implications, and, largely as an appealing proposal strategy to suggest a sophisticated understanding of Kenyan development.

Preoccupied with modernization, WID policy tended to focus foremost on women's roles as food producers and largely ignored their domestic labour roles. In this way WID policy rarely engaged with the causes of women's subordination. WID proponents continued working within the confines of the modernization paradigm: they assumed that development was best measured by the adoption of Western technologies, institutions, and values and thus largely ignored the potentials of local knowledge. The innovation of the strategy was in asking how women could be integrated into the development process.³² Associated with the view that African women's status would improve if they were given productive employment opportunities was the implicit assumption that women must move *from* the traditional sector to the modern sector to achieve this improvement.³³ Koczberski highlights that such a view is predicated on two important assumptions: "the modern sector is socially progressive and a necessary precursor to self-advancement, and traditional work roles are inhibiting to self-development."³⁴ That these assumptions also reflect tenets of modernization theory suggests that WID, instead of offering an alternative approach to 1960s development discourse, remained embedded in existing mainstream development policies. Arguably, the resemblance of integration strategies and modernization theory extends to other

³² Parpart, et al., "Feminism and Development: Theoretical Perspectives," in *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development*: 72.

³³ Rhoda Reddock, "Why Gender? Why Development?" in *Theoretical Perspectives on Gender and Development*, eds. Jane Parpart, et al. (Ottawa: IDRC, 2000), 26.

³⁴ Koczberski, 399.

flaws: both recognize development as a linear process, and deem modern things as advanced and traditional things, backward.³⁵

Although Ford applied many WID assumptions in her project, the focus of GSHEC was somewhat different. Because GSHEC was aimed at urban women, rather than the trendy rural focus of the early 1970s, Ford's project presents an ironic ambition. While she is attempting to give Gatina's women access to income generating activities as well as education, the Centre concentrates entirely on domestic themes: childcare, health, and nutrition. Paradoxically then, Ford is less concerned with Gatina's women as producers in her attempt to improve their socioeconomic conditions by encouraging the continuation, and arguably the intensification, of their traditional domestic roles. While local foods are used for the nutrition program, Ford's lessons in the benefits of dairy products were no doubt grounded in Western knowledge; likewise, her child rearing advice would have differed vastly from Kenyan tradition.

For GSEHC to be successful, CHF and CIDA both saw Ford as a necessary component; Gatina's self-help was possible, but not without Western intervention. After concentrating on Ford's efforts early in her letter, Batchelor continues to convince CHF Director McCoy of the potential of GSHEC by giving credence, albeit limited, to the citizens of Gatina: "Within the area there is inevitable conflict between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', but there is a hard core of people who know that there is a better way of living and want to do something about it."³⁶ Again, she seemingly suggests that although their intentions are good, any hopes of development in the area are slim without Western assistance. Stressing the importance of women in the project, Batchelor describes that this

³⁵ Reddock, 75.

³⁶ Batchelor, Letter to Tim McCoy, April 27, 1973: 2.

hard core of people “are generally very poor and are represented foremost by the ‘working mothers’.”³⁷ Her descriptions do well to convince McCoy that the potential for success at GSHEC is high, especially with this group of women determined to ‘do something about’ their circumstances. All that they need of course, is Western support. There is little mention of the history of the area beyond geographic descriptors, and beyond the repetitive use of ‘poor’, even less regarding the social and economic conditions in which the women live. And finally, while Batchelor does attest that the women’s “influence is basic but crucial ... even in this crumbling society,” she neglects to infer any details on the women’s capacity to influence the project or the community, or the ways in which this influence manifests at GSHEC.³⁸ Essentially, as Batchelor saw it, development for African women throughout the 1970s meant becoming both more western and modern, rather than engaging directly with the social and historical conditions of their poverty. African women were presented strategically in WID rhetoric, their needs identified by ‘experts’ rather than by themselves. In this way, women’s control over their own development was largely restricted. The impact of this approach on GSHEC is clear, yet there is evidence of an awareness of some of problems surrounding the strategies, especially by Batchelor.

Even at this early stage, Batchelor admits that “the major weakness of the project lies in its reliance upon volunteer help, both Kenyan and expatriate.”³⁹ Though she cushions the warning by reassuring McCoy that Ford “is well aware of the necessity of making the project as self-supporting as possible,” she is careful to demonstrate the necessity of CIDA and CHF’s involvement: “the project will either have to rely on

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 3.

outside funds in order to be able to make a substantial contribution to the community or else cut back its programme to a very limited scale.”⁴⁰ Finally, to reiterate the self-sustainability Ford was aiming to achieve at the Centre, Batchelor explains that “if the project can prove its worth to the community [it is the hope] that the government will eventually be persuaded to provide full-time personnel and funds for salaries.”⁴¹ Linking GSHEC to the changes in Western development discourse, Batchelor explains to McCoy that “The [Kenyan] Government is interested in this project as a people-based attempt at Health Education ... and beyond as a model for development.”⁴² Aside from the implicit suggestion of improving bi-lateral relations between Canada and Kenya, Batchelor highlights the potential for participatory based projects on a larger scale. In this way she presents GSHEC as experimental, yet exceptionally promising for development planning elsewhere in Africa.

On June 10, 1973, in a letter from Ford to McCoy thanking him for CHF’s \$11,764 donation to GSHEC, she provides an update on the project:

We have classes for women on nutrition and baby care, physical exercises, country dances and basketball. The women make baskets, and the old women make patchwork quilts. Often whilst they are working they listen to a talk on family planning. Adult literacy classes are being held on Tuesday and Friday afternoons, and the small children attend a play school, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings. A special nutrition diet is being worked out by nursing volunteers for the more serious cases of malnutrition every Monday and Thursday Morning and we work in conjunction with health centres and hospitals.⁴³

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 2.

⁴³ M. E. Ford, Letter to McCoy, June 10, 1973. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 1.

In addition, Ford arranged to have CHF's donation presented formally by the Canadian High Commissioner in Kenya, W.A.M. Olivier, to Nairobi's Mayor, Margaret Kenyatta, a few months later. In a press release from CIDA following the ceremony, Olivier was said to have commended the volunteer work being done by the Centre "in a 'harambee' program of improved child nutrition, distribution of food to small children and the aged, and "most importantly education in health and child-care for working women."⁴⁴

Furthermore, the press release conveyed CIDA's hope that the financial contribution would assist GSHEC in its aim of "serving the basic needs of those working mothers and the aged who are most in need of such services."⁴⁵ They described CHF briefly in its mandate to give "maximum assistance to developing countries ... with a view to helping these countries help themselves." Skilfully speaking to the new discourse, the press release describes CHF programs operating on the fundamental principle of local participation, believing firmly that input in the form of cash, goods and services from the recipient country is the best guarantee of dignity and pride for them, and, also goes a long way in ensuring the success of the project."⁴⁶ In his speech at the cheque presentation Olivier commented:

This contribution is a token of appreciation from Canadians in all walks of life to the 'harambee' movement of social and economic development, of which this project can well be a model. I am particularly impressed by the volunteer and selfless spirit of the local and expatriate staff of the Centre, and the substantial contribution it is making to the local community by way of welfare services and health and nutrition education programmes

⁴⁴ Canadian Hunger Foundation, "Press Release: Gatina Self-Help Centre Gets Aid from Canada," (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: G28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200, July 11, 1973): 1.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1.

for the needy sections of society. I am sure the Centre will continue to provide and improve upon this service.⁴⁷

Olivier is no doubt aware of the importance of harambee in Kenya, and understands both the social and political benefits in associating GSHEC with the local development philosophy. Perhaps it is not coincidental that CIDA's press release mirrors President Kenyatta's speech quoted earlier.⁴⁸

In July 1973, Batchelor made her second trip to visit Ford at GSHEC, and while her formal report describes that upon her arrival the Centre was continuing to provide the services Ford had previously described to McCoy, the project was facing rather significant difficulties. Batchelor's usual optimistic and supportive tone is noticeably absent in the last sections of the report. She describes that while during her first visit to GSHEC in November 1972, she had the impression that GSHEC's Management Committee was playing a fairly strong and active role. Yet this time, Batchelor felt the committee was a much weaker component of the Centre than she had originally thought: "its composition is a weird assortment of local people, some of whom belong to the 'have' classes of Gatina and who, therefore, represent some of the stronger opposition to the project."⁴⁹ In terms of the participation at the Centre from a services point of view, Batchelor attested that GSHEC's mandate of catering to the neediest of the Gatina area was flawed on account of the Management Committee. In an area like Gatina where even the wealthiest "are extremely poor," explains Batchelor, attempting to serve the needs of

⁴⁷ "Speech by the Canadian High Commissioner at the Cheque Presentation Ceremony," (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: G28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 1.

⁴⁸ See, Kenyatta, *Harambee: The Prime Minister's Speeches*, 7.

⁴⁹ Batchelor, "Note to File. GATINA SELF-HELP HEALTH EDUCATION CENTRE, NAIROBI." July 18, 1973, (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: G28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 1.

the most destitute “has created some friction.”⁵⁰ Batchelor’s report described in detail the “constant complaints” by women not selected by the Management Committee as qualifying for GSHEC’s services, believing they too deserved the benefits of the project. For instance, Batchelor witnessed this most profoundly in the classes for pre-school children held each afternoon: “the Centre is physically located beside a nursery school (about 10 yds. away) where the children pay 5 shillings per term for tuition. Some parents question why they have to pay while others get similar things for nothing.”⁵¹ Apparently, Ford’s answer was two-fold, though largely unsatisfactory: firstly, she explained that the afternoon classes provided an opportunity for the children to receive a nutritious meal, and secondly, Ford justified the Management Committee’s selection by explaining that this was most likely the only education the children would ever have.

In April 1975 however, Ford described the following to the Canadian High Commissioner’s Office in Nairobi:

The Centre has been closed since Christmas 1974 due to a lack of food, disagreements in the Management Committee (a continuing factor over the last 3 years), and the absence of any one to teach health education or take any responsibility whatsoever for running the Project ...⁵²

On May 2, 1975, Ford wrote to CHF to officially announce her resignation as GSHEC’s Project Director. With little explanation for her decision beyond her suffering health, Ford suggested the remaining funds “should be used for another more deserving project, or returned to CHF.”⁵³ She justifies her recommendation based on her confidence that no volunteer was prepared to undertake the responsibilities of the project and the likelihood

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² M.E. Ford, Letter to B.G. Hankey, April 11, 1975. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 1.

⁵³ M.E. Ford, Letter to John Kortright, May 2, 1974. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 2.

that “if the money was turned over to the administration in the area it would be used unwisely and certainly not for the poor people of Gatina.”⁵⁴ By June 1975, the remaining CIDA funds were returned to the High Commissioner’s Office and the CHF funds were turned over to Nairobi’s City Council of Community Development Department. Ford left Nairobi for Vancouver the same month. With regard to the project’s participatory principles, GSHEC project failed to evaluate the important distinctions between the women in Gatina. It is clear that Ford recognized an important characteristic of the community when making the distinction between ‘mothers’ and ‘old ladies’, but the roles are never formally nor effectively interrogated. Here we recognize Cornwall’s earlier caution: GSHEC homogenized Gatina’s women under the umbrella of ‘the community’ and, at best, identified them as a cohesive group without attention paid to their individual circumstance, whether that be old age, single motherhood, multiple family households or otherwise.

The issue of participation and control over development is an important one where GSHEC is concerned, as the late Elise Boulding remarked, rather than questioning how women can be “integrated into development, the question should have been what do women want?”⁵⁵ Her remark reveals how the women at GSHEC were given little say in the conception of the project despite the early reports of impressive local participation. While WID strategies may have offered a different approach to planning and implementing development, Koczberski recognizes that it was not an alternative strategy to mainstream development unto itself since “its concepts, strategies and perspectives on development remain welded to the existing Western-dominated development

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Boulding, 58.

framework.”⁵⁶ Although WID efforts did encourage the necessary and overdue recognition of women’s role in development and gave roots to ‘gender-aware’ development planning, the flawed concept of integration and participation limited any lasting benefits. WID practice assumed that in overcoming male-bias in development planning women would automatically benefit more from development programs. In accepting this approach to the problems experienced by Third World women, development organizations and many WID advocates largely ignored the historical context of development. Furthermore, in failing to be self-critical, they continued to support fundamental flaws inherent in Western development thought and overlooked the unique social contexts of women’s lives in developing countries.⁵⁷ Ultimately, the integration of women into development schemes throughout the 1970s was based on the narrow principle that development’s foremost flaw was that it was male-biased. From this premise WID proponents assumed that a more gender-aware approach to development planning would be successful in delivering economic, and by extension social, benefits to Third World women.

Conclusion

Whether well-intentioned or misinformed, and despite Ford’s efforts to support and sustain GSHEC in its original mandate, the Kenyan women at the Centre were likely disinclined to ‘take over’ GSHEC largely as a result of the lack of meaningful participatory strategies aimed at this effective transfer of responsibility. While the organizing policies of Ford’s GSHEC project seemed to suggest a deviation from these

⁵⁶ Koczberski, 396.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 397.

innovative yet flawed WID assumptions, proposing that women *could* actively and productively contribute to their own development, it fell far short of avoiding them in practice. WID based projects focused largely on modernizing Third World women, rather than on understanding their circumstances and experiences. The ways in which Ford's proposal went above and beyond typical WID rhetoric was its appeal; the Centre was optimistic, ambitious and innovative on paper. Indeed, Cornwall reminds us that "fine-sounding words used in development policies do more than provide a sense of direction: they lend the legitimacy that development actors need to justify their interventions."⁵⁸ In early 1973, Ford's genuine interest in recognizing and responding to the needs of Gatina's women would have been difficult to ignore from an aid organization's point of view. In initiating a project aimed at their education *and* the creation of employment opportunities, Ford's proposal provided solutions to both problems. It was evident that Ford recognized and was responding to the needs of the women in Gatina; she understood that their access to income generating activities was limited indefinitely so long as they lacked the educational resources that would support such development. Likewise, Ford drew on her own knowledge and resources in order to implement a program that addressed the most crucial and basic health needs of Gatina's women: child care and nutrition. The multiple ways in which her proposed project aligned itself with changing development trends was exceptionally appealing to CIDA and CHF; even better was that the project was wedded to Kenya's own development philosophies, making the partnership between Western participatory based development strategies and local self-help ones seem exceptionally promising. Beyond WID rhetoric and the impressive plans

⁵⁸ Andrea Cornwall & Karen Brock, "What do buzzwords do for development policy? A critical look at 'participation,' 'empowerment' and 'poverty reduction,'" *Third World Quarterly* 26, no. 7 (2005): 1045.

for women's participation, Ford's intentions for the GSHEC project actually transcended the model's discourse in a few important ways. GSHEC made a commitment to identifying the "basic needs" of these women, another new development buzzword to emerge in the early 1970s. The project proposed the involvement of local women in identifying their needs and in seeking ways of meeting these needs, yet the control that Ford maintained over the implementation of the project effectively prevented the successful fulfillment of those needs on a self-sustainable level.

CHAPTER 2: OUTSIDER EXPERTS, INSIDER PARTICIPATION:

DETERMINING & FULFILLING NEEDS IN GATINA

Though it did address innovative changes in development discourse, GSHEC was faced with many of the challenges typical of WID-based projects. Essentially, while WID policy remained within the modernization paradigm it did emphasize a fundamental difference: addressing the concept of basic human needs, with particular regard to food supply, health, housing, and to some degree, education. While arguably these pillars had always been relatively important components in traditional development planning, the typical measures of development success and failure throughout the 1960s focussed on top-down implementation and, as mentioned, were based heavily on economic indicators like GNP. In the early 1970s, development discourse began to adopt a relatively more complex consideration of social, economic, and political factors in order to work towards the fulfillment of the basic human needs (BHN). Early BHN rhetoric began to enhance development planners' understanding of women's needs, particularly the need to improve statistical measures of various women's work and to provide women with adequate opportunities for education and employment.⁸⁴ WID specialists also adopted this approach, targeting poor women and their basic human needs as the primary goals of WID policies, especially arguing that fulfilling basic needs would increase women's labour productivity, presumably assisting both economic development and the improvement of women's lives. Development planners also called for more credit, greater access to land, legal reform and of course, for increased female participation in development planning. Emphasis on women's basic needs helped spawn early concepts

⁸⁴ Parpart, et al., "Feminism and Development: Theoretical Perspectives," 58.

of development ‘from the bottom up’ by criticizing the lack of local self-determination of needs and self-help, or participatory based projects in meeting the needs of the poorest of the poor. The concept of BHN was perhaps most strongly developed and supported in the early 1970s by the World Bank president, Robert McNamara. He steadfastly encouraged development organizations and aid agencies to make commitments to planning and policies that prioritized addressing basic human needs of those in the poorest countries.⁸⁵ Although the Bank clearly defined BHN to include “productive employment, adequate nutrition, clean drinking water, shelter, primary health care, and basic education,” the concept was difficult to define in practise.⁸⁶ As is the fault with many development discourse trends, BHN was often used to simply re-label typical development policies; yet it did serve to effectively instate poverty reduction among the foremost goals of development assistance.⁸⁷ As a result of the push for innovative bottom-up approaches during the 1970s, aid organizations and donors became receptive to the often illegitimatised smaller-scale projects with participatory and self-help focuses. As was the case at GSHEC, however, participatory based projects continued to involve Third World women on a minimal level, despite their pro-women rhetoric. Amongst the most significant inherent problems with the participatory approaches of the 1970s was the premise that a consensus regarding needs and goals amongst the beneficiaries was easily achieved. Not surprisingly, this assumption overlooked the difficulties that came with defining needs in the first place, and ignored the potential that a flawed determination of women’s needs restricted the potential success of project execution and thus the fulfillment of those needs.

⁸⁵ Morrison, *Aid and Ebb Tide*, 102.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Ford's awareness of WID policy and the up and coming concept of BHN were made clear in her early proposals to CIDA. The very purpose of GSHEC is defined by Ford "to serve the basic needs of poor people in an outlying squatter area of Nairobi," and speaks directly to the indicators as defined by the World Bank. In her original proposal to CIDA, Ford described four main aspects of the Centre: a health education program, a medical clinic, a general education program (including domestic skills, literacy and numeracy), and, finally, welfare services.⁸⁸ Her plans effectively mirrored the World Bank's defined indicators of BHN: GSHEC represented an opportunity for local women to receive a basic education, knowledge about proper nutrition, access to primary health care, clean water, and eventually, productive employment. However, as economist Amartya Sen argues, what makes development concepts valuable is precisely that which gives it broad-based appeal; to have that appeal, concepts need to resonate with those who work in development and speak about *their* preoccupations, their hopes, their values, and not necessarily those of the beneficiaries.⁸⁹ Only short of offering these women shelter, GSHEC is arguably an all-in-one package from an organizational perspective, incorporating major trends in rhetoric, and addressing major concerns in planning and policy. Yet in all its promise and potential, the major neglect of Ford's plans at GSHEC was not so much in assuming the needs that she defined were appropriate, but in overlooking the lived experiences of these women that would, in fact, prevent their anticipated commitment to the eventual self-sustainability of the Centre. Using relevant and convincing buzzwords, Ford made it clear in her proposals and reports that GSEHC intended to, and did, address pressing issues in the slum community, and

⁸⁸ Batchelor, Letter to Tim McCoy, April 27, 1973: 2.

⁸⁹ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (New York: Knopf, 1999): 156.

although the Centre saw important accomplishments such as clean water and improved community health, it effectively failed to achieve self-sustainability for having not considered the *causes* of these women's socioeconomic underdevelopment, instead only addressing the symptoms of it. This chapter will reveal the greatest challenges faced at GSHEC, including the consequences of neglecting to address the root causes of poverty in the community, especially where women were concerned, the difficulty of empowering women, and actively engaging with local knowledge so as to support and benefit the project.

The GSHEC Approach to Working with Women

Indeed, the WID approach to basic needs, as employed at GSHEC, neglected to challenge gender hierarchies and effectively ignored the possibility that women's development might require fundamental social change.⁹⁰ Political sociologist Maxine Molyneux presents an extension of BHN in her explanation of the concept of 'practical and strategic' gender needs. According to Molyneux, gender needs in general "are those that women (or men, for that matter) may develop by virtue of their social positioning through gender attributes", and she identifies two gender needs in particular: practical and strategic.⁹¹ Practical gender needs are determined by the empirical conditions of women's social and economic positioning; women themselves determine their practical needs rather than an external intervention acting as the determinant. As such, common practical needs are water, shelter and food, since these are immediate but do not

⁹⁰ Ampofo, et al., "Women's and Gender Studies in English-Speaking Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review of Research in the Social Sciences," 688.

⁹¹ Maxine Molyneux, "Mobilization without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua," *Feminist Studies* 11, no. 2 (1985): 232. She adapts this theory from Caroline Moser. See, Caroline Moser, *Gender planning and development: theory, practice and training*. (New York: Routledge, 1993).

necessarily address strategic goals such as gender equality.⁹² In contrast, strategic needs are directly related to women's socioeconomic and political subordination and to the potential for relevant interventions. Therefore, Molyneux identifies possible strategic needs "such as the abolition of the sexual division of labour, the alleviation of the burden of domestic labour and childcare, the removal of institutionalized forms of discrimination, the attainment of political equality", and so forth.⁹³ As Anthropologist Caroline Moser contends, the new antipoverty approach recognized, and tried to serve, women's practical gender needs by focusing on improving their access to income through such efforts as small-scale, income-generating projects. Thus, development thinkers and planners agreed on the importance of poverty alleviation in policy, although they may have differed on how to bring it about.⁹⁴ Finally, as Molyneux highlights, it is important to recognize that practical needs cannot be assumed to be innocent of class effects. The inherent risk in distinguishing between practical and strategic needs is that practical interests do not in themselves challenge prevailing causes of gender subordination, even if they arise directly out of them. For example, due in large part to women's primary role in their household's daily welfare, they arguably have a heightened interest in domestic provisions and welfare concerns. For this reason and more, it is understood that gender and class are closely, often complexly, intertwined. And while Molyneux contends that it is usually the poorest women so readily mobilized by economic necessity, GSEHC does well to demonstrate just how complicated an assumption like this can become. Ford initially describes to CIDA that her services were requested by the people of Gatina after

⁹² Molyneux, 233.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ See, Jane Jaquette, *Women in Developing Countries*, (New York: Haworth Press, 1983), 79; and, Parpart et al., "Feminism and Development: Theoretical Perspectives," 61.

they learned of her work in another nearby community. She describes her work in the first community as working with local women to teach “simple lessons in maternal and infant health.” In Gatina on the other hand, Batchelor describes Ford’s “major concern as a health educator is to improve the nutrition of the children of the area not only through feeding programmes but more importantly through teaching the women the elements of basic nutrition and improved cooking.”⁹⁵ Designating Ford as a health educator is questionable, as she had no post-secondary education; instead, where CIDA and CHF are concerned, the title assigns an authority to the project, implying that Ford, indeed, has the essential knowledge and tools to guide Gatina’s women to improved family health. It also assumes that Ford already knows what this community needs where *their* health is concerned; as a ‘health educator,’ Ford automatically appears more knowledgeable about the best interventions. There is no suggestion that she would find it valuable to engage in meaningful planning with the local women about their local health strategies, or domestic and familial values and challenges, since Ford’s methods, based in Western ideals, assume that they are most certainly more effective.

Empowering Women: A Tool of Development

In Chapter 1, some of the theoretical and practical implications of participatory development were considered. When evaluating the value of participation strategies from the recipients’ point of view, rather than that of the development organization, we cannot ignore the significance of empowerment. As a ‘tool’ of development, it is most simply the focus on achieving power and control over the decisions and resources that determine the quality of women’s lives. From this definition it is easy to see how empowerment has

⁹⁵ Batchelor, Letter to Tim McCoy, April 27, 1973: 1.

the potential to be exceptionally powerful, yet equally interpretable and vague. The concept began to gain recognition in the wake of the promise of participatory strategies. The University of Buea, Cameroon, development theorist, Lotsmart Fonjong, contends that participation and empowerment are, in fact, necessarily dependent on one another. He recognizes the need to move beyond top-down development policies to grass-roots focussed approaches in order to better facilitate women's participation. He also suggests that a deeper evaluation of women's 'practical' and 'strategic' needs is required to ensure their empowerment. For Fonjong, the importance of addressing both practical and strategic needs stems from women's unique triple role in society:

Women are empowered when they gain a voice, have mobility, establish a presence, obtain control over different aspects of their lives and overpower structures or change them. For women to be empowered, their immediate, practical gender needs which are crucial in the execution of their triple gender roles in society [reproductive, productive and community] have to be fulfilled ... Likewise, women's strategic gender needs which challenge the existing gender subordination, are essential.⁹⁶

Inherently problematic to participatory strategies, however, is the limited degree to which obvious practical needs can be fulfilled without also addressing the underlying inequalities, which contribute to their cause.⁹⁷ While the women of Gatina may have had interrelated needs, it did not mean that these were not also conflicting. Practical needs often directly relate to underlying causes of inequality; but what was most commonly overlooked in 1970s development planning was inequalities *amongst* women themselves, such as age and class, even ethnicity. Development theorist Linda Mayoux contends that, based on their interrelation, attempts to address a particular need often result in

⁹⁶ Lotsmart Fonjong, "Fostering Women's Participation in Development through Non-Governmental Efforts in Cameroon," *The Geographical Journal* 167, no. 3 (2001): 229.

⁹⁷ Mayoux, 241.

ramifications for another, especially when they are symptoms of similar underlying inequalities:

In practice the achievement of women's 'immediate needs' such as income earning, or the ability to protect their own health and/or that of their children, can rarely be achieved without addressing underlying aspects of gender subordination such as the unequal division of reproductive labour, restrictions on female mobility, domestic violence, women's lack of autonomy, and so on.⁹⁸

That participatory development strategies are also based on common priorities amongst women is an idealized ambition, albeit an appealing one from a planning point of view. Often overlooked in early participatory based projects were the differences between women who, although they may have been from the same community, were of various age groups, classes, and may have had different ethnic backgrounds. Largely neglected at GSHEC was any interrogation of networks of social status amongst the women themselves. Mayoux reminds us that "certain categories of women, such as older women, mothers-in-law, first wives and wealthier women benefit more than others, and are often anxious to preserve their privileges within the socio-cultural, political, and economic system rather than challenge it."⁹⁹

That said, it is important to account for the fact that the goals, programming, and design of GSHEC are all aimed at Gatina's women specifically. Where programming services and community needs are concerned, men are never mentioned in the Centre's documents, which is especially curious when we consider how the Centre was meant to empower the women involved. According to Mayoux, "women-only projects are most common in 'female' activities in which men are not interested either because the income

⁹⁸ Ibid, 242.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 244.

is low and/or the activities have low social status.” With this in mind, we see the ironic intent of GSHEC to provide women with opportunities aimed at overcoming their subordination by providing services and training that encourage and sustain activities that contribute to their subordination in the first place. And yet, perhaps this is among the very reasons Batchelor professed early on that this was a good project for introducing development to a group: since, arguably, women’s involvement in participatory based projects is greater where there is little threat to men.

Writing to CHF in June of 1973, Ford gave an updated description of the project:

The Centre is now open every day, and apart from the feeding program ... we are trying to include every aspect of health education. We have classes for women on nutrition and baby care, physical exercises, country dances and basketball. The mothers make baskets, and the old women assist in cooking and making patchwork quilts for the children. Adult literacy classes are being held on Tuesday and Friday afternoons, when mothers can send their small children to attend a play school. A special nutrition diet is being worked out by nursing volunteers for the more serious cases of malnutrition every Monday and Thursday morning ... Our numbers have increased considerably which present more problems, but we are happy to note that the general health of the people has really improved over the last year.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, according to Ford’s report “a new programme has been started teaching nutrition, child care, cookery and family planning. Each morning the children are taught simple arithmetic and writing, dancing and singing. Tuesdays and Friday afternoons literacy classes are held by a Kenyan.”¹⁰¹ These advances aside, the local knowledge of the Kenyan women involved at GSHEC was continuously overlooked. Anthropologist Anja Nygren acknowledges that there is often a lack of attention by westerners to the

¹⁰⁰ Ford, “Report on Gatina Self-Help Health and Education Project,” 2.

¹⁰¹ M.E. Ford, Letter to Janet Uren, January 18, 1974. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 2.

political context in which local knowledges exist, especially for women. An especially important consequence of these political and power relations is the “uneven distribution of local knowledge” in which she points to the fact that girls are often educated in different ‘skills’ than boys.¹⁰² Moreover, Nygren believes that local knowledge is legitimized only when it reflects development principles, determined by ‘experts’, in our case mainly Ford and Batchelor.¹⁰³ Such an example is easily identifiable at GSHEC in the domestic focus of both its services and adult education program; local knowledge is legitimized at GSHEC in so far as Ford seems to believe in the capacity of the women to sustain a centre aimed at their basic needs, those determined and decided upon by her no less. This is an excellent example of development theorist William Fisher’s claim that knowledge often “depends on the perspective and agenda of the imaginer.”¹⁰⁴ He highlights that the terms participation, empowerment, and community are problematic rhetoric of development, stating that these allow for the ironic advocacy from various development groups since the way these people, projects and policies are perceived is relative and based on their own agendas.¹⁰⁵

Perceived Progress and Continuing Challenges at GSHEC

Less than one month later, Batchelor visited Ford at GSHEC for a second time. Especially interesting where practical and strategic needs at GSHEC come into play are Batchelor’s ‘general comments’ from her formal July 1973 report:

¹⁰² Anja Nygren, “Local Knowledge in the Environment-Development Discourse: From dichotomies to situated knowledges.” *Critique of Anthropology* 19, no. 3 (1999): 278.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 273.

¹⁰⁴ William Fisher, “Doing Good? The politics and antipolitics of NGO practices.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997): 442.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Mrs. Ford, assisted by her husband, is a capable, intelligent woman, well aware of both the technical needs and the sociological implications of development. She is attempting to orient the programme to education aspects, realizing that in the long run these will have more impact than catering exclusively to the symptoms rather than the causes of poverty.¹⁰⁶

In her own report, Batchelor identified two important difficulties: the role of volunteers and Gatina's 'local politics'.¹⁰⁷ With regard to the former, Batchelor explained that the basic services provided at the Centre were done on a volunteer basis and while many Kenyan women came to Gatina to lend support, the majority of volunteers failed to realize the amount of "time and effort" necessary for such a project. Although willing to donate their time when "personally convenient", the large majority of women were unwilling to assume more responsibility for aspects of the administration. "Thus there is no cadre of responsible volunteers who can be relied upon for continuous service," she explains, "and as a result, many of the Centre's people come only to discover that services are not available."¹⁰⁸

Likewise, Batchelor's report describes Gatina's local politics as problematic for the Centre: "there are constant complaints by those who have not been selected by the Management Committee as qualifying for the services the Centre provides, that they also deserve attention."¹⁰⁹ Here again we can see the identification of two distinct roles for local women in Ford's report: mothers and old women. However, Ford's report suggests that the older women are merely utilized to help fulfill the practical needs of the younger mothers through quilt making, certainly 'participating' in the Centre but only through co-opted means, which effectively *prevented* their empowerment. Likewise, Batchelor's

¹⁰⁶ Batchelor, "Note to File. GATINA SELF-HELP HEALTH EDUCATION CENTRE, NAIROBI," 2.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 1.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 2.

follow-up report points to the inadequacies in participant selection at GSHEC: there is no mention in any project documents as to what criteria the village committee used to determine women and children as ‘needy’ enough to be nominated for participation.

Batchelor’s report further explains that Ford described how many local women arrive at the Centre in hopes of ‘doing good’, but fail to realize the extent of the situation at GSHEC. “When ‘instant results’ are not apparent,” Batchelor states, “they lose interest and become discouraged. Thus there is no ‘cadre’ of responsible volunteers who can be relied upon for continuous service.”¹¹⁰ As a result, Ford recounted that many women and children arrive at the Centre for appointments or scheduled classes only to discover that services are not available due to insufficient staffing. The report details Ford’s criticism that “the majority of volunteers fail to realize the amount of time and effort that is involved in organizing and running a programme of this nature.” Although willing to give their time when it seemed personally convenient, Ford tells Batchelor they are “unwilling to assume more responsibility for certain segments of the administration.”¹¹¹ What is clear about Ford’s conclusion is that there is a fundamental difference in understanding between two foundational concepts of GSHEC: volunteering and self-help. Arguably, Ford appropriated Kenya’s self-help harambee movement to suit the very Western-based notions of volunteerism at the Centre. Ford recognized this as a self-help project in so far as it provided services that would give Gatina’s women the tools with which to improve their health as well as their children’s, that is services that, presumably, the women would find valuable enough to actively sustain the Centre through volunteer effort. Yet the harambee notion of self-help was largely based on small-scale, temporary community

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 1.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

improvement tasks, a very different description than GSHEC's, with its continuously growing services that were no doubt costly to sustain. In practice, Ford's own understanding of volunteerism was incompatible with Kenyan ideas of self-help. Gatina's women would have been foremost focussed on their survival, which meant the *use* of GSHEC's services was beneficial, but voluntarily committing large amounts of time to its management and administration was not.

There is no evidence that demonstrates any recurring process of consultation with women in Gatina about their priorities and needs, whether for their families or themselves. It seems sufficient to both Ford and those at CIDA and CHF to mention that women supported the project in its early stages, and of course that the goals of the project addressed what was newly defined by the World Bank as their basic human needs. And while the intentions of the program seem honourably aimed at the improvement of the women's lives, there is no mention or evidence of the women's own views about the desirability of this project in their community beyond Ford's admission that it was initiated after 'many requests' from local women when she stumbled upon it in January 1971:

The conditions amongst which the poor people [of Gatina] were living were atrocious and I started immediately to try and clean up the children and distribute vitamin pills and clothing ... When I returned in November 1971 no further help had been given to these needy people, by the church or even any other individual. The people requested many times I return to the area, though at this time it was difficult for me, as I lived 25 miles from the village. However, in January 1972 I promised to return and do what I could ... on a rough piece of open ground, and with six African women to help me we started to bring some help to the sick and needy.¹¹²

¹¹² Ford, "Report on the Gatina Self-Help Health Education Centre," 1.

The initial need or want of any sort of participatory project aimed at Gaina's women is never questioned; indeed in early documents, the project, and even Ford, are often described as a saviour for the community, as though its development is impossible without it.

In January 1974, Ford wrote to CHF with an inspiring update: "All who attend the centre receive on Mondays and Thursdays a cup of high protein uji, made from soya wheat flour or a cup of high protein soup and vegetables plus vitamin pills."¹¹³ Perhaps surprising was the number of adults, 100, and children, 200, who visited the Centre weekly. For the 50 "very old and destitute women" who frequented GSHEC, Ford was pleased to report that they received food allocations twice a month by the following system: coupons "are given to these old people on the 1st and 15th of each month which enables them to receive from the local store: 1 bag of maize meal, 1 kilo beans, 250 grams of fat ... and again a big improvement in the health has been seen amongst these old people."¹¹⁴ With help from two Canadian doctors and three Canadian nurses, Ford reports that the medical clinic has also been able to see more people, especially with the installation of clean water and electricity. In an appeal to CHF, Ford explains that among the most pressing concerns at the Centre is food supply. While once provided free of charge by CARE, GSHEC was now being charged for the soya wheat blend they distributed; as well, milk powder was no longer available from the government.¹¹⁵

Also supported by CHF and CIDA funding, Ford described the duties of eleven Kenyan employees that the grant supported in a report that followed in January 1974: six women were considered 'general' workers responsible for cooking, serving and cleaning

¹¹³ Ford, Letter to Janet Uren, 2.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

the Centre on Monday and Thursday mornings; two female interpreters, responsible for assisting where needed three mornings each week; one head teacher to care for the children every morning and provide “simple teaching”; a second and third teacher meant to perform the same duties as the first, but at reduced hours; and finally, a maintenance supervisor. “All of these people, prior to the Centre’s establishment, were without jobs,” the report stated, “yet helped here when they could without pay.”¹¹⁶ By March 1974, Ford wrote to CHF Project Officer John Kortright with good news:

Recently progress had been rapid at Gatina. We have been asked for two things by the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Njoroge Mungai. The first is to enlarge our present building, because of considerably increased numbers, we do not have anything like enough room for either the cooking, the clinic or the teaching of Health Education. The children even have to be taught on the verandah. Secondly I was informed that State Land is available on the west side of this area of 27,000 people and Dr. Mungai would like to see another Health Education Centre started similar to Gatina.¹¹⁷

From all accounts, then, it seemed as though Batchelor’s reported conflicts had been minimized and, seemingly, all was going according to plan at GSHEC: local women were attending the Centre, children were enrolled in the day school, the general health of the community was apparently improving, even clean water and electricity were installed at the Centre. Yet there came a sudden change of outlook in May 1974. After submitting an optimistic report to CHF in January 1974, Ford inquired about the possibility of continued funding after the original budget end date of June 30, 1974. CHF’s Tim McCoy followed up her request asking for clarification on dates of funding, though stating that CHF would be pleased to consider another proposal so long as it followed the

¹¹⁶ Ford, “Report on the Gatina Self-Help Health and Education Centre” 1974: 1.

¹¹⁷ M.E. Ford, Letter John Kortright, March 20, 1974. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 2.

same guidelines under which she submitted the first.¹¹⁸ Two weeks later, on May 2, Ford replied asking McCoy to, “please disregard my letter of March 20th in which I requested further aid from the Canadian Hunger Foundation. My husband and I feel we cannot carry on with this voluntary project, therefore, I am resigning as project leader.”¹¹⁹ Furthermore, she explained rather rationally that, in an effort to protect the unused funds, she notified Second Secretary Blair Hankey at the Canadian High Commission in Nairobi, and suggested that the money should be put towards another project altogether or returned to the CHF: “because I know no volunteer is prepared to undertake the project, and I am quite sure if the money was (sic) turned over to the administration in the area it would be used unwisely and certainly not for the poor people of Gatina.”¹²⁰ Likewise, when Ford described her frustrations with a lack of dependable voluntary support from the women, it was determined, as she saw it, that their laziness was to blame, rather than the pressures and responsibilities the women faced in their lives outside the Centre. Mayoux recognizes that many projects like GSHEC fail to consider the women’s obligations beyond the parameters of the project itself: “whereas men may be able to call on the support of women and children in their families to allow them time for participation in other activities, women are generally unable to do this unless they have the wholehearted support of men.”¹²¹ Ford seems largely unaware of the specific realities that the women face beyond the Centre and how their involvement there, be it minimal or great, would have altered and increased their workload in general.

¹¹⁸ Tim McCoy, Letter to Ford, April 12, 1974. (NAC, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 1.

¹¹⁹ M.E. Ford, Letter to John Kortright, May 2, 1974. (NAC, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 1.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²¹ Mayoux, 248.

Daily Obligations & Responsibilities of Nairobi's Women

For Nairobi's women in the 1970s, 'traditional' obligations were still the greatest determinant for lifestyle, and arguably an important influence in their socioeconomic position. In 1974, UNICEF and Kenya's Central Bureau of Statistics launched a cooperative research project: "Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Kenya;" the final report is a lengthy description of the economic, social, and political position of women throughout the country, and declares its hope "that the publication will serve as an advocacy tool to increase awareness at all levels of the pressing needs of children and women in Kenya."¹²² It gives an excellent statistical and descriptive picture of the socioeconomic conditions of life for Nairobi women and is an exceptionally useful document for determining the lived experiences Gatina women likely faced. Early on in the report, for instance, marriage is described to be common to virtually all Nairobi women, and in 1974, 28 per cent of 15-19 year old women and 80 percent of 20-24 year old women were married. The study is careful to highlight, as well, that the loss of a husband has various economic implications for women, especially with regard to landholdings. Interestingly, the study also concludes that urban Kenyan women who are employed *after* marriage were more likely to face divorce, and subsequently less likely to remarry, than women who never sought work for wages. Perhaps not surprisingly, the study borrows from historian Angela Molnos' research that,

¹²² "Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Kenya," Nairobi: UNICEF and Central Bureau of Statistics, Kenya, 1985: i. Because there exists very little material regarding the history of Gatina itself, the information in this chapter is largely based on studies of Nairobi, and in a few cases, on Kawangware. That this is the best information available concerning local women during this time period is neither to homogenize *all* Nairobi, or Kenyan women, nor suggest that they lived the same experiences. The information used is, however, an important indicator of Western development rhetoric and concerns at the time.

motherhood was and is the most important of women's roles in Kenya ... the ideal of fertility is firmly impressed into the traditional image of the 'proper woman'. Barrenness, sterility or limited fertility are socially considered humiliating conditions and misfortunes. Children constitute the most important visible signs of success and achievement ... For a woman, the regular birth of children is indispensable to ensure her status; indeed, children are the justification of her very existence.¹²³

Assuming Molnos' testaments are valid, we can infer that Ford's plan to address women and children *together* at GSHEC was, at the very least, culturally relevant. Providing day care and primary educational classes for the community's children was an exceptionally important service at GSHEC. Ford recognized that the daycare and school classes encouraged and supported women coming to GSHEC; and without provisions for child care, the women would have almost certainly committed even less time to volunteering. And yet there is perhaps one aspect of the Centre that presents a paradox. What utility would there be in showing films and providing lessons on family planning to the community when the study reports that the mean desired number of children, for both rural and urban, Kenyan women is seven? There is an obvious discrepancy between Western and local values here that thorough and recurring consultation with local women could have identified. Granted, Ford would not have had access to UNICEF's 1985 report, but it does raise important questions about the ways in which she would have determined that family planning lessons were not only appropriate for the community, but also desired. Ford may have understood that high numbers of children often resulted in higher domestic expenses, but she failed to understand the cultural importance of children in Kenya: "children are valued for themselves, as well as for prestige,

¹²³ Ibid., 4.

production, and protection in old age.”¹²⁴ Likewise, fertility rates were higher for women who performed unpaid labour, or without formal responsibilities outside the home. Perhaps the expectations of having large families and the responsibilities of raising multiple children were additional cultural deterrents for Gatina’s women in committing to volunteering at GSHEC.

From all indications, GSHEC address at least one aspect of the demands on women’s time raised in this report. Where time constraints were a concern, the report faults modernization for increasing the scope and complexity of caring for children and household provisions for Kenyan women. It concludes therefore that “reducing the disparity between the demands women face and the resources at their disposal is thus the single most important way of improving the wellbeing of Kenyan children.”¹²⁵ In theory, GSHEC largely fulfills this demand: the project provided women with increased access to health and education resources, both for themselves and their children, in order to support their wellbeing at home and in the community. However, the project’s preoccupation with self-sustainability only served to demand a commitment of time that these women were unable to meet. Kenyan women’s role of household provisioner was among the greatest time commitments: producing, processing, preparing and storing food; planting, hoeing, weeding, maintaining gardens and crops; physical activities related to the home, such as carrying water, firewood, food, and in many cases, materials for housing repair. Especially relevant to GSHEC is the expansion of childcare responsibilities faced by Kenyan women: lessons at the Centre would have lengthened the list of tasks associated with adequately ensuring a child’s welfare. Increased expectations in ‘proper’

¹²⁴ Ibid., 5.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 14.

childrearing and welfare could have only added to women's physical, even financial, obligations. Likewise, lessons in sanitation would have taught Kenyan women that more water was needed at home, thereby requiring that more water be carried in order to bathe children, clean dishes and, in cases where clothes were not carried to the water source, launder clothing. Boiling drinking water, too, would have increased the need for firewood. Finally, the report cautions that "most household needs are elastic. Assisting in the satisfaction of a particular need will not necessarily liberate time, which can be devoted to other needs; instead, the saved time is likely to be used for more complete satisfaction of the particular need in question."¹²⁶

In a case study of 1000 Nairobi women the vast majority reported that they began their daily activities around the hour of six in the morning, and usually went to bed around eleven at night. Virtually all the women surveyed expressed that their first priority in the morning was feeding the family and that food-related tasks took up almost forty percent of the day; the report confirms that this figure held true even amongst women of varying economic status. The remainder of the day was taken up with collecting water (16%), hygiene and cleaning (14%), family care (including breastfeeding, 10%), household production (including collecting firewood and household repair materials, 12%), and finally with leisure (10%).¹²⁷ In her description of Nairobi's poverty throughout the 1970s, Mari Clark refers to women who head households as "frequently divorced or deserted ... and among the poorest of the poor."¹²⁸ And although data on woman headed households in Nairobi during this time is relatively scarce, "their high

¹²⁶ Ibid., 32.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 36.

¹²⁸ Mari H. Clark, "Woman-Headed Households and Poverty: Insights from Kenya," *Signs* 10, no. 2 (1984): 353.

concentrations in urban slums provide evidence of their disadvantaged economic position.” Indeed, UNICEF’s report estimates that the proportion of female headed households in Mathare Valley, a slum very near Kawangware, was as high as 80%.¹²⁹ Likewise, for women who head urban households, the report explains that marriage is not an avenue for improved economic status, since there is little to be gained from marriage when amongst them, employment is irregular and unstable. It is probable, then, that many of the women in nearby Gatina also headed their own households, thus likely having even less time to commit to the Centre than perhaps their married neighbours. However, when compared to rural areas, Nairobi and its surrounding slums offered women few opportunities for productive employment. In fact, the UNICEF report stated that low rates for employment generation in the modern sector and a surplus labour market significantly reduced women’s employment opportunities in both the formal and informal sectors. Women in Nairobi were often disadvantaged by “sex-stereotyping of jobs and by employers’ preference for males, which comes in part because men are perceived as family breadwinners and in part because women are perceived as less reliable” due to maternity leaves and child rearing.¹³⁰ Once again, GSHEC is an appealing, even appropriate, intervention for combating the few employment opportunities offered to Nairobi’s women but also for delivering services aimed at the improvement of women’s lives. The creation of employment opportunities was, on the surface, a celebrated achievement of GSHEC, especially since it indicated the on-going participation of community members, especially women. Without Ford’s direction and presence as project leader, however, these employment opportunities were unsustainable: it was

¹²⁹ “Situation Analysis of Women and Children in Kenya,” 47.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 81.

simply a voluntary commitment Gatina women did not have time for. Arguably, the self-sustainability of the project may have fared differently with paid positions for Gatina's women from the beginning; but the necessity of volunteering while waiting for the local government to support eventual salaries was simply not practical in the short-term. What was once the most appealing part of the project, the self-help aspect of GSHEC, ultimately failed to be realized.

Conclusion

GSHEC professed dominant concerns in involving the women of Gatina through self-help strategies, aimed largely at fulfilling their immediate, practical needs. Yet Ford's early plans seem to demonstrate an awareness ahead of its time for the importance of strategic needs, at least in theory, with ambitions for wage-paying jobs at GSHEC and a formal education program. The project's weakness, however, was found in its concentration on fostering women's domestic roles with little attention paid to the potential benefits of political engagement or socioeconomic awareness, sustaining what Fonjong calls "the neglect of 'conscientisation.'"¹³¹ Molyneux reminds us that governments and organizations that take into account the interconnectedness of practical and strategic needs is fundamental for development gains and successful interventions: "an understanding of this," she states, "is vital in understanding the capacity or failure of states or organizations to win the loyalty and support of women."¹³² In both conception and execution, GSHEC's design homogenized the women of Gatina, assuming their common geographical area necessitated common wants and needs. Ultimately, GSHEC

¹³¹ Fonjong, 230.

¹³² Molyneux, 233.

maintained the ‘status quo’ in terms of women’s awareness of the sources of their socioeconomic and political subordination: while women’s participation in the project is evident, Ford never committed to raising awareness amongst Gatina’s women. Cornwall and Fonjong contend that women’s empowerment is heavily reliant on this conscientisation so that the women themselves, and not just project planners or NGOs, are knowledgeable about the extent of their problems; only then can appropriate development interventions be implemented.¹³³ Furthermore, Cornwall reminds us “it is only when analysis moves beyond the everyday materialities of people’s lives to explore issues of gendered power that other choices become imaginable.”¹³⁴ Even with such an emphasis on women’s participatory development, GSHEC effectively demonstrates that in merely addressing women’s practical needs, only short term development goals are even potentially reachable. And despite indications to the contrary in early proposals, Ford ultimately found it increasingly difficult to move beyond the assumptions of WID discourse. As the Centre developed under her leadership, Ford depended upon volunteer work to sustain the project; her intention to bring the project, and more importantly, its benefits, into self-sustainability failed largely on account of this mutual dependency between Ford and the Kenyan women with whom she worked.

¹³³ Cornwall, 1330.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 1334.

CHAPTER 3: FORD, 'SELF-HELP', DEPENDENCY, & COLONIAL STEREOTYPE

In its neglect of any meaningful and recurring dialogue with the local women, GSHEC only superficially supported any attempts at self-help. Instead, Ford insisted on maintaining a level of managerial and financial control that effectively prevented the very transfer of control she professed to be working towards. In our case, the colonial tendencies that manifested in Ford's project went, for the most part, unchallenged by the Kenyan women with whom she worked; indeed they benefited the women to a considerable degree, facilitating their access to medical and welfare services. The problem becomes clear however in Ford's condemnation of the women who she said were meant to take over the project and fulfill her ambitions for self-sustainability. GSHEC was unsuccessful largely on account of its neglect in engaging with local women about *their* wants and needs, thereby making assumptions about their desires and development goals based largely on Western values. However, traces of colonial discourse are especially evident in Ford's later letters; the ways in which she describes the women as well as her attempts to maintain control of the Centre suggest that so many of the foundational principles of the project were at best lacking in awareness and misapplied, and, at worst, used simply for funding appeal. This chapter considers colonialism not exclusively in the conventional sense of foreign and outsider, but also to represent that which is imposed and those who dominate. In line with University of Toronto anthropologist George Dei, this more discursive view allows us to see how those who lived under colonial discourses may have found it difficult to challenge or even

resist it.¹³² To further Dei's explanation, feminist scholar Amina Mama effectively demonstrates how colonialism in Africa was an overtly gendered process that exploited long-standing social norms in African cultures. Colonial women's education, for instance, was often designed to prepare women in domestic skills whereas education in pre-colonial African societies was largely based on practical purposes meant to address the needs of specific, local circumstances.¹³³ Generally speaking, while African women's labour was an integral aspect of pre-colonial society, power relations between men and women *were* unequal. Mama recognizes that during colonialism, Western notions of domesticity merged with capitalist influences to drastically exclude African women from the formal sector, and while independence brought opportunities for a reinvention in women's education, "occupational inequality persisted."¹³⁴

This inequality endured at GSHEC in its attempts to involve local women in 'meaningful' ways despite the disparities that permeated the community. A paradoxical relationship existed between Ford and the Centre's volunteers: effectively, each depended on the other to sustain the project. Regardless of her intention to assist the women in making the benefits of the project self-sustainable, in maintaining her role as project leader Ford effectively kept the entire project dependent upon her management. Combined with the neglect of any meaningful consultation and dialogue with the local women about their wants and needs, Ford's desire to control virtually all aspects of the project definitively limited opportunities for the participation of the same women she expected to take it over. With this control, Ford effectively distinguished herself in

¹³² See, George Sefa Dei, "Interrogating 'African Development' and the Diasporan Reality," *Journal of Black Studies* 29, no. 2 (1998): 141-153.

¹³³ Amina Mama and Fatou Sow, *Engendering African Social Sciences*. (Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA, 2000), 81.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

contrast to the local women at GSHEC, creating a condition of ‘otherness’ that is reminiscent of colonial discourse. In its many attempts to represent the Self in relation to a subjugated Other, many scholars contend that colonialism was a contradictory project; this section considers how a similar contradiction thrived at GSHEC, as manifested in Ford’s actions.

The Influence of Colonial Discourse on Development Efforts

In his 1973 *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter*, Talal Asad describes the unequal power relationship that exists between the West and Third Worlds. For Asad, the colonial period is but one of many important encounters between the two that gave, and largely continues to give, the West “access to cultural and historical information about the societies it has progressively dominated.”¹³⁵ And although he is specifically addressing anthropology, his arguments have important resonance for both history and development studies: in attempts to record indigenous traditions Asad recognizes that, whether directly or indirectly, there is often a reinforcement of colonial power structures “since anthropological understanding is overwhelmingly objectified in Western languages that is most easily accommodated to the mode of life, and hence to the rationality, of power which the West represents.”¹³⁶ This is especially relevant for early post colonial development, as it commonly neglected to contextualize specific conditions of poor societies, presenting their poverty as a ‘natural’ occurrence. Relationships between Third World countries and their colonizing governments were generally carried out under a mantle of moral superiority and, at times, condemnation of the indigenous

¹³⁵ Asad, 16.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 17.

population and their cultural and economic systems. As postcolonial and feminist scholar Chandra Mohanty explains:

Institutionally, colonial rule operated by setting up visible, rigid, and hierarchical distinctions between the colonizers and the colonized. The physical and symbolic separation of the races was deemed necessary to maintain social distance and authority over subject peoples. In effect, the physical details (e.g., racial and sexual separation) of colonial settings were transmuted to a moral plan: the ideal imperial agent embodied authority, discipline, fidelity, devotion, fortitude, and self sacrifice. This definition of white men as 'naturally' born to rule is grounded in a discourse of race and sexuality which necessarily defined colonized peoples, men and women, as incapable of self-determination.¹³⁷

Early postcolonial development efforts in Africa were designed as a linear process, by which traditional and backward peoples could proceed from underdevelopment to modern and progressive development. Early interventions of course, were largely justified by imperialism, which fostered the assumption that everything Western was superior to its Third World equivalent, or lack thereof. This sense of difference and supremacy was enshrined in a colonial discourse that compared Third World peoples and cultures unfavourably with advanced Western societies, and called for world-wide modernization.¹³⁸

Colonialism in Kenya brought significant and long term changes to local social and political structures specifically, labour patterns, land tenure, and land use. As the main food producers in many communities, women were no less affected by colonialism than men. Koczberski recognizes "colonialists caused a re-definition of indigenous ideologies regarding identity, status, kinship, marriage, residential patterns and gender

¹³⁷ Chandra Mohanty, "Under Western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses," in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, eds., Chandra Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Loudres Torress, (Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1991), 63.

¹³⁸ Jane Parpart, "Who is the 'Other'? A Postmodern Feminist Critique of Women and Development Theory and Practice," *Development and Change* 24 (1993): 447.

relations, all of which had varying and unexpected consequences for women's daily lives."¹³⁹ Important here are that the negative perceptions of Africans perpetuated by colonialist rhetoric resulted in a devaluing of local customs and structures; these attitudes continued to influence relations even after African nations began to achieve independence throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and thus permeated the policies of early Western development models. As previously discussed, it was assumed that the development pattern of the Third World would follow that of the West, thus development practice focused on encouraging capital accumulation and overcoming barriers to development such as poor education systems.¹⁴⁰ The assumption was that underdeveloped countries, plagued by traditional structures and customs, would then catch up to the modern and industrial nations of the West. As explained by Jane Parpart and Marianne Marchand,

the rationale for this progression was provided by colonial (and later neo-colonial) discourses which compared 'backward, primitive' Third World peoples and cultures unfavourably with the 'progressive' North. Modernisation theory thus adopted the dichotomisation of colonial discourse to reinforce developed nations' superiority and the negative perceptions of Third World countries: modern/traditional, dynamic/static, progressive/backward and developed/underdeveloped.¹⁴¹

Among the most prominent concerns of studies of colonialism has been this overt focus on opposition and difference. Even outside the boundaries of colonial studies, the idea that women have been defined as 'other' by men has long been explored and debated by gender scholars. In her groundbreaking book, *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir challenged male definitions of 'woman' and called on women to define themselves by

¹³⁹ Koczberski, 397.

¹⁴⁰ Koczberski, 398.

¹⁴¹ Jane Parpart and Marianne Marchand, "Exploding the Canon," in *Feminism/Postmodernism/Development*, eds., Jane Parpart and Marchand, (New York: Routledge, 1995), 11.

becoming the subject instead of the object of analysis.¹⁴² Parpart explains, however, that “the concern with women as ‘other’ emanated largely from the writings of white western middle-class women, whose generalizations were grounded for the most part in their own experience.”¹⁴³ As such, a great deal of Western scholarship, came to recognize women as if the experience of these women was applicable across *all* classes and ethnicities worldwide. As previously discussed, feminist concern with female ‘otherness’ ignored the possibility of differences amongst women themselves.

This debate has important implications for development studies, especially where women’s development in the Third World and the inherent problems in participatory and empowerment strategies are concerned. It is no secret that development plans based on inadequate knowledge of women’s lives and unique needs have consistently failed.¹⁴⁴ The attention to difference encouraged by postmodernist thought does well in reminding scholars that women of any geographic or cultural space cannot be labelled in undifferentiated or decontextualized categories. The simplicity of a homogenous Third World woman made the notion an especially appealing one from a WID point of view, regardless of its faults in practice. Yet Parpart highlights that “it ignored the intersection of class and gender in the Third World and the need to evaluate that intersection in concrete historical circumstances.”¹⁴⁵ With this in mind, Homi Bhabha’s description of colonial discourse is an important consideration at GSHEC. His argument is relevant since it relies on the colonized becoming *like* the colonizer, but also the maintenance of difference between them. Bhabha describes the objective of colonial discourse as

¹⁴² See, Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, (New York: Knopf, 1952).

¹⁴³ Parpart, “Who is the ‘Other’?,” 443.

¹⁴⁴ See, Caroline Moser, “Gender Planning in the Third World: Meeting Practical and Strategic Gender Needs,” *World Development* 17, no. 11 (1989): 1799-1825.

¹⁴⁵ Parpart, “Who is the ‘Other’?,” 454.

construing “the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction.”¹⁴⁶ Central to his argument is the ambivalence of the object: it is both scorned and desired. It is “the colonizer himself caught in the ambivalence of paranoiac identification, alternating between fantasies of megalomaniac and persecution.”¹⁴⁷

Colonial Discourse at GSHEC

This same ambivalence manifested in Ford’s methodologies insofar as she expected the women at GSHEC to learn from, and adapt to, the Western value-based lessons and services provided, all the while clinging to the maintenance of authority under a guise of self-help. In Ford’s early correspondence with CIDA and CHF, there is a constant theme that emerges amongst her descriptions of Gatina and the women that live there: they are abandoned, desperate, even powerless against their impoverished circumstances. Upon notice in mid-1973 that CHF approved \$11, 764 (US) funding to support the Centre though the following year, Ford wrote to McCoy: “As project leader, I cannot begin to tell you what this means, after struggling for two years trying to build something for these destitute people out of nothing. Although the project has continued to expand, we could never look forward to more than three months ahead.”¹⁴⁸ And while she is clearly thankful, she is careful to stake a claim: “Before I use any of the money so generously donated by the Canadian Hunger Foundation, I want to be absolutely certain that this program I have outlined briefly will be carried out without any interruption

¹⁴⁶ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 70.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 61.

¹⁴⁸ Ford, Letter to Tim McCoy, June 10, 1973: 1.

whatsoever.”¹⁴⁹ This letter is the first overtly identifiable declaration of control to come from Ford. Given that it comes after CHF’s funding approval announcement, it is also curious that this is also the first instance where Ford declares anything in such a confirmed, even demanding, tone. One month later, in her otherwise favourable report of the project, Batchelor cautioned a rather prophetic admission,

One should always keep in mind, however, the dangers of supporting projects which are run essentially by one individual. Any local or political eruption could close down the project. On balance, however, because of the orientation, and dedication of the Fords, and because the project is catering to those who have so few services provided, the project continues to deserve our support.¹⁵⁰

Ford’s early demanding statements, and even her more casual, less aggressive assertions of control are also easily attributable to a thorough and organized managerial style. Granted she is overseeing a rather complex project in an exceptionally limited resource environment, so confirmation from CHF that her project *should* run without interruption is an important point to clarify for its anticipated success. It stands, however, as both an early indication of Ford’s dominating personality as well as her own understanding of her place in GSHEC in relation to the ‘peripheral’ players, be they Canadian or Kenyan.

In his reply, McCoy did not directly reassure Ford that the project would continue uninterrupted as she had requested; in fact, he did not address her letter to any degree. Instead, he made clear the requirement of quarterly progress reports, with a final report to come in June 1974. He ended the letter by stating, “Once again may I repeat how pleased

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Batchelor, “Note to File. GATINA SELF-HELP HEALTH EDUCATION CENTRE, NAIROBI.” July 18, 1973: 2.

we are to be associated with you in this endeavour.”¹⁵¹ In a short reply a week later, Ford wrote, “I will do my best to make periodic progress reports, but as my volunteers come and go and I have to assume all responsibility for the project I find the paper work side very time consuming.”¹⁵² In this and many of the letters to follow, Ford is careful to mention her responsibility, management, direction, and time commitment at the Centre. And as discussed, many of Batchelor’s early letters of support present Ford in a glorified light, a saviour for the Gatina community. Indeed Ford developed a project that Batchelor touted as being an excellent one for ‘introducing’ development to a group based, no less, on Ford’s impressive knowledge of development.¹⁵³ The important insinuation in representing Ford in this manner is two-fold; first, from the beginning there is a strong contradiction in Ford as project director and GSHEC as a self-help program that remains largely overlooked by CHF or CIDA until early 1974; second, Gatina’s women are described to have both needs and problems, but short of Ford’s promising intervention, never is there mention of *their* choices or capacity to change their circumstances.

Essentially, Ford adopted a colonial style management at GSHEC well reflected in her attempts to maintain a clearly defined leadership position. As Historian Frederick Cooper recognizes, for those involved on both sides of the colonial divide, *decolonization* was also an exceptionally important process of negotiation, which he asserts was plagued with uncertainty. For him, the fundamental problem of colonial style development was that it was essentially a concept derived from a vision of the future, “an ethnocentric notion to be sure, but one which was being opened to Africans who wished to reform

¹⁵¹ Tim McCoy, Letter to Ford, July 30, 1973. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 2.

¹⁵² Ford, Letter from Ford to McCoy, August 8, 1973. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 1.

¹⁵³ Batchelor, Letter to Tim McCoy, April 27, 1973: 1.

themselves.”¹⁵⁴ Essentially, development was oversimplified and decontextualized; colonialists uncritically assumed that modernization would advance the backwardness of Africa into to a modern future. Cooper contends that what was missing in official post-war development discourse “was the present, with its dynamism and possibilities as well as constraints.”¹⁵⁵ Development rhetoric, however, was prone to the same uncertainty that plagued the entire decolonization process; development and modernization were a simultaneous project, to be directed by a government on one hand and a “metahistorical tendency affecting the entire world” on the other.¹⁵⁶ In the wake of strengthening African social and political movements, colonial officials slowly began to recognize that African independence *and* the continuity of the development project was a legitimate possibility.¹⁵⁷ Here Cooper recognizes the continuity in discourse from the colonial era, but with one important difference. Prior to decolonization, the backwardness of African populations was, for the most part, uncritically assumed. The new developmentalist spirit, he argues, altered this view; backwardness soon became “an act of defiance, a sign of ill will of Africans who refused the opportunity now being offered them.”¹⁵⁸ As a result, African ‘primitivism’ was used to explain early failed development efforts, rather than any fault being attributed to policy or practice.¹⁵⁹

These kinds of assumptions were relevant in early letters from both Batchelor and Ford, in which they describe an important and unique, albeit limited, potential about the women in Gatina. In her initial funding plea to CHF for instance, Batchelor describes,

¹⁵⁴ Frederick Cooper, “Development, Modernization, and the Social Sciences in the Era of Decolonization: the Examples of British and French Africa,” *Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines* 1, no. 10 (1994): 10.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

“The involvement of Kenyans in all phases of the project is most impressive and the achievements of the project on a very limited budget indicate the extent of the dedication of the women especially, to continue the project.”¹⁶⁰ Ford, too, seems to identify a special quality in the local women in her brief but careful mentioning of their “extensive involvement” in the conception of the project.¹⁶¹ Even High Commissioner Olivier spoke of the commendable commitment of the Gatina community on September 1, 1973 in a speech to officially announce CHF’s funding contribution:

I am particularly impressed by the volunteer and selfless spirit of the local and expatriate staff of the Centre, and the substantial contribution it is making to the local community by way of welfare services and health and nutrition education programmes for the needy sections of society. I am sure the Centre will continue to provide and improve upon this service.¹⁶²

Regardless of the fact that this involvement is never described, nor was it likely in any way a sustained effort, their professions indicate that the capacity of these women is, on some level, exceptional. In early correspondence, GSHEC was so promising and held such appealing potential for success because of the distinctive dedication of *these* women in particular. Their capacity however was limited without Ford; it was *her* expertise and commitment that could mobilize these women. Indeed, it is only through the project that the women would be able to identify “their needs and ... seek ways of meeting these needs,” even if superficially.¹⁶³ In this way, Gatina’s women are still represented in a discourse as the Other, but they are a unique category, an Other that shows strong potential for development; they are receptive to Ford and capable of learning from her.

¹⁶⁰ Batchelor, Letter to Tim McCoy, April 27, 1973: 2.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁶² “Press Release: Gatina Self-Help Centre Gets Aid from Canada,” July 11, 1973: 2.

¹⁶³ Batchelor, Letter to Tim McCoy, April 27, 1973: 3.

This ambiguous representation of Gatina's women is increasingly relevant when we consider it with regard to identity under colonial discourse. Bhabha argues that the ambivalence of identity involves a process of disavowal where the colonial subject's attitude towards the Other is not simply a rejection of difference, but also a recognition of otherness that is at once desirous and threatening.¹⁶⁴ Since colonial discourse sought to produce knowledge of two distinct subjects, Bhabha determines that the ambivalence therefore manifests itself in stereotypes. As one of these stereotypes, then, the Other becomes ambivalent not because it is an assertion of difference so much as it is an articulation of "contradictory beliefs."¹⁶⁵ He believes that the ambivalence of colonial stereotypes renders them visible through "signs of crisis", a strategy of colonial power symbolic of the desire for a changed, or approved, Other. Among these signs of crisis is *mimicry*: "a difference that is almost the same, but not quite."¹⁶⁶

Ford presents Gatina's women in a way that allows for this limited similarity by highlighting their potential, yet maintaining their difference by making her knowledge and methods a necessary component for their success. Bhabha recognizes that colonial discourse reasserts both similarity and difference in identity; it is most challenged as the colonized becomes an imitation of the colonizer, while the colonizer works to preserve categories of social difference.¹⁶⁷ Most important however, is not how the colonized mimics the colonizer, but how the colonizer begins to recognize traces of himself *in* the colonized therefore seeing otherness become sameness. This threat to the colonizer's superior identity indicates to Bhabha the irreconcilable problem that mimicry poses for

¹⁶⁴ Bhabha, 3.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 73.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 86.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 87.

the colonizer: its desire to control peoples who will always accept their culture differently than how it is given.¹⁶⁸ As project leader, Ford no doubt experienced a similar threat at GSHEC as the women there accept and, in their own ways, appropriated the benefits offered at the Centre. In this way, Ford's vision for GSHEC could have never matched the reality for this very reason; the women at the Centre would always interpret and accept lessons on different grounds than Ford would have presented them, arguably on account of Ford's subscription to cultural reductionism.

Ford's Withdrawal

The influence of colonial discourse on Ford's management style is even more apparent in the letters in which she outlined her reasons for withdrawing her involvement with the project. On May 2, 1974 Ford wrote to CHF, a rather abrupt letter without previous warning, to announce her resignation from the project:

In my opinion, I think the [remaining] money should be used for another deserving project or returned to the CHF. My reason for saying this is because I know no volunteer is prepared to undertake the project, and I am quite sure if the money was turned over to the administration in the area it would be used unwisely and certainly not for the poor people of Gatina.¹⁶⁹

She provides little explanation or insight into the catalyst for her decision: "I have fought hard for 3 years with little support, now, find my health is suffering and I am not prepared to spend the majority of my time working for the benefit of others when it is a losing battle."¹⁷⁰ In an immediate response on May 13, John Kortright replied to Ford:

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 92.

¹⁶⁹ Ford, Letter to John Kortright, May 2, 1974: 2. Emphasis in original.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 2-3.

Figure 1 (above) - CHF Cheque Presentation, 1973. Right to left, Mayor Margaret Kenyatta, Njeri Mungai, Ford, Robin Ford, Unknown, Victoria Ford (Ford's daughter). Source: National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200.

Figure 2 - Mayor Margaret Kenyatta's Speech at CHF cheque presentation, 1973. Right to left, High Commissioner in Kenya W.A.M. Olivier, Margaret Kenyatta, Njeri Mungai, Ford. Source: National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200.

First I would like to express the sincere regrets of the Canadian Hunger Foundation that you are unable to continue as project leader of the Gatina Centre. We have decided that since we at CHF have an unclear idea of the precise nature of the problem and of the personalities involved, we will leave the decision regarding the application of the remaining unspent funds to the High Commission in Nairobi ... I'm sure you appreciate that this is a delicate situation which involved not only the project's contact with the CHF and CIDA, but also the broader political relationship between Kenya and Canada. This is why we feel that the resolution of the problem is one to be handled best by the High Commission.¹⁷¹

Almost as suddenly as she announced it, CIDA's Area Manager for Anglophone Africa, Tony Enns wrote to McCoy on May 17 to explain Ford's apparent change of heart. Enns enclosed a message, copied from a telegram sent the day before from the High Commission in Nairobi:

Mrs. Ford will be advising project that her resignation will remain effective pending greater contribution and self reliance by local people ... If this contribution materializes project will continue more on self help basis, with part time admin support from Mrs. Ford. Recommend allocation of some of remaining funds for admin if Mrs. Ford continues under above terms. Recommend also that CHF authorize allocation of some funds for hiring of professional accountant as this is taking up too much of Mrs. Ford's private time.¹⁷²

During the same time, CHF sent Michael Sinclair, a University of Toronto doctoral student to visit GSHEC and produce a thorough report on its state. His trip was approved by CHF's Jal Ghadially in April, long before Ford gave indication of her impending withdraw, and he arrived in Nairobi only five days after Ford penned her resignation letter, likely before it even reached McCoy. Sinclair met with Ford and her

¹⁷¹ John Kortright, Letter to M.E. Ford, May 13, 1974. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 1.

¹⁷² Anthony Enns, Letter to Susan McCoy, May 17, 1974. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 1.

husband in their home in Nairobi on May 9, 1974, engaging in what Sinclair reports was “a long discussion ... about the Centre and Mrs. Ford’s involvement with it.”¹⁷³ Despite his original assignment to visit GSHEC and report on its progress, he clarifies that, owing to her withdrawal from the Centre, Ford thought his attendance there would be “inappropriate.”¹⁷⁴ He reports that Ford received his advance letter as well as an introductory letter from CHF’s John Kortright, shortly before his arrival. The rather curious timing of these events cannot easily go unnoticed. While there are no documents with which to support the notion that Sinclair’s impending visit was any catalyst to Ford’s sudden resignation, it is difficult not to question her efforts to keep Sinclair away from GSHEC, especially when the focus of his report was the progress of the Centre, not on Ford herself.

His report continues to describe his conversation with Ford at great length; professing that he recognized she was experiencing “a period of considerable difficulty about her role with the Centre, especially her unsuccessful efforts to get anyone else to assume responsibility for it.” Sinclair describes at length Ford’s ‘role’ at GSEHC, explaining the extensive amount of time she devotes to the project as “only she among all the volunteer workers would take responsibility for its management.”¹⁷⁵ After which he explains his observations regarding the dependent condition of GSHEC’s staff, volunteers, and the local people in general on Ford as project director:

concerned about this developing dependency relationship, Mrs. Ford finally felt herself unable to carry on in this context and on May 2nd

¹⁷³ Michael Sinclair, “Report of Discussion with Mrs. (and Mr.) M.E. Ford concerning the Gatina Self-Help Health Education Centre, Gatina Nairobi, Kenya, East Africa.” June 16, 1974. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 1.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

withdrew from the Centre. This action was necessary also due to the situation having adversely affected her health, and was partly prompted by a wish to see what Kenyan support and self-reliance would be forthcoming.¹⁷⁶

Once again, Ford makes it very clear how much time and energy she devotes to GSHEC, and as such, casts a cloud of doubt over the once described dedicated and motivated volunteers. Sinclair echoes similar concerns seen in Batchelor's early report with regard to the reliability of the volunteer staff; while Sinclair describes Ford's success in recruiting *some* local women to assist at the Centre, mainly in the feeding programs, many would commit "a few times only and then drop out and not honestly say why."¹⁷⁷ Ford extends her accusations against the volunteers, blaming their "inability and unwillingness to work amidst a scene of intense poverty," which seems curious not least because these women were described as local, thus likely living in similar conditions, but also in light of Ford's March 1974 report which praised the work of GSHEC's volunteers. Perhaps she is referring to these same volunteers when telling Sinclair that "even the six women volunteers that remained throughout would not share in the management responsibility."¹⁷⁸ Subsequently, Sinclair dedicates an entire section of his report to the "Reasons for Growth of the Dependency Complex" at GSHEC. He describes his observations that this dependency complex, exhibited by the local women towards Ford of course, as he saw it manifested in nine specific ways:

(a) no one else would take significant responsibility for management. (b) expectation by some women that Mrs. Ford would keep taking them to the hospital's family planning clinic. (c) at first some would contribute a shilling for food, but not later – yet the food kept coming. (d) indications of help from prominent local Kenyans were seldom followed up (e.g., by

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

Miss Margaret Kenyatta, the President's daughter and head of the Nairobi City Council; and by Dr. Mungai, a cabinet minister in whose constituency the Centre was located). (e) The District officer said no to a request from Mrs. Ford that her role be Africanized, replying that 'we need you, Mrs. Ford.' (f) During consideration of the need for a Kenyan administrator the City Council would want Mrs. Ford to find the needed monies. (g) When Mrs. Ford appealed to the district officer to form a management committee of local people there was very reluctant local participation in a meeting Mrs. Ford called. This group should be given direct responsibility. (h) effect of complications and some misuse of free food availability from CARE, the Red Cross. (i) All the above was complicated by a changing, threatening social scene including the breakdown of traditional values.¹⁷⁹

No doubt these specific reasons would have come as a surprise to CHF as there is no allusion to any of these conflicts in previous correspondence with Ford. In fact, Ford made multiple reference to the contrary where Mayor Kenyatta and Dr. Mungai were concerned. The final reason, citing a breakdown in traditional values, is perhaps most interesting, especially since it is addressed nowhere else in his report. While it is not clearly indicated, it is likely that the breakdown of traditional values to which Sinclair is referring has a great deal to do with the Western-based values Ford is attempting to impart at GSHEC, and the conflicts that arose from negotiations with local values.

Apparently following her resignation, the Centre's administrator telephoned Ford repeatedly, "asking what did they at the Centre do wrong to cause Mrs. Ford's withdrawal, and would she please come to explain this to them."¹⁸⁰ Sinclair reveals that Ford denied the request several times before finally obliging; the meeting was scheduled to take place after Sinclair had left Nairobi, arguably another questionable arrangement on Ford's account. Ultimately, Sinclair's report is significantly sympathetic to Ford and

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 2-3.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 3.

her decision to withdraw from GSHEC. He recommends to CHF that they “immediately communicate support for and thanks to Mrs. Ford” by both telegram and a follow-up letter. Likewise, he condones an investigation into potential ways to minimize the Centre’s dependency on CHF and Ford, in particular “(a) the administrative burden on Mrs. Ford (b) the accounts burden on Mr. Ford, and (c) the financial burden on CHF.” In this case however, the diversification of external funds, he clarifies, would not be helpful; “rather, local self-reliance must be promoted.”¹⁸¹ After concluding that he believes this to be an important turning point for the Centre’s future, Sinclair strongly recommends that CHF “give strong moral support to the Fords, and assist them to enable the Centre to get on a sound self-sufficient basis, with local management.”¹⁸²

Communication between CHF and Ford halted between the time Sinclair arrived in Nairobi and the date he submitted his final report to CHF, on June 19, 1974. A week later Susan McCoy, CHF’s newly hired Project Officer for Africa, wrote to apologize for their delay in responding personally to Ford’s decisions since they were awaiting Sinclair’s report. The short letter reassured Ford that Susan McCoy agreed “a greater contribution by the local people is necessary if this project is to be truly a ‘self-help’ endeavour. We are most sympathetic to your position and the large demands which have been placed upon you. Hopefully, these have been alleviated somewhat by now.”¹⁸³ Susan McCoy ended by informing Ford of her July 18 arrival in Nairobi to visit the project, discuss its future direction, and finalize CHF’s decision on continued financial

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid., 1.

¹⁸³ Susan McCoy, Letter to M.E. Ford, June 26, 1974. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 1. Henceforth, Susan McCoy’s full name is used so as to not confuse her letters with Tim McCoy’s, also of CHF.

support of the project. Unfortunately, there is no record of any reports or notes as a result of Susan McCoy's trip. CIDA's Enns however, also attended the Centre only two weeks after Susan McCoy, and recorded a short but important observation: "I visited the project on Monday August 12 and my prejudices regarding its management were confirmed rather than challenged by my observations ... We in CIDA are not going to push for further support ... I would appreciate hearing your conclusions about the project when you at CHF have decided what follow up you will give to it."¹⁸⁴

Susan McCoy did just that, copying Enns on a letter to Ford dated September 23 declaring that CHF had decided not to renew the funding grant for GSHEC. The reasons behind this decision, Susan McCoy explained, were based largely on evolving programming priorities, with regard to the emphasis which CHF planned to place on agricultural focused projects. Perhaps in an attempt to appease Ford, Susan McCoy explains that she saw many worse off communities than Gatina during her July visit: "At least Kenya does possess the financial and organizational capability to help itself."¹⁸⁵ Susan McCoy indicates that remaining CHF funds have been authorized to permit the project to continue until January, even February of 1975, after which she asks Ford to submit both a final financial and descriptive report regarding GSHEC.

Ford did not respond to Susan McCoy's September letter, nor is there any evidence that she submitted the reports as she requested. Instead, Blair Hankey, the High Commissioner's Second Secretary wrote to CHF in May 1975 to provide a thorough

¹⁸⁴ Anthony Enns, Letter to Susan McCoy, August 21, 1974. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 1.

¹⁸⁵ Susan McCoy, Letter to M.E. Ford, September 23 1974. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 1.

update on the conclusion of the project. In reality, the CHF funds lasted longer than McCoy anticipated, as Hankey reports that in mid-March, Ford telephoned the Office, demanding to meet with Olivier immediately concerning the disbursement of remaining funds. It was only after Olivier told Ford that, in her capacity as project leader, she had authority to use the remaining funds did Hankey receive the following description from her on March 20:

The Centre has been closed since Christmas 1974 due to a lack of food, disagreements in the Management Committee (a continuing factor over the last 3 years), and the absence of any one to teach health education or take any responsibility whatsoever for running the Project ... I have no energy left to pander to the whims and demands of a people who have been given too much, and who have sadly misused my voluntary efforts on their behalf. The words 'self-help' in the Project title have long been a mockery. I will therefore have nothing more to do with the problems of Gatina or with any correspondence or meetings related to it.¹⁸⁶

As he now understood that Ford requested the use of funds during a time when the Centre was in fact shut down, Hankey requested in an immediate letter that the remaining balance be returned to the High Commission so that the Office could supervise their disposal as directed by CHF in May, 1974.¹⁸⁷ Hankey reported that "Ford took great umbrage to this suggestion, asserting that the High Commission's actions demonstrated that (1) we did not trust Mrs. Ford, and (2) we had not showed proper gratitude for the selfless effort which she had expended on behalf of the poor people of Kenya over the last four years."¹⁸⁸ Consequently at a meeting with the remaining Canadian volunteers

¹⁸⁶ M.E. Ford, Letter to Blair Hankey, March 19, 1975. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 3.

¹⁸⁷ See, John Kortright, Letter to M.E. Ford, May 13, 1974. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 1.

¹⁸⁸ Blair Hankey, Letter to Susan McCoy, May 2 1975. (National Archives of Canada, Canadian Hunger Foundation: MG28-I395. *Kenya – Gatina Self-Help Centre*, Volume 16, Number 406-200): 1.

involved at GSHEC, it was decided that Anne Hunter would deal with any additional correspondence with the High Commission regarding the conclusion of the project; Hankey admits Hunter “proved much easier to deal with than Mrs. Ford.”¹⁸⁹ And yet, in an unanticipated letter, Ford wrote again to Hankey with statements from a number of organizations in and around Nairobi indicating that they received funds for ‘capital development’ from ‘Charities for Kenya’, “presumably the designation Mrs. Ford has chosen for the fund comprised of the balance of the CHF/CIDA grant to the Gatina project which she considers should be disbursed by herself and her colleagues in the Canadian Volunteer Committee.”¹⁹⁰ Also attached was a document entitled ‘Receipts and Payments Account,’ finally detailing the entire use of funds from CHF and CIDA. While Hankey admits that he is “by no means entirely satisfied with the manner in which Mrs. Ford has proceeded, without the authorization of the High Commission in disbursing the balance of the CHF and CIDA grant to the Gatina Project,” he concedes that he has no reason to believe that the funds were at all misused. He recommends that this concludes the project from CHF and CIDA’s point of view, and proposes to not pursue Ford any further.¹⁹¹

Hankey then admits that he ultimately regards GSHEC as a failure, both from the developmental and political point of view. From the development perspective, he explains that the Centre “appears merely to have created a group of persons dependent upon handouts from Canadian sources, whose condition is probably no better, and indeed is perhaps worse than it was prior to the initiation of the project.”¹⁹² Hankey’s view is

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 2.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

perhaps especially valuable given that his Office was involved on a more day-to-day basis than was anyone at CHF or CIDA. So when he professes that “the project was, in spite of its title, neither a self-help nor an education project, but rather a charity which merely dispensed food and medical care to the poor people of the Gatina area,” the validity of Ford’s earlier reports detailing success become questionable. Perhaps most interesting is Hankey’s condemnation that “no progress was made in ‘Africanizing’ the project because Mrs. Ford was convinced that the local people were incapable of running the project without the benefit of her direction,” a suspicion that arguably plagued the duration of the project since Batchelor warned of the risks of individually headed projects in April 1973.¹⁹³ Casting doubt on any ambition Ford ever professed to the self-sustainability goals of the Centre, Hankey reveals,

she was further convinced that the local people were inherently corrupt and that, unless she scrupulously supervised the expenditure of every shilling, the CHF/CIDA funds would be misappropriated. Because she conceived the project largely as a monument to herself, she was determined that the project should terminate when her association with it came to an end.¹⁹⁴

Finally, he makes the insightful argument that the way in which Ford insisted on handling the unspent balance of the CHF and CIDA funds “only serves to further demonstrate the degree to which she viewed the project as her personal creature to be disposed at her discretion.”¹⁹⁵ Indeed, it explains her ongoing preoccupation with the Centre’s funds ever since writing to McCoy to ensure that the program could run uninterrupted and as she saw fit. He decides that ultimately, GSHEC failed on account of Ford’s “need for self-glorification,” which negated any supposed desires for the improvement of the social and

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 3.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

economic conditions of Gatina's women. Likewise, he accuses the project of being "characterized by an anachronistic paternalism completely out of tune with the psychological mood of Africa today, which has little sympathy for the 'White man's burden'." Lastly, Hankey concludes that despite early appearances to the contrary, Ford was "a neurotic and self-righteous individual whose temperament made her ill-suited for the role of project leader."¹⁹⁶ His final sentence arguably offers a considerable amount of foresight:

I would suggest that in future, when selecting projects for developing countries, some attempt should be made by CHF to ascertain whether any expatriate personnel associated with the project have the necessary personal attributes, especially an inclination and ability to work effectively with local people, to facilitate the success of the project.¹⁹⁷

While Hankey's report may seem emotionally charged at times, it is an incredibly valuable document for understanding Ford's actions in her last days as Project Leader, as she scrambled to maintain control over remaining funds, if not the Centre itself. Its striking contrast with Sinclair's report, which praises Ford's dedication to the project, suggests too that Ford was able to uphold a guise of genuine selflessness while Sinclair visited shortly after her initial resignation. But as the project began to collapse even further, with future funding denied by CHF and CIDA, Ford could no longer maintain control of herself, or the floundering Centre.

Conclusion

Writing in 1969, political scientist Rupert Emerson explained how the 'arrogance' of colonialism takes many forms; it rests upon the belief in some form of racial or

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

cultural superiority which justifies colonial rule since, he describes, “the ‘natives’ are congenitally incapable of overcoming their backwardness ... or for as long as they are regarded by their colonial masters as being incompetent to manage their own affairs.”¹⁹⁸

In the Gatina community of Nairobi’s Kawangware slum, both CHF and CIDA recognized that the local people were indeed capable of overcoming their traditional values, certainly those that impeded their development, but not without the impressive development knowledge and directorial skills of Ford. Emerson suggests that the “supreme arrogance” of colonialism came in the form of the “devoted and unself-seeking civil servant or missionary who set as his goal only the transformation of the native society and its beliefs into a closer replica of his own.”¹⁹⁹ It is not coincidental that this description fits Ford’s ambitions at GSEHC so well; designing and implementing a participatory project based at worst on the compliance of the local women, and at best on the consultation of local authorities.²⁰⁰ The arrogance of this imposing individual, Emerson argues, is in fact far worse than “the strong ruler who exploits his subjects for what he can get out of them but is indifferent to their creeds and institutions,” since the ruler at least allows their subjects to “save their souls in their own fashion.”²⁰¹ Perhaps it is most telling that in all of CHF’s archives, there is not one mention of any CIDA or CHF official ever speaking with any of Gatina’s women involved at GSHEC, or minutes of a meeting between Ford and the few women who did volunteer on a regular basis, an

¹⁹⁸ Rupert Emerson, “Colonialism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 4, no. 1 (1969): 13.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Andrea Cornwall describes six levels of participation in development projects; co-option is the lowest level, where “no real input of power” is given to the local people, and outsiders make decisions “in a top-down manner.” Consultation is the third level involving the “opinions of leaders ... [while] outsiders decide on activities.” In between the two is compliance, in which “tasks are assigned, using incentives [and] outsiders decide the agenda,” certainly recognizable at GSHEC. See, Andrea Cornwall and Rachel Jewkes, “What is participatory research?” *Social Science & Medicine* 41, no. 12 (1995): 1667-1676.

²⁰¹ Emerson, 14.

interview or newspaper article quoting any of the women involved besides Ford, even a strategically written letter to CHF or CIDA from a local woman describing the wonderful improvements in the community thanks to their grant money. At all times, Ford is completely in control of not only the daily operations of the Centre, but also of what CHF and CIDA know of the project.

In the end, Chandra Mohanty's warning could scarcely be more relevant:

Only from the vantage point of the West is it possible to define the 'third world' as underdeveloped and economically dependent. Without the overdetermined discourse that creates the *third* world, there would be no (singular and privileged) first world. Without the 'third world woman' the particular self-presentation of Western women ... would be problematical.²⁰²

For Mohanty, each woman - First and Third World - enables and sustains the other.

Indeed, Ford could not possibly maintain her role as project director without maintaining the Gatina's women's subordination. Early professions of the exceptional potential of Gatina's women were strategic in appeals for funding; once Ford's authoritative role at GSHEC became clouded by the same ambivalence in identity as that stemming from colonial discourse, Ford could no longer uphold the guise that she began the project under. Fulfilling her early commitments to the self-sustainability of the project would have not only required the surrender of managerial control, but the admission that these women were indeed capable of a dialogue in which *they* could identify their own needs and determine attempts at which to achieve them. On the surface, the project's fate was sealed early on by its superficial participatory strategies and exclusive commitment to Western based maternal values, but it was the assumption of authority, even superiority,

²⁰² Mohanty, 74.

which Ford maintained between herself and Gatina's women that served to fuel her underlying dependence on *them*.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has considered the failed participatory development strategies implemented at the Gatina Self-Help Health Education Centre, a once promising project initiated by Canadian Topsy Ford in the small impoverished region of Gatina, Nairobi, Kenya from 1972 until May 1974. In the 15 months GSEHC was in operation, there is little evidence to support any major achievements where the welfare of the local women and children are concerned. Letters, reports, and even journal style notes from Ford are the best sources available for a comprehensive picture of the project, and yet the objectivity of her accounts is almost certainly compromised in order to present an optimistic and successful picture of the project to funding agencies CIDA and CHF. A few valuable documents do exist, however, especially in Sheila Batchelor, Michael Sinclair, and Blair Hankey's reports, that allow for an alternative consideration of daily operations at GSHEC and the influences that caused the project's demise. From a historical point of view, GSHEC is an incredibly important case study for being initiated during an exceptionally significant time in development studies where Third World women were recognized as potential, even promising, resources for development planning. The theoretical weaknesses of the Women in Development model provide insight into where GSHEC fell short of its ambitious goals. Similarly, considering where colonial discourse influenced Ford and the Centre's design is especially useful for recognizing the implications of development discourse in practice. After CIDA and CHF withdrew their financial support from the project, there is no record of Ford continuing any efforts at the site of GSHEC. Instead, the facilities began to be used by the

community, sporadically, as a day care centre for the region's increasing child population.

The Gatina Primary School²⁰²

GSHEC informally became the Gatina Primary School (GPS) after the former was abandoned by Ford and her surrounding Canadian support in 1975. Today Amsha Africa, a small American NGO, seeks to continue a great deal of the work originally initiated at GSHEC, now at GPS. Influential in the school's recent surge in community support was the Free Primary Education (FPE) program established in January 2003 by Kenya's national government, which established a fund aimed at addressing financing and quality challenges in the country's primary schools. It targets all Kenyan children attending formal and non-formal public schools, of which GPS is considered the latter, though to date they have not been successfully nominated for funding.²⁰³ An emphasis is directed towards children from Kenya's poorest regions and funds are disbursed to a district based on the number of children enrolled in schools there. It is important to note that communities are expected to participate in the management and implementation through voluntary school committees.

Nairobi's Kawangware slum, the area surrounding Gatina, remains characterized by persisting unsanitary conditions, overcrowding, sub-standard buildings, unsafe water supplies, and deficient waste disposal. Houses are usually built in rows with floors most often made up of dirt and cement, and the walls composed of metal sheets, timber, cardboard, plastic sheets, and mud, while corrugated iron sheets are the most common

²⁰² This section is adapted from an earlier, unpublished paper by the author, "Participation, Empowerment and Strategies for Self-Help: Reflections on the Gatina Primary School project, Nairobi."

²⁰³ Amsha Africa Foundation, "Project Proposal on Child Welfare and Development: Case Study Gatina Primary School Kawangware," (Dallas, Texas: 2008), 8.

type of roofing.²⁰⁴ Rooms of 100 square feet often accommodate families and groups of three to five people. Furthermore, few families have adequate kitchen facilities and most prepare their meals with kerosene in the same room used for living and sleeping.²⁰⁵ The Nairobi City Council is responsible for city services such as water supply, sewer systems, refuse disposal, and health care. However, with few exceptions it has neglected to provide these services in the informal settlements such as Gatina. Davinder Lamba, executive director of Mazingira Institute, a Kenyan interdisciplinary research firm and NGO, believes that the City Council's neglect of the Nairobi's informal settlements stems from the fear that providing services would confer legitimacy to their existence, "and the argument has been that the city administration has no mandate to service illegally settled areas."²⁰⁶ But in not providing services, he contends that the Council effectively neglects its self-determined duty to provide for *all* its citizens regardless of their circumstances. Quite obviously, this neglect causes "a kind of de facto discrimination" resulting in restricted access by Nairobi's urban poor to safe housing, water, health care and so forth.²⁰⁷

In December 2007, Anthony Abuta, Director of Amsha Africa (AA), discovered Gatina much in the same way Ford had some 35 years earlier: by guidance from a local person. At this time, the school was supported entirely by locally raised funds. Echoing concerns at GSHEC, AA identifies the School's most prominent problem as "poor management."²⁰⁸ This poor management is credited to several factors ranging from

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 9.

²⁰⁵ Davinder Lamba, "The forgotten half; environmental health in Nairobi's poverty areas," *Environment and Urbanization* 6, no. 164 (1994): 169.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 168.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 169.

²⁰⁸ Amsha Africa, 6.

inadequate funds to run the school, to pressure from private developers in acquisition of the plot to which the school is located. In their official project proposal, AA identifies single mothers as the most adversely affected group influenced by the socio-economic 'decay' in Gatina. Most girls in the Kawangware region end up pregnant at an early age, the proposal declares, highlighting prostitution as a common occupational role for women and girls in the area. Not surprisingly then, AA's proposal concludes that unplanned pregnancies heavily contribute to the rampant increase in the number of children within the community. Finally, "widowed women or women whose husbands have left them face a burden in taking care of their children with limited resources."²⁰⁹

As of June 2009, GPS reported 135 enrolled students with six teachers paid a salary of 3000 Kenyan Shillings per month (approximately CAD \$40). The school also employs one security guard, who doubles as a janitor, and one cook. All salaries are paid for by AA, as is the food for each student's daily meal. The sustainability of the project's benefits in light of AA providing GPS staff salaries is worth considering. Without consistent and reliable funds from government programs such as FPE it is highly unlikely that the management of the School is sustainable without AAs continued support. GPS's curriculum is derived from Kenya's Ministry of Education, and enrolment is open only to children under the age of fifteen. Under the FPE act, the School is free to attend, in theory, however, for Gatina's impoverished families paying for school uniforms and basic supplies, such as paper and pencils, is an increasing challenge. As a result, many children drop out since these items are prerequisites for school attendance. According to AA's proposal, an important barrier at GPS is the "limited participation by the local community especially in ensuring that there is accountability, proper teaching, and

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 8.

children's consistent attendance at the school."²¹⁰ According to AA, this limited participation then, contributes to the number of children dropping out of school at an early age. And despite the FPE program, AA's proposal reports that the government (through the local administration) has similarly not been active in ensuring parents send their children to school.

For the purposes of earlier concerns, the most relevant goals of AA's partnership with GPS are to

establish the immediate needs of children, youths, and single mothers in the Kawangware region and identify how these needs can be satisfied ... and to train and employ single mothers around the Kawangware region to begin empowering projects such as making school uniforms for children or cooking lunch for the Gatina School children.²¹¹

Reminiscent of the employment opportunities established at GSHEC, AA's proposal identifies the need to address the *practical* needs of Gatina's women, but the proposal fails to see that these participatory opportunities still concentrate women "in the lower echelons of society" since they focus on domestic-related labour.²¹² Fonjong contends that participatory opportunities in literacy, home economics and hygiene do very little to challenge the occupational segregation inherent in many African societies. Again, what is missing at GPS is an *extension* of the goals to include a consideration for these women's strategic needs in relation to the achievement of their practical needs. Finally, AA's proposal's sixth and final 'immediate' goal seeks "to establish direct and indirect ways external donors or the government can step in to eradicate poverty through child education" in order to meet the United Nation's Millennium Development Goal (MDG)

²¹⁰ Ibid., 14.

²¹¹ Ibid., 7.

²¹² Fonjong, 228.

of free basic education for all.²¹³ The most encouraging aspect of this goal is its mention of state intervention; in fact, it is the *only* goal to identify the potential benefits of political engagement with Gatina's socioeconomic problems. Senior Fellow for the International Institute for Environment and Development, David Satterthwaite argues that the challenge for NGOs addressing urban poverty areas is to identify their role in supporting and legitimizing the processes through which the needs (arguably both practical and strategic) of the urban poor are determined and addressed. "This includes supporting solutions that the urban poor develop themselves," he explains, "together with the processes by which they develop solutions and negotiate with government and other external agencies."²¹⁴ NGOs such as AA then, are incredibly well positioned to facilitate the conception of these solutions for urban slums like Gatina, especially with regard to the MDGs. While their proposal lacks concrete strategies with which to engage political structures in Gatina's poverty alleviation, or in their pursuit of making GPS accessible to (and sustainable for) the entire community, at the very least AA acknowledges the necessity of state cooperation as they develop methods aimed at MDG achievement.

Ultimately, both Ford's GSHEC and Amsha Africa's GPS projects recognized a need in the Gatina community for the improvement in women's lives, as well as emphasized the importance of creating participatory, or 'self-help' opportunities for local women in order to achieve this improvement. However, the historical comparison of strategies at GPS are too similar to GSHEC's to deny its historical ignorance: 30 years removed from GSHEC's commendable, though failed, attempts at channelling Kenya's harambee movement, Amsha Africa's goals at GPS focus solely on women's practical

²¹³ Amsha Africa, 7.

²¹⁴ David Satterthwaite, "How to Meet the Millennium Development Goals in Urban Areas," *Environment and Urbanization* 17, no. 1 (2005): 19.

needs, overlooking the importance of addressing their strategic needs, which are crucial to their empowerment. Furthermore, Cornwall reminds us that “claims to the inclusiveness of WID participatory strategies wobble once questions are asked about who participates, decides and benefits from [these] interventions.”²¹⁵ Ultimately however, both GSHEC and GPS maintain the ‘status quo’ in terms of women’s awareness of the sources of their socioeconomic and political subordination: while their participation in each project is evident, neither GSHEC nor GPS commit to raising awareness amongst Gatina’s women. Where knowledge is not ‘situated’ in participatory development projects, an important process whereby access to the information, and control over its use shifts from outsider ‘experts’ to the local people whose lives are being affected is gravely missed.²¹⁶ Through developing strategies aimed at achieving women’s strategic needs however, NGOs such as Amsha Africa can support and facilitate truly empowering opportunities for women that are not only attainable, but also sustainable.

Finally, it should be stated that the objective of this brief sketch is not to suggest that Amsha Africa’s efforts at GPS are doomed based solely on the project’s historical ignorance; rather, it is my hope that the analysis provides sufficient evidence to support the potential benefits of historical contextualization in development studies. The late feminist political theorist Susan Okin reminds us that development approaches that favour the poor and recognize the “rights of the vulnerable” do well in challenging the socioeconomic and political power relations that sustain inequalities, and even better

²¹⁵ Cornwall, 1328.

²¹⁶ Lisa Campbell and Arja Vainio-Mattila, “Participatory Development and Community Based Conservation; Opportunities missed for lessons learned?” *Human Ecology* 31, no. 3 (2003): 425.

when meaningful participatory strategies are opened to women specifically.²¹⁷ However, too often ahistorical approaches to development neglect important examinations of the *causes* of poverty and women's subordination; ultimately, they end up presenting underdevelopment as a natural occurrence. In the end, perhaps it is as simple as recognizing that development analyses contextualized in historical realities have the potential to vastly enlighten our understanding of so many of the central social, political and economic obstacles to development, and can help us to better develop participatory strategies that support women's *real* empowerment.

CIDA & CHF Today

Current CIDA policy is heavily influenced by the Canadian government's 2009 Aid Effectiveness Agenda, which dictates that 80 percent of bilateral resources will be channelled into just 20 countries of focus. These 20 countries were chosen by the government "based on their real needs, their capacity to benefit from aid, and their alignment with Canadian foreign policy priorities."²¹⁸ Kenya is not among them; instead, the Sub-Saharan African recipients are Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, Tanzania, and Sudan. The stated goal of this channelling is to improve both the effectiveness and accountability of Canada's overseas development assistance. Like Amsha Africa, recent CIDA policy has also been heavily influenced by the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals, described by the agency as "a unique approach to achieving sustainable development built around a partnership of the global

²¹⁷ Susan Okin, "Poverty, Well-Being, and Gender: What Counts, Who's Heard?" *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 31, no.3 (2003): 288.

²¹⁸ Canadian International Development Agency, "Aid Effectiveness Agenda," [Ottawa] 2009. <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/ACDI-CIDA.nsf/eng/FRA-825105226-KFT>. (accessed July 19, 2010).

community.”²¹⁹ Gender equality, governance, health, basic education, private-sector development, and environmental sustainability are all featured as prominent concerns in recent CIDA literature. In May 2009, during an address on this new approach, Minister of International Cooperation Beverley Oda, indicated that the MDGs are among the foundational priorities of CIDA’s new effectiveness plan.²²⁰ Related to this, CIDA has increased its investments in sectors and initiatives directly related to developing countries’ plans for reaching the MDGs. More specifically, the agency professes to have “made visible and lasting contributions in the areas of child health and education and in addressing hunger through food aid and support for agricultural development.”²²¹ CIDA cites that among its priority themes, “increasing food security, securing the future of children and youth, [and] stimulating sustainable economic growth,” are its foremost priorities. Where Africa is concerned, CIDA contributed to \$2.1 billion to the continent in 2008 to 2009, compared to \$1.05 billion between 2003 and 2004. In September 2008, the Canadian government announced that it would untie all development aid by 2013, a commitment consistent with not only the MDGs, but also 2005’s Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, and 2008’s Accra Accord.²²²

On the other hand, recent CHF literature is less concerned with the Millennium Development Goals, though the financial support from CIDA is explicitly credited in their Annual Reports. As indicated by Susan McCoy in 1974, the organization has indeed shifted their programming priorities to rural-based projects that support the use of what

²¹⁹ Canadian International Development Agency, “Global Issues,” <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/acdi-cida.nsf/eng/NIC-53131840-NB8>. (accessed July 20, 2010).

²²⁰ Canadian International Development Agency, “Millennium Development Goals,” <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/ACDI-CIDA.nsf/eng/JUD-13173118-GPM>. (accessed July 20, 2010).

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² See, Canadian International Development Agency, “Millennium Development Goals,” <http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/acdi-cida.nsf/eng/JUD-13173118-GPM>. (accessed July 20, 2010).

they call the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA). According to CHF, SLA “offers a way of analyzing rural poverty that respects and empowers the local population as architects of their own development.”²²³ CHF describes that their projects involve entire communities in designing and implementing projects, and ensures that the projects priorities help people to collaborate with local organizations and government agencies in order to maximize potentials for success.²²⁴ Specifically, SLA is designed to address rural poverty and food insecurity in Ethiopia, Kenya, Ghana, Bangladesh and Pakistan, all places with active CHF programming. Along with improved agricultural production, the SLA approach recognizes that diversifying income through small businesses and other activities is essential for long-term resilience for impoverished rural communities.²²⁵ And although their participatory methods are not described in any depth, CHF does profess to ‘work with’ communities “to ensure that the mix of agricultural production and small enterprise activities is suited to their particular circumstances, and that these are complemented with the appropriate training and technical support.”²²⁶

In their 2009 Annual Report, CHF devotes an entire section to their work on “Empowering Women through Livelihoods & Gender Equality,” rhetoric still obviously alive and well in development policy.²²⁷ The report confirms that the values, attitudes and relationships required to gain equal status between women and men is central to the sustainable development debate. Alluding slightly to the utility of history, they confirm that decades of practice have demonstrated that when women have equal access to and

²²³ Canadian Hunger Foundation, “2009 Annual Report,” Ottawa, 2009. : 7. <http://www.chf-partners.ca/annual-report/annual-report/about-us/annual-report/>. (accessed July 20, 2010).

²²⁴ Ibid., 1.

²²⁵ Ibid., 10.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid., 16.

control over resources, households and communities both benefit; in this way, gender equality is a crucial factor for CHF in their SLA efforts. In Kenya specifically, CHF currently partners with the WEM Integrated Health Services (WEMIHS) organization, initiated by three Kenyan women in 1998. WEMIHS is described to oversee several programs in central and eastern Kenya that are attempting to strengthen community responses to AIDS through “livelihoods initiatives” in the country’s Thika and Maragua districts.²²⁸ In particular, these two districts report high rates of HIV/AIDS, “fueled by the large number of migrant workers attracted to nearby factories.” Described by CHF as the local AIDS service organization, WEMIHS has partnered with them with the foremost goal of integrating sustainable livelihoods with their health-focused work in these communities. Specifically, the project provides alternative sources of income and improved food production to the population, which is primarily dependent on casual labour and contract farming.²²⁹ The two organizations also work together to raise awareness regarding people living with HIV/AIDS, who are commonly stigmatized and forced to repeatedly migrate between communities as a result.

CHF accuses traditional rural development plans for considering only the deficiencies of communities: “this approach has left communities no further ahead than before, presenting only temporary solutions to long-term chronic problems.”²³⁰ As an important component of SLA, the report subsequently describes ‘Three-Dimensional Development,’ where a more complex evaluation of the community is considered in order to uncover the often overlooked components of communities that *do* contribute towards development. CHF contends that the approach helps to identify “hidden assets,

²²⁸ Ibid., 7.

²²⁹ Ibid., 13.

²³⁰ Ibid., 1.

untapped potential, networks of people, skills and resources, all of which give communities the power to transform themselves and create stable and sustainable livelihoods.” “By looking at the biggest picture possible,” the organization believes that their Three-Dimensional Development approach “reveals the power within communities to create self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods.”²³¹ Relevant especially to previous discussions, CHF subscribes to viewing all sectors of society in order to determine the important influence groups and interrelationships can have on a community. In this way, CHF’s methods are, at least on paper, based in optimism and in search of opportunities rather than focussed solely on identifying problems.

Some Thoughts on Women’s Development Today and the Utility of History

Certainly demonstrated by Ford’s assumptions at GSHEC, the case for development is more often than not presented as a self-evident one, and, arguably, as a process necessary for *all* poor societies no matter what their unique needs, specific circumstances, and certainly with little regard to important historical influences. As a result, even contemporary development projects and proposals often neglect to contextualize the conditions of poor societies, presenting their poverty as a ‘natural’ occurrence. Political historian Tim Mitchell contends that the ahistorical rhetoric of development allows poverty to become the “traditional poverty of a peasantry that has not yet or has only recently joined the twentieth century – rather than very much a product of the political and economic forces of that [same] century.”²³² Similarly, in their influential study of Guinea’s presumed rapid deforestation, anthropologists James

²³¹ Ibid., 10.

²³² Tim Mitchell, “The Object of Development,” in *Power of Development*, ed., Jonathan Crush. (New York: Routledge, 1995), 140.

Fairhead and Melissa Leach expose assumptions of social science narratives by contrasting them against counternarratives brought out through alternative historical sources. They recognize that these false narratives reveal “how applied social sciences can be used to lend weight to popular Western perceptions about African society.”²³³ Perhaps not surprisingly, these ahistorical, often depoliticized, narratives thus present strong justifications for development. An important power relationship manifests here; these false narratives “expose the field of Western imagination concerning African society ... they show that stereotypes born of the colonial era are alive and well.”²³⁴ Important implications of colonial discourse can be found in the case for development, a project which is more often than not presented as a self-evident one. A growing body of scholarship views colonial and post-colonial social relations as “a sustained interaction in which political-economic systems and systems of signification are inextricably intertwined.”²³⁵ Analyzing the ideological dimensions of African colonialism, a number of writers have argued that the colonized appropriate and internalize the colonial vision, even while resisting it.²³⁶ If we extend this understanding of colonial relationships to contemporary international development, then we must consider how Kenya’s vision for national development acknowledges, resists, accepts, and appropriates ideologies of modernization at the micro level. For such a consideration, anthropologist Peter Pels

²³³ James Fairhead and Melissa Leach, “False forest history, complicit social analysis: Rethinking some West African environmental narratives,” *World Development* 23, no. 6 (1995): 1023.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1031-1032.

²³⁵ See, for example, Jean and John Comaroff, “Through the Looking-Glass: Colonial Encounters of the First Kind,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1, no. 1 (1988): 6-32; John and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the historical imagination*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992); and, Steven Feierman, “African histories and the dissolution of world history,” in *Africa and the Disciplines*, eds., by Robert Bates, Valentin Mudimbe, and Jean O’Barr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

²³⁶ See, for instance, Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965); and, Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1983).

remains a strong proponent for the relevance and value of interdisciplinary collaborations. His focus on the unique relationship between contemporary anthropology and colonial studies is most relevant here: “For anthropologists, more than for any other type of scholar, colonialism is not a historical object that remains external. The discipline descends from and is still struggling with techniques of observation and control that emerged from the colonial dialectic of Western governmentality.”²³⁷

Persistent social inequalities are evident in both development projects considered in this paper. Though separated by over 30 years, GSHEC and GPS share striking similarities in their attempts to involve local women in ‘meaningful’ ways despite the disparities that permeate the community. Ultimately, each project recognized a need in the Gatina community for the improvement in women’s lives, as well as emphasized the importance of creating participatory opportunities for local women in order to achieve this improvement. However, the historical comparison reveals that the participatory strategies at GPS are too similar to GSHEC’s to deny its historical ignorance: three decades removed from GSHEC’s commendable, though failed, attempts at channelling Kenya’s harambee movement, Amsha Africa’s goals at GPS focus solely on women’s practical needs, overlooking the importance of addressing their strategic needs, which are crucial to their empowerment.

Historically, and as we see at GSEHC, development organizations have a strong tendency to examine the failure of development projects based on the values, structures, and even faults, of the recipient communities; rarely do planners initially look to their own policies and priorities as being problematic in execution, never mind in theory. The

²³⁷ Peter Pels, “The Anthropology of Colonialism: Culture, History, and the Emergence of Western Governmentality.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997): 164.

prevailing colonial discourse, especially in Africa, that sustains conventions of dualism (modern versus traditional, industry versus agriculture) only serves to perpetuate a narrow understanding of the vast potential for development there. Decontextualized representations of Africa, for example, widespread images of failing rural subsistence farming, are more so the result of specific historical discourses, like those of the colonial era, and *not* a natural condition, as development rhetoric suggests.²³⁸ Likewise, the typical image of the Third World woman, veiled, obedient, mothering, prostituting, etcetera, “exists in universal, ahistorical splendour, setting in motion a colonialist discourse which exercises a very specific power in defining, coding, and maintain existing first and third world connections.”²³⁹

This discourse was alive and well at GSHEC; it may seem that initially, Ford saw beyond its confines, recognizing the capacity of these women for their own, self-helped development, even privileging them with her descriptions of their dedication and hard work. And regardless of the degree to which Gatina’s women *could* have helped themselves, Ford’s plans for GSHEC failed on account of assumptions that the project did not necessitate both a historical and socio-political contextualization. Three decades later, AA has reinstated the hope of a participatory education project in Gatina without any knowledge of Ford’s previous efforts. Its success depends largely on the empowerment of the women involved and the establishment of clear and committed local government support. In her 1993 *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practise and Training*, Caroline Moser develops a framework for women’s empowerment in development projects now used by UNICEF to help development planners to recognize

²³⁸ Karl Botchway, “Are Development Planners Afraid of History? Notes on Reading a Development Report on Northern Ghana.” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 35, no. 1 (2001): 36.

²³⁹ Mohantny, 73.

the crucial steps to achieving women's empowerment and evaluate how their projects address both practical and strategic needs. The model is based on five levels that relate to women's empowerment: welfare, access, concientization, participation, and control.²⁴⁰

The welfare level requires that all gender disparities are eliminated between the men and women involved in the project, and while this seems like a lofty achievement, improving women's welfare alone can still leave women as passive beneficiaries or recipients of development benefits. For instance, a community based project may provide women with pipe-borne water, without necessarily allowing them to influence its location.²⁴¹ The access level reinforces the gender equality attained in the welfare stage by ensuring women have the right and ease to obtain the products and services that will facilitate their development, such as land credit. With the concept of concientization previously considered in the context of GSEHC, its relevance to the participatory strategies at GPS is even greater. Where AA is concerned, Gatina's women's empowerment greatly depends on raising the level of awareness of the various roles of women in the community and interrelationships between, moving away from policies that homogenize women's experiences. Likewise, an increased and informed awareness of the economic and political structures that contribute to their circumstances gives women the knowledge to challenge and dismantle these obstacles.²⁴² Thus, concientization is arguably the most important stage of the model where the sustainability of empowerment is concerned since it allows women to see the *causes* of their subordination and develop appropriate interventions to address them. Finally, when participation is achieved,

²⁴⁰ See, Fonjong, 224; and, UNICEF, "The empowerment framework in women and girls advancement," (Washington, DC: UNICEF, 1993).

²⁴¹ Fonjong, 224.

²⁴² Ibid., 225.

women contribute to and share in community resources and the allocation of power in decision making: “this will lead to the level of control where they are able to direct or influence events so that their interests are protected” and they are, theoretically, empowered at all levels.²⁴³

Quite obviously, women’s empowerment should be a fundamental component and concern of participatory based development projects. As at GSHEC, however, empowerment is too often assumed to be accomplished when women are merely given access to their basic, or practical, needs; on its own, this achievement is insufficient since it does not necessitate that women thereafter gain control over their needs. Even the highest point of the model, ensuring women’s access to political participation and decision making and control, remains inadequate where many critics are concerned. NGOs cannot be solely responsible for women’s empowerment initiatives; Fonjong cautions that where the fulfillment of strategic gender needs intersects with fundamental cultural and structural changes, NGOs can be seen as foreign interventions on domestic issues.²⁴⁴ In such cases, *locally* based NGOs and civil society are better suited to take initiative but often “lack the necessary human and material resources to take the lead.”²⁴⁵ Therefore, development projects aimed at women’s empowerment must actually be joint efforts between international and local NGOs, civil society and, finally, with cooperation from the state in order to ensuring the sustainability of long-term benefits.

From a theoretical point of view, Jane Parpart believes that postmodernism has a great deal to offer development studies: a feminist critique of “the modern and its focus on localized, subjugated knowledge and power systems would encourage development

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 234.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

planners to pay more attention to the concrete circumstances of Third World women's lives."²⁴⁶ Ultimately, anthropologists and development planners should seek to discover the needs and aspirations of Third World women in as many places and circumstances as possible, rather than presuming Western-based models and strategies aimed at their assumed needs are easily implemented. In the interest of history, designing and implementing projects based on contextualized realities of Third World women would stimulate a contemporary search for historically silenced voices, particularly rarely documented interpretations of women's daily lives, their successes on one hand, their desires for change on the other.²⁴⁷ Social Anthropologist Michelle Rosaldo gives an important reminder: "a woman's place in human social life is not in any direct sense a product of the things she does (or even less of what, biologically, she is) but the meaning her activities acquire through concrete social interactions."²⁴⁸ At GSHEC, especially, that Gatina's women 'mothered' was not as significant as the value attached to *being* a mother in urban Kenya. The distinction between the act of mothering and the status attached to it is an important analysis that is too often neglected, certainly by Ford, and potentially by Amsha Africa.²⁴⁹

Recognizing Third World women as agents with their own histories, practices and achievements gives development planners and scholars the opportunity to work collaboratively to improve development theory and practice. Attention to difference, language and resistance amongst Third World women provides new insights into their realities and, as Parpart argues, "undermines the tendency to unthinkingly apply western

²⁴⁶ Parpart, "Who is the 'Other'?", 453.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 454.

²⁴⁸ Michelle Rosaldo, *Knowledge and Passion: Ilongot notions of self and social life*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 400.

²⁴⁹ Mohanty, 60.

standards to all Third World societies.”²⁵⁰ Consequently, it would encourage development specialists to challenge the historical roots of development discourse representing Third World women as the vulnerable Other. Overlooked at GSEHC were the important socio-political, even socioeconomic, connections that restricted Gatina’s women’s access to the resources and knowledge that would have challenged their subordination. A comprehensive understanding of women’s realities can only really be discovered Parpart contends “by uncovering the voices and knowledge of the ‘vulnerable’, and that once that is done, this vulnerability is neither so clear nor so pervasive.”²⁵¹

Finally, the University of Manchester’s development theorist Bill Cooke believes that the redemption of participatory development strategies lay in historicizing both theory and practice: “it’s about learning from experience, about not repeating on Third World people methodologies without acknowledging the potential problems long recognized in the First World.”²⁵² He recognizes that development requires a historical perspective to be able to put the role and function of participatory development into perspective and context. His recommendation is unique insofar as it requires the interrogation of history in order to assess how participatory development strategies contribute to long term, *future* processes and trends. There is fault however in the inherent design of participatory strategies, recognizing that disincentives such as the short-term nature of “its flying visits to a series of different nations makes it very difficult

²⁵⁰ See, Ibid., 62.

²⁵¹ Parpart, “Who is the ‘Other?’,” 455.

²⁵² Bill Cooke, “Rules of thumb for participatory change agents,” in *Participation: from tyranny to transformation?*, eds., Sam Hickey and Giles Mohan. (London: Zed Books, 2004), 51.

to take this historical view.”²⁵³ Of course, this also discourages historical assessment of development interventions on a micro level over longer term periods of five, even ten years. Finally, Cooke advocates that participatory development agents “should ask themselves how they would appear in histories of the engagement with development written by or for participants; and must realize that whether or not they are being actually written, they are inevitably placed in a historical context by those with whom they work.”²⁵⁴

Of all things discussed, this research has been least concerned with criticizing the individual characteristics that compromised Topsy Ford’s leadership at the Gatina Self-Help Health Education Centre, and instead, hopes that analysing her project as an important case study helps to reveal the significant implications of Western discourses, both developmental and colonial, during a crucial paradigm shift in development theory and practice in which women were recognized as a largely untapped resource for success. The evaluation of the Women in Development model, its corresponding rhetoric, and its influence on GSHEC’s design serves to confirm the importance of not only a socio-political and cultural contextualization of development goals and benefits at the local level, but also a consideration of the appropriateness of those plans where the practical and strategic needs of the community are concerned. Amsha Africa’s Gatina Primary School project similarly does well to justify the utility, arguably the necessity, of historical contextualization in development planning; when asked if they knew anything about GSHEC, AA’s executive director admitted to knowing nothing of the Centre.²⁵⁵ Finally, despite the 30 years that separate them, the similarities between the two projects

²⁵³ Ibid., 52.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Anthony Abutu, e-mail to the author, November 13, 2009.

attest to the lasting pervasiveness of Western development discourse and the challenges faced by both make a strong case for breaking free of the narrow, often homogenizing, tendencies of Western development strategies. Ultimately, it is my hope that the projects discussed here have made it possible to recognize that considering moments of historical change have the potential to be development planners and researchers' best hope for spotting new and adaptive opportunities at the local level for development in both theory and practise.

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