

Transnational Feminism and Labour Organising:

The Case of Gabungan Serikat Buruh Indonesia

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This thesis is my own original work. To the best of my knowledge, it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed.....

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Glossary

AAFLI	Asian-American Free Labor Institute
ABGTeks	<i>Asosiasi Buruh Garmen dan Sepatu,</i> The Association of Garment and Footwear Workers
ACILS	American Center for International Labor Solidarity
AFL-CIO	American Federation of Labor- Congress of Industrial Organizations
CAA	Community Aid Abroad
CBA	Collective Bargaining Agreement
CCC	Clean Clothes Campaign
CLAF	Children Labour Aid Foundation
DAWN	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
FBSI	<i>Federasi Buruh Seluruh Indonesia,</i> All-Indonesia Labour Federation
FNPBI	<i>Front Nasional Perjuangan Buruh</i> <i>Indonesia,</i> National Front for Indonesian Workers' Struggle
FOA	Freedom of Association
FPBN	<i>Forum Pendamping Buruh Nasional,</i> National Forum of Labour NGOs
FSPMI	<i>Federasi Serikat Pekerja Metal</i> <i>Indonesia,</i> The Indonesian Metal Workers' Union
GSBI	<i>Gabungan Serikat Buruh Independen,</i> Federation of Independent Unions
GUF	Global Union Federation

ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ILO	International Labor Organization
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
Jabotabek	Jakarta-Bogor-Tangerang-Bekasi
KASBI	<i>Kongres Aliansi Serikat Buruh Indonesia</i> , The Indonesian Workers' Alliance Congress
LBH Bandung	<i>Lembaga Bantuan Hukum Bandung</i> , Bandung Legal Aid Institute
LMF	Labour Market Flexibility
OAus	Oxfam Australia
OCAA	Oxfam Community Aid Abroad
OI	Oxfam International
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NOVIB	<i>Nederlandse Organisatie voor Internationale Bijstand</i> , Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation
P4P	<i>Panitia Penyelesaian Perselisihan Perburuhan</i> , Labour Dispute Arbitration Committee
PERBUPAS	<i>Perkumpulan Buruh Pabrik Sepatu</i> The Association of Footwear Workers
Reformasi	Reformation (Period following Suharto's 1998 resignation)
SAP	Structural Adjustment Policy
SISBIKUM	<i>Saluran Informasi Sosial dan Bimbingan Hukum</i> , Channel for Social

	Information and Legal Guidance
SMO	Social Movement Organisation
SPSI	<i>Serikat Pekerja Seluruh Indonesia</i> , All Indonesian Workers' Union
SSO	Solidarity Support Organisation
TGF	Textile, Garment and Footwear (Sector)
TNC	Transnational Company
UN	United Nations
USAID	The U.S. Agency for International Development
WRC	Worker Rights Consortium

Abstract

International Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have long played a pivotal role in shaping Indonesian agendas in the labour sphere. One important aspect of the international agenda for unions in Indonesia has been to ‘improve’ women’s participation in the movement. Whilst many international NGOs’ development agendas for women have been shaped by western feminist theory, it remains questionable as to how relevant such programs are in non-western settings, and also what measures are used by international NGOs to gauge the ‘success’ of such programs.

This paper questions the international feminist agendas driving these initiatives and examines the measures international NGOs use to assess the success of gender-related programs regarding labour and their relevance in an Indonesian context. Drawing on fieldwork conducted with GSBI (*Gabungan Serikat Buruh Indonesia*, The Federation of Independent Trade Unions) in Jakarta, as well as interviews with representatives of international NGOs working with GSBI, this thesis argues that where NGOs have pursued a non-interventionist approach in their work with GSBI, women have experienced more positive results, and that if gender programs are to be beneficial to women in the future, women must be fully included in the decision-making, implementation and evaluation processes of any program which specifically aims to ‘empower’ them.

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Introduction

Transnational feminism has played an influential role in shaping international organisations' agendas within the labour sphere for the past two decades. As international NGOs and Global Union Federations (GUFs) moved from a 'relief' to 'empowerment' focus (Sinaga, 1994), they adopted feminist agendas in their overseas development work and have worked with the aim of 'empowering' and increasing the participation of women in the union movement. In Indonesia, international organisations were particularly important actors during the last decade of Suharto's New Order, offering alternative channels through which workers could organise.

One of the key objectives for international organisations working in Indonesia has been to 'empower' women through the establishment of women's departments and the implementation of quota systems in unions (Briskin, 1999). While NGOs' aim of 'empowering' women has been successful in some cases, in other areas it raises important theoretical questions regarding the outcomes of empowerment, and the methods used to achieve it. This thesis begins to answer these questions by analysing the impact these programs have had on women union members, and the measures used to assess these programs. In particular, this thesis questions NGOs' use of 'empowerment' as a framework, and the models of accountability used in their relationships with Indonesian unions. This thesis argues that while NGOs have taken on a model of 'empowerment' based on feminist theory, it is necessary to question the outcomes achieved through the 'empowerment' framework, and the actors involved in achieving 'empowerment'. As the case study of *Gabungan Serikat Buruh Indonesia* (GSBI, The Federation of Independent Trade Unions) demonstrates, these questions are important in the Indonesian labour sphere as international NGOs continue to work with feminist agendas and the aim of 'empowering' women.

Empowerment for whom?

Over the past two decades, many NGOs have adopted 'empowerment' as a key objective in their overseas development work, reflecting a global shift from 'relief' agendas to 'empowerment' agendas in NGO programs (Korten, 1987; Sinaga, 1994). For many NGOs, a key aspect of this focus has been to work with women in particular. In the labour sphere, NGOs have used measures such as quota systems and separate organising structures for women to increase the participation of women in unions, and to balance the representation of women in leadership (Briskin, 1999). As NGOs continue to work with the aim of 'empowering' women in unions, it is important to question not only whether the empowerment of women union members has been an outcome of these projects, but also how this empowerment has been achieved.

'Empowerment' emerges in NGO, development and feminist literature as a contested term among scholars (See, for example, Amos and Parmar, 1984; Kabeer, 2005; Mohanty, 1984; 2003; Parpart, Staudt and Rai, 2002; Pettman, 2004; Rahman, 1990; and Sinaga, 1994). Some define it as the 'ability to make choices', as Kabeer (2005: 13) suggests:

To be disempowered means to be denied choice, while empowerment refers to the processes by which those who have been denied the ability to make choices acquire such an ability. In other words, *empowerment entails change*. (emphasis in the original)

More specifically, Hadiwinata (2003: 183) considers the empowerment of women to mean:

[T]he process of organising, awareness building and capacity building of the oppressed women in order to transform unequal relationships between men and women, to increase the decision-making power of women in the

home and community and to stimulate greater participation of women in politics. (citing Karl, 1995: 109)

Yet many scholars are critical of simplistic definitions of ‘empowerment’. Feminist scholars Amos and Parmar (1984) argue that the term ‘empowerment’ has most often been used to refer to the empowerment of white, western women, which has largely been achieved at the expense of black, non-western women. They argue that defining empowerment in this way has resulted in the ‘predominantly Eurocentric and ethnocentric theories of women’s oppression’ that abound in feminist scholarship (Amos and Parmar, 1984: 7). Mohanty (1984: 350) develops this argument further by stating that, ‘Power relations are structured in terms of a source of power and a cumulative reaction to power,’ arguing that in feminist scholarship it has been western women at the source of power and non-western women reacting to that power. For Mohanty, this structure is a problem not least because it creates a visible hierarchy between western and non-western women, but also because non-western women are conceived of as a homogenous group—“the oppressed”—with little regard for their cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. As with Amos and Parmar (1984), Mohanty (1984) argues that the definition of ‘empowerment’ most prominent in feminist scholarship is one which privileges western women, and subsequently disempowers non-western women.

Problems with the ‘empowerment’ model emerge in the NGO and development literature as well. Not only is the term ‘empowerment’ contested within this literature, but also the sources of power within international and local relationships. In recent years, the definition of ‘empowerment’ has been criticised as representing a ‘token’ approach by NGOs and other organisations in achieving real change for women. As Parpart, Staudt and Rai (2002) argue:

Empowerment has become a popular, largely unquestioned ‘good’ aspired to by such diverse and contradictory institutions as The World Bank, Oxfam, and many more radical non-governmental organizations (NGOs)...[E]mpowerment has been adopted by mainstream development agencies as well...more to improve productivity within the status quo than to foster social transformation. Empowerment has thus become a ‘motherhood’ term, comfortable and unquestionable, something very different institutions and practices seem to be able to agree on.

While international organisations claim that they work in ‘partnership’ with Indonesian unions, often these ‘partnerships’ are hierarchical, with power resting with the NGO and not the local organisation. Sinaga (1994) and elsewhere Roman (2004) argue that despite international organisations’ aims of ‘empowering’ local unions, and local women, in reality it is often the international NGO which benefits more from this partnership (through network building, international travel and awareness raising) while the local organisation is often left ‘worse off’. While the NGO literature promotes the shift from ‘donor/recipient’ relationships to ‘partnerships’ between these groups (Korten, 1987), in practice, many of these relationships reinforce power hierarchies between western and non-western actors. This is especially evident when NGOs are involved in funding Indonesian unions. As Ford (2006a) and Fowler (1992) observe, international donors have the power to stop funding projects at any time, leaving the unions at the whim of international organisations and creating power imbalances within these working relationships. Hierarchical structures between international donors and local unions demonstrate that while NGOs may work with the aim of ‘empowering’ women, these partnerships can often serve to disempower women, by denying them any agency or autonomy in the decision-making process.

‘Empowerment’ will be discussed throughout this thesis in order to identify theoretical and empirical issues which emerge when international organisations adopt gender agendas in their work with Indonesian unions. Chapter One will discuss transnational feminists’ critique of ‘empowerment’ in more detail, while Chapter Two will examine the power structures in GSBI’s relationships with international partners, the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS) and Oxfam Australia (OAus). Chapter Three will assess the outcomes of these collaborations, and whether women have been ‘empowered’ by these programs from the perspective of women union members themselves.

NGOs and accountability

Accountability is another important issue which emerges as NGOs work with feminist agendas in the Indonesian labour sphere. In particular, the distinction between ‘upwards’ accountability (to donors and NGOs’ governing bodies in their home countries) and ‘downwards’ accountability (to the local organisation or their ‘target groups’ in Indonesia) has been the source of much debate within the NGO and accountability literature (see Baccaro, 2001; Clarke, 1998; Courville, 2006; Dowdle, 2006; Ford, 2006a; Marsden and Oakley, 1990; and Riddell and Robison, 1995). It is useful to examine the evaluation and accountability models used by NGOs and unions in order to assess whether NGOs’ gender programs have been beneficial for women union members in Indonesia.

Accountability is best understood as a ‘relational’ model, where one party is accountable to another (Hilhorst, 2003). In recent years, NGOs’ accountability has been questioned, as scholars, governments and the broader public have often questioned to whom NGOs are accountable (Dowdle, 2006). In answering this question it becomes clear that NGOs’ accountability can be conceived of in two ways: ‘upwards’ and ‘downwards’; or as Weber and Durkheim have described it, ‘rational’ and ‘moral’ (Hilhorst, 2003).

In Weber's model of rational accountability, NGOs report back to their donors, governing bodies and managers in their home countries, through 'formal reporting mechanisms' such as budget summaries, field reports and project evaluations. In this model, both parties involved attempt to achieve an impersonal transparency regarding their work, in an effort to improve its quality and remain accountable for their work (Hilhorst, 2003). Evaluations form a key component of this model, as Marsden and Oakley (1990) argue, and will be discussed in Chapter One in more detail.

In contrast to this model of rational accountability is Durkheim's less formal—but equally important—model of 'moral' accountability. In a model of moral accountability people report to one another through more informal systems, such as reputation, gossip, and story-telling, and accountability is an intrinsic part of everyday interactions (Hilhorst, 2003). This model is advantageous in that it offers marginalised groups who might otherwise be excluded from formal reporting processes the opportunity to informally evaluate the work of NGOs and to participate in a system of accountability.

As this thesis argues, it is useful to compare rational and moral models of accountability as both play an important role in the Indonesian labour sphere. While international NGOs have often been upwardly accountable, they have been criticised for their lack of downward accountability (see Baccaro, 2001; Courville, 2006; Ford, 2006a; and Roman, 2004). This thesis will examine the accountability models more thoroughly in Chapter One, while Chapter Two will compare rational and moral accountability through the case study of GSBI and its international partners, ACILS and OAus. Finally, Chapter Three examines moral accountability more closely through interview data with GSBI's women members regarding OAus' work with GSBI. It argues that as moral

accountability offers women union members the chance to assess OAus' work, it should be incorporated more fully into OAus' evaluation structures.

Methodology

In order to gain an empirical understanding of how NGOs use feminist agendas in their work, this thesis draws on three key methodologies: interviews, questionnaires and participant observation. One-on-one interviews were conducted with NGO staff, union leaders and GSBI's women union members; while group interviews were conducted with GSBI women members in Tangerang. Where interviewees from GSBI have requested that they remain anonymous, they have been identified using a coded alphabetical and date system.¹

Questionnaires were used to gather quantitative data on GSBI women members, such as the mean age, ethnicity and living areas of the respondents. While this information was not used in this thesis to supplement the main theoretical arguments, it helped to inform a broader perspective of the GSBI demographic, and to canvass a broader sample of respondents than would be possible using only an interview methodology.

Finally, this thesis relied heavily on a model of participant observation during fieldwork in Tangerang and Jakarta between December, 2006 and February 2007, and again in April, 2007. Living and working with one of GSBI's member unions, PERBUPAS (*Perkumpulan Buruh Pabrik Sepatu*, The Association of Footwear Workers), allowed for a greater understanding of the day-to-day culture of the union, and also provided the opportunity to participate in union meetings, informal gatherings, and social activities that took place. There were

¹ Due to the repressive measures used by Suharto's New Order government in suppressing labour unrest, many workers were dismissed for speaking about conditions at factories or for collaborating with labour NGOs and external researchers. I believe this is still a stigma among many workers, as the majority of workers declined to be named during interviews and questionnaires.

three primary advantages in using this methodology. Firstly, the union office often became a site for informal debates, discussions, and late night conversations, illustrating the importance of a model of moral accountability in the Indonesian labour sphere, as discussed throughout this thesis. Secondly, this methodology illustrated more clearly GSBI's membership structure beneath its central Jakarta level, with PERBUPAS as one of GSBI's many plant-level member unions. Finally, it also clarified many of the key theoretical issues which inform the third chapter of this thesis, including the different experiences of women members in Tangerang and Jakarta, and the lack of OAus' program reach. This methodology was most useful in gaining a perspective from the grassroots, and in illustrating empirical issues with NGOs adopting feminist agendas in the Indonesian labour sphere.

Thesis outline

This thesis examines the influence of transnational feminism in shaping NGOs' development programs for women, and questions whether these programs have been beneficial for women union members. Chapter One begins by examining the development of transnational feminism as a movement, as it grew out of the experiences of women who had been marginalised from the 'hegemony of white, western feminism' (Mohanty, 1984). This chapter identifies feminists' use of framing as a strategic tool in positing 'women's right as human rights' throughout the 1980s and 1990s and the number of NGOs which subsequently adopted this framework in their development agendas (Ackerly and d'Costa, 2005; Friedman, 2003). It then examines theoretical and empirical flaws in the framing model and in the current model of transnational feminism. Finally, this chapter outlines Weber and Durkheim's accountability models which will be used throughout this thesis in order to assess whether NGOs gender programs have been beneficial for women union members.

Chapter Two then examines the ways international organisations ‘gendered the agenda’ of the Indonesian labour sphere. It begins by discussing the role of local and international NGOs in providing an autonomous space for workers during the New Order in the absence of independent trade unions. It outlines the methods used by international NGOs to encourage women’s empowerment within Indonesian unions, such as quota systems and women’s departments. It then examines the influence of GUFs in this sphere since the fall of Suharto. The second section of Chapter Two offers the case study of two NGOs working with GSBI: ACILS and OAus. In order to gain an understanding of why ACILS no longer works with GSBI and why OAus still does, it is useful to compare the different approaches and models of accountability used by each NGO. This case study demonstrates that ACILS’ ‘interventionist’ approach was not beneficial to women union members, while OAus’ ‘non-interventionist’ approach has been more useful.

Finally, Chapter Three examines GSBI’s working relationship with OAus from the perspective of its women members. Taking as its central framework Rahman’s (1990) model of ‘people’s self-assessment of progress’ as the basis for evaluation, this chapter draws on data from interviews with women union members in Tangerang and Jakarta to assess the impact OAus’ and GSBI’s work has had on them. It begins by detailing the history of GSBI, and the approaches it has used in addressing gender issues within the union. It then examines OAus’ program work with GSBI from the perspective of women members, highlighting clear discrepancies between the lived experience of women union members in Tangerang and Jakarta. This chapter concludes by arguing that in order for NGOs’ gender programs to have an impact on women, women members must be given the opportunity of shaping, participating in and evaluating programs where their ‘empowerment’ is a specific program aim.

Chapter One

Following the 1980s and 1990s United Nations (UN) conferences on women, which heralded the ‘birth of global feminism’ (Ackerly and d’Costa, 2005: 12), many international NGOs and Solidarity Support Organisations (SSOs) incorporated ‘gender agendas’ or ‘gender perspectives’ in their overseas development work, often with the explicit aim of improving the position of women, or ‘empowering’ them.² Yet little has been written that analyses the extent to which these programs have actually benefited women in non-western settings, or questions the measures these international organisations have used to assess their ‘success’. It is necessary to examine the relationship between transnational feminism, NGOs and SSOs, and trade unions and their members—and to assess the models of accountability used within these relationships—in order to understand how the ‘gender agenda’ has affected women union members.

This chapter examines the influence of feminist theory on the development agendas of international NGOs and SSOs working on Indonesian labour programs, and describes the measures used to evaluate these programs. It begins by describing the way framing has been used as a strategic tool to position ‘women’s rights as human rights’ throughout the 1980s and 1990s UN conferences, and the resulting ‘boom’ in the incorporation of gender agendas in NGOs’ development programs. It then examines theoretical issues associated with the framing model and with transnational feminism’s shift from an ‘old’ to a ‘new’ social movement (Cohen and Rai, 2000). Finally, this chapter examines the models of accountability that will be used throughout this thesis in order to evaluate whether the gender programs of international NGOs working with GSBI have been beneficial to women union members. The chapter argues that

² As noted in the Introduction, the term ‘empowerment’ is strongly contested by NGO, development and feminist scholars.

while collaborative partnerships across borders—such as GSBI's with its overseas NGO partners—offer valuable opportunities to explore theoretical shifts in transnational feminism, they also highlight many limitations within the movement, and show that transnational partnerships do not always benefit women.

'Framing' and Transnational Feminism

Transnational feminism developed throughout the 1980s and 1990s in reaction to the hegemony of white, western feminism, and to the increasing impact of globalisation on women around the world.³ Marginalised women began to reconstruct the movement as 'global feminism', 'international feminism', and 'southern feminism' in an attempt to include the experiences and contributions of women from non-western backgrounds.⁴ In identifying western feminism as a 'site of specific exclusion', Amos and Parmar (1984: 7) argue that non-western women have been portrayed as 'politically immature women who need to be versed and schooled in the Ethos of Western feminism'. This argument is echoed by Mohanty (1984: 353), who claims that the 'inherently political nature of feminist scholarship' has positioned non-western women on the 'periphery' of feminism, and western women at the 'center'.⁵ According to Mohanty, western women situated at the core of the global feminist movement defined non-western women's actions on the periphery of the movement, thereby marginalising non-western women and reinforcing the hegemony of western feminism.

Transnational feminism also called into question the notion of women's universal solidarity, or the 'assumed category of woman' (Mohanty, 1984).

³ See Ackerly (2004); Ackerly and d'Costa (2005); Amos and Parmar (1984); Mendez (2004); and Mohanty (1984; 2003) on the growth of transnational feminism.

⁴ Scholars such as Amos and Parmar (1984), Friedman (2003), Lyons (2004) and Pettman (2004) refer to the movement through many terms, but the most commonly agreed on is 'transnational feminism', which is used in this thesis.

⁵ Mohanty's well known article, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and colonial discourse', is cited in this chapter from an early version, published in the journal *Boundary 2*, 12/13, 1984. Citations of this work are generally made from 1986; however, it is the same article.

Scholars argue that feminism has been based on the assumption that ‘women qua women have a necessary basis for unity and solidarity’ (Amos and Parmar, 1984: 6), which in turn encourages and celebrates a notion of ‘sisterhood’ as the sole unifying factor for women around the world. Mohanty (1984: 337) also disputes the notion that women are united in solidarity by a ‘shared oppression’, arguing that no woman’s oppression is the same as another’s, and that many women have gained from the oppression of other women. This questioning of the terms ‘women’ and ‘women’s solidarity’ continued well into the 1990s, as scholars participated in debates regarding their problematic use.⁶ Judith Butler describes ‘women’ as a ‘troublesome term, a site of contest, a cause for anxiety’ (1990: 3), while Ien Ang (1995: 58) argues that the rise in transnational feminism signalled ‘the end of the authority of the category “women” as the “natural” binding factor for feminist politics’. These debates not only challenged the traditional bases of feminism, but made it clear that new models of organising were needed if feminism were to equally represent women from the North and the South.

As a result, feminists began to organise globally around issues not necessarily related to their *being* women. As Ackerly (2004), Friedman (2003), and Pettman (2004) have argued, the UN Conferences of the 1980s and 1990s—in particular the Conferences on Women in Nairobi 1985, and Beijing, 1995—provided a significant political opportunity structure for women’s organising, and also the chance for feminists to redefine the issues most important to a contemporary global feminism. Most importantly, as women were increasingly becoming an important part of the development process, these conferences offered a unique opportunity for women to ‘gender the agenda’ in discussions on agriculture, debt and globalisation, and to engage in a political space that might be otherwise unavailable to them (see Friedman, 2003: 313). Throughout these conferences, framing emerged as a clear strategy through which women were able to

⁶ See Ang (1995); Butler (1990) and Yeatman (1993).

‘regender’ conference agendas, and global discussions regarding women more broadly.

This process is referred to as ‘framing’, which has been defined as the ‘conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action.’ (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, 1996: 6). In the sphere of transnational activism, Keck and Sikkink (1998: 2- 3) suggest that transnational activists use framing in order to make their issues ‘comprehensible to target audiences, to attract attention and encourage action, and to “fit” with favorable institutional venues’. For example, Friedman (2003: 320) notes that by using a framework of ‘women’s rights = sustainable development’, women activists at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro successfully ‘linked women’s rights and environmental preservation, and then insisted upon their inclusion in the initially genderless “Agenda 21,” the final conference document’. In 1993, feminists framed women’s rights as ‘human rights’ at the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna by arguing that ‘violence against women must be considered a violation of human rights’ (Friedman, 2003: 320).⁷ Using these conferences as political spaces, women activists and feminists were able to network across national borders, and establish a framework for global feminism with which to move forward. What emerged in the decade between the Nairobi and Beijing Conferences was feminists’ use of framing as a strategic tool in local and global campaigning, and in positioning ‘women’s rights as human rights’.

⁷ Friedman (2003: 320- 321) argues that feminists’ efforts were particularly successful in Vienna as they delineated between the public and private spheres, and therefore public and private understandings of human rights protection. As Friedman notes, ‘On the one hand, they [feminists] challenged the traditional framing of human rights protection as the responsibility of state parties in only the public sphere, because violations of women’s rights are often perpetuated by private actors in the home. On the other hand, in confronting a human rights frame primarily focused on political and civil rights, they insisted on the indivisibility of human rights.’

By framing women's rights as 'human rights', feminist activists and scholars succeeded in placing women's issues on the agendas of international institutions and government bodies. According to Amnesty International, women's human rights were a central concern of UN peacekeeping missions, human rights conventions and even war crimes tribunals in the decade between 1985 and 1995 (cited in Ackerly and d'Costa, 2005: 13). As Morton argues, one of the advantages of framing issues in this way was that transnational feminists succeeded in raising awareness of women's rights in countries where the rights of women were not prioritised.⁸ As she notes:

Activists in various states where rights arguments were politically infeasible (sic), such as China, the US and Singapore, took advantage of the lessons learned from transnational dialogues and opportunities created through the transnational women's movement. Although not without complication, activists found women's and children's rights to be less politically dangerous and thus relatively more easy to deploy toward achieving other human rights goals such as migrants' and labour rights.' (in Ackerly and d'Costa, 2005: 13)

The increased use of framing strategies resulted in a veritable 'boom' in the number of NGOs using global feminist agendas throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Alvarez, 2004). During this time, Alvarez (2004: 122) notes that NGOs 'specializing in gender policy assessment, project execution, and social services delivery' were granted a 'newfound public prominence' across the globe.⁹ According to Ackerly and d'Costa (2005: 14), the framing of women's rights as human rights:

⁸ Morton's comments are taken from an interview conducted by Ackerly and d'Costa, Canberra, 27 February, 2004.

⁹ See Alvarez's (2004) study on the growth of Latin American feminist NGOs; Mendez's (2004) fieldwork with The Central American Network of Women in Solidarity with Maquila Workers; and Ackerly and d'Costa (2005: 13) on women's NGOs in Bangladesh.

enabled local NGOs and SMOs [Social Movement Organisations] to gain access to international donor dollars by educating global donors about women's human rights and convincing them to think of their issues as women's human rights issues, and by educating local actors on how to articulate their issues as women's human rights issues in order to secure such support.

As a result, as much of the NGO literature illustrates, many NGOs during this time took on feminist agendas in their development programs, highlighting a shift in NGOs from 'relief' to 'empowerment' (Korten, 1987; Riddell and Robinson, 1995; and Sinaga, 1994). Within the rhetoric of 'empowerment', not only did new women's NGOs flourish, but many existing NGOs took on 'gender agendas' and began to focus specifically on development for women.

Within the labour movement, a framework of 'women's issues are union issues' was adopted, resulting in the implementation of gender training programs, gender quota systems, and gender as a measurement of 'democratisation' (Olney et al., 1998). The International Labour Organisation (ILO), in collaboration with the International Confederation of Free Trade Union (ICFTU)—now known as the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)—played a key role in encouraging separate organising structures for women, such as women's departments and women's branches (Briskin, 1999; Pocock, 1997; and Reerink, 2006). Recognising that women were often marginalised or excluded from union participation due to work and family responsibilities, separate organising structures were encouraged in an effort to include women who might otherwise not become involved with their union.¹⁰ Quota systems were put in place in

¹⁰ For example, a 2002 ILO survey, 'The Role of Trade Unions in Promoting Gender Equity' notes that women's low union representation was the result of several key factors, namely, a 'lack of understanding of how unions can help them'; a 'fear of reprisals from employers'; 'conflicting family responsibilities'; the 'male-dominated culture/activities of the union'; and 'religious/ cultural norms and constraints.' (in Reerink, 2006: 13- 14)

order to encourage a more balanced female membership and leadership.¹¹ Within a framework of ‘women’s issues are union issues’, unionists sought to ‘empower’ women, raise awareness of gender issues among male and female members, and redress the low participation rates of women members (Reerink, 2006).

While framing has been used successfully by feminists to ‘gender the agendas’ of UN conferences, NGOs and unions throughout the 1980s and 1990s, it has also been criticised by many scholars and activists. It is important to examine these critiques in order to gain a more thorough understanding of the limitations in the framing model. ‘Framing’ raises important questions regarding its long-term value in securing women’s rights, and its ethical credibility in doing so. When women are encouraged to ‘frame’ their issues in order to gain financial support from international donors, a linguistic aptitude, knowledge of donors, and understanding of ‘global partnerships’ is implied, and women who are unsure of how to ‘frame’ their issues within the current global discourse on ‘women’s rights as human rights’ have much less access to ‘donor dollars’.

Where donor funding is provided by western organisations (for example, governments, NGOs or churches), framing can reinforce hierarchical binaries that again position ‘non-western women as politically immature women’ (Amos and Parmar 1984: 7). Scholars argue that donor relationships can encourage a culture of financial dependence, and that funding agreements can often stop suddenly, leaving the local organisation worse off (Chambers, 1983; Ford, 2003b; 2006a; Fowler, 1992; Korten and Quizon, 1995). In addition, while in theory these relationships may be conceived of as ‘partnerships’, many scholars argue that in practice donors determine the agendas, leaving the local organisation with little choice but to comply or risk losing funding (see for

¹¹ Reerink (2006: 45) notes that, ‘Many federations and confederations are under increasing pressure from both their female members and their international counterparts to institute quotas for women’s participation and representation.’

example Fowler, 1992; Ford, 2006a). Finally, as Sinaga (1994) and Roman (2004) argue, these partnerships may benefit the external organisation more than the host organisation, especially where the development work of the external organisation does not actively challenge the status quo and only serves to ‘safeguard a middle class hegemony’.¹²

Problems with framing also emerge when women’s access to the language of transnational feminism is examined. In her study of international activists’ attempts to develop a theory of human rights, Ackerly (2004) collects the responses of more than two hundred men and women who identify as ‘women’s human rights activists’ who have participated in two moderated online forums regarding their work on women’s human rights projects. Despite the diversity of the participants’ linguistic backgrounds—the majority were from Eastern Europe and Asia—English was the only language used in the online forums. Forums were facilitated in English by online moderators, a practice which Ackerly (2004: 289) defends by saying:

Although it may be attractive to theorize about international or transnational communities that enable cross-cultural dialogue among equal participants as a resource for thinking about universal human rights (or other universals), in practice such communities cannot exist...[A]ctive moderation was particularly necessary with participants from Eastern Europe and parts of Asia due to the lack of proficiency in English. Through their behind the scenes editing, the moderators actively included those participants whose ideas would have been marginalized without active moderation.¹³

¹² See also Bacarro (2001); Clarke (1998); Fowler (1992); Mercer (2002); and Morris-Suzuki (2000).

¹³ In addition, Ackerly (2005: 304) adds in an endnote that, ‘[T]he moderators provided weekly summaries in English, Spanish and French, thereby enabling those with limited time and those who read Spanish and French to be able to follow the dialogues.’ However, this still does not

In making this claim, Ackerly reinforces the very Western feminist hegemony that she has elsewhere critiqued;¹⁴ a feminism that stands distinctly as a site of exclusion and privilege, to which non-English participants must assimilate. Although not all transnational forums are conducted in English, the vast majority are conducted in English or another ‘world’ language. As Ackerly’s study demonstrates, the issue of linguistic access is one challenge transnational feminism faces in mediating between the North and South.

The problem of linguistic access is compounded by women’s differential access to communication technologies. Many scholars have emphasised the role of technology in enabling transnational feminism to organise across borders (see for example Ackerly and d’Costa, 2005; Pettman, 2004; Woodhull, 2003). This literature suggests that with the advent of fax, email and online technologies, women activists and feminists around the world are in contact with each other more than ever before, placing transnational feminism in a unique position to reach women in many places. Yet Mohanty (2003: 508) is quick to point out that the supposed ‘information highway’ is ‘profoundly unequal’, arguing that whilst women in the West may have access to the latest technologies and internet advances, women in non-western countries are often excluded from such spheres, rendering these as ‘specific sites of exclusion’. Similarly, Winnie Woodhull (2003) observes that many western feminist websites are not relevant in non-western contexts, and do not really address the ‘worldwide audience’ for which they are intended.

speak to the majority of participants, who, as Ackerly has already acknowledged, were primarily from Eastern European or Asian backgrounds.

¹⁴ Earlier in her study, Ackerly notes that, ‘Feminist human rights discourse incorporates southern women as sources of illustration but not as authors in the theory-building project’ (2004: 287); and Ackerly and d’Costa (2005: 1) claim that, ‘Un-networked women, particularly from the global South, have not been brought into transnational dialogues, leaving them without the tools to access new sources of funding and political support.’

Another problem regarding access emerges when feminists' opportunities to organise transnationally are curtailed by the state. On the basis of fieldwork with NGOs organising on behalf of migrant workers in Singapore, Lenore Lyons (2004) notes that it is often more difficult for advocacy NGOs to work transnationally due to heavy-handed regulation by the state, and as a result, Singaporean NGOs are often excluded from transnational networks. This has significance for transnational feminism overall, as she argues, because '[f]or transnational activism to be successful, feminists must consciously delineate the boundaries of their engagement, paying close attention to the different situations "on-the-ground" in those places where they seek to forge alliances' (2004: 162). The Singaporean example highlights the fact that, despite the successes of feminists throughout the 1990s organising transnationally around the UN conferences, where the state limits women's access to organise transnationally, transnational feminism is still limited in its potential to represent women in all parts of the world. Where women are excluded on the basis of linguistic or technological access, or where governments restrict women's ability to organise transnationally, transnational feminism ceases to offer an alternative to the exclusive feminism it is attempting to transform, instead continuing to replicate a pattern of hegemony and exclusivity.

Ackerly and d'Costa (2005) suggest that feminists should continue to work on issues related to women's human rights, but in areas that 'are not exclusively female identified'. In that sense, they suggest a focus on issues relating to: migration, trafficking, trade justice, agricultural reform, unionism, HIV/AIDS and 'all forms of discrimination' in their communities (2005: 22-23). In Ackerly and d'Costa's model, transnational feminism would be at the core of these issues, broadening the scope of the movement, and engaging male as well as female activists in the project.

Yet while Ackerly and d'Costa situate transnational feminism at the core of many diverse struggles in this model, they fail to give it a clear focus around which to organise, highlighting the difficulties transnational feminism faces if it is to successfully take on such a multi-faceted agenda. Mohanty (2003) instead suggests that transnational feminists should concentrate their efforts on issues concerned with globalisation. She views 'the politics and economics of capitalism as a far more urgent locus of struggle' for feminists in the twenty-first century than struggles of the second-wave (2003: 509), and suggests that feminists organise transnationally in response to the negative effects of globalisation such as privatisation, debt and Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs). There are three key problems with Mohanty's argument. Firstly, by suggesting that 'women' collectively have suffered as a result of globalisation, and should therefore resist collectively, Mohanty contradicts her earlier (1984) argument that women cannot unite on the basis of a 'shared oppression' as every woman experiences oppression differently. Secondly, by suggesting that it is 'women' who must collectively respond, Mohanty also contradicts her previous questioning of the 'assumed category of woman' as a source of solidarity. Finally, Mohanty's pursuit of an 'anticapitalist transnational feminist practice' fails to recognise the role that women themselves have played in perpetuating the hegemony of globalisation upon other women in the name of 'empowerment'. As Pettman (2004: 56) observes, '[s]ome women [have] gained from the exploitation of other women; highly educated and English-speaking women [have] enjoyed a mobility and remuneration denied to their poorer sisters'. In this sense, Mohanty fails to acknowledge that globalisation has not necessarily been a negative experience for all women, and therefore not all women would be eager to adopt an anti-globalisation position. In short, an 'antiglobalization' framework may not be in the interest of those women who have benefited—and continue to benefit—from globalisation.

Despite the models suggested by Ackerly and d'Costa (2005) and Mohanty (2003), the future of transnational feminism is still contested by feminists and scholars alike. A representative for the NGO, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), claims that the 'current global environment is not at all conducive to advancing gains for women' (Slatter, 2001: 4 in Pettman, 2004: 57); while Vera Mackie (2001: 188) insists that 'the transnational sphere, if it can be said to exist, is a gendered, raced, classed and ethnicized public sphere', and cautions feminists 'romanticising' its use (in Lyons, 2004: 150). Many feminists argue that despite examples of women's organising across borders,¹⁵ transnational feminism has reached an impasse in this new 'global arena' (Woodhull: 2003).

Yet while feminist scholars debate the future of transnational feminism, feminist theory continues to play an important role in shaping the gender programs of international NGOs, and in fostering networks between western and non-western women. As noted earlier, in the labour sphere, NGOs continue to encourage quota systems¹⁶ and separate structures for women's organising, such as Women's Departments or external Women's Forums.¹⁷ Efforts to include women through these systems highlights not only the impact of feminist theory, but also of feminist praxis—as witnessed throughout the 1980s and 1990s UN Conferences—in shaping NGOs' agendas in the labour sphere, and the continued importance of both for NGOs' development programs more broadly.

As feminist theory continues to inform NGOs' gender programs for women, it is necessary to question the accountability and evaluation measures used by NGOs

¹⁵ See Ackerly (2004); Ackerly and d'Costa (2005); and Mendez (2004).

¹⁶ As discussed in Chapter Two, quota systems are a requirement for ACILS in its work with Indonesian unions. According to ACILS' Indonesia Director, Rudy Porter, 'We require a minimum of 30% participation from women...and if they [the unions] fail to meet that then we would seriously reconsider working with them again.' (Interview, April, 2007)

¹⁷ In fieldwork with two Indonesian unions, FSPMI and SPN, Ford found that international NGOs, GUFs and the IMF were all keen to establish women's departments in order to offer an autonomous space for women's organising (Personal Communication, 30 March, 2007).

to assess whether these programs are in fact impacting the transnational feminist movement overall, or the women involved in these programs. This chapter will now examine some of the key accountability measures which will be used throughout this thesis to assess whether the gender programs of GSBI's international partners have been beneficial for women union members.

Evaluating the impact of NGOs' gender programs on women

One of the most important measures used to evaluate whether NGOs' gender programs are beneficial to women members is the process of accountability. Within the accountability framework evaluations often play an important role in measuring the outcomes of NGO programs. This thesis draws on two accountability models in order to assess whether the gender programs of international NGOs working with GSBI have been beneficial to women union members.

Accountability has been described as 'the means by which individuals and organizations report to a recognized authority (or authorities) and are held responsible for their actions' (Edwards and Hulme, 1996: 8 cited in Hilhorst, 2003: 125); as well as a notion that 'people with public responsibilities should be answerable to "the people" for the performance of their duties' (Dowdle 2006: 3). In this sense, accountability is considered a 'relational' model, where one party is accountable to another (Hilhorst, 2003). Within this framework of 'relational' accountability, two models illustrate the complexities of NGO accountability: Weber's 'rational accountability' and Durkheim's 'moral accountability'.

For Weber, relationships of accountability are based on clear distinctions between individuals (or organisations) and the authorities to whom/which they must report. In Weber's definition, accountability is impersonal, transparent, and involves the use of formal mechanisms such as reports or evaluations to

facilitate accountability (Hilhorst, 2003). According to Hilhorst (2003), rational accountability ‘presupposes a clear division between the authorities and the accountable actor, and assumes that accountability takes place through formal reporting mechanisms’. In the labour sphere, this model of accountability largely operates ‘upwards’; that is, where local organisations such as unions or labour NGOs are funded by international donors, the ‘formal reporting mechanisms’ Hilhorst suggests play a key role in the process of rational accountability. In that sense, program evaluations, external audits and budget reports form the basis of this model with the objective of providing transparency between the two parties.

In contrast, Durkheim views accountability as an ‘everyday’ process, intrinsically woven into the social fabric of societies. In his view, ‘societies force individuals to surrender to shared norms and values and to fulfil their part in the division of labour on the basis of a “moral contract”’ (Hilhorst, 2003: 127). The methods of reporting and accounting for action within Durkheim’s model may be less transparent than Weber’s model, but can be found in many more facets of social life. According to this model, individuals or organisations are not only accountable to formal reports or evaluations, but are accountable to their peers in more informal capacities, such as gossip, word-of-mouth and social networking. This accountability may manifest in various ways, as Hilhorst notes: ‘What the report and the statistical record are to rational accountability, stories, ironic remarks and gossip are to moral accountability’ (2003:127).

Within these models of accountability, Marsden and Oakley (1990: 12-13) argue that evaluations form an integral part of NGO performance assessment. In their study of NGO performance evaluation, they identify three key actors and three models of evaluation that are useful in assessing the effectiveness of NGO performance. They argue that within every accountable relationship there are three actors: the external actor (such as an independent auditor), the actor themselves (the NGO) and the ‘beneficiaries’ (the local organisation). In their

first model, the external actor conducts an evaluation with no input from the NGO or the local organisation. This can be called an 'external' evaluation. In the second model, the evaluation is conducted jointly by an external actor and the NGO staff as a 'joint' evaluation. In the third model, the evaluation is carried out by the 'beneficiaries' and NGO staff themselves with no input from external auditors, and is termed a 'self' evaluation (Marsden and Oakley 1990).

Arguably, it has been the third model which has received the most scholarly attention, as a basis for criticising NGOs for evaluating their own projects without the input of any external agents and often sidelining the evaluation input of the 'beneficiary' organisation itself. Scholars argue that this model of accountability not only promotes the interests of the NGO, but also does not adequately evaluate the work being carried out on the ground with the host organization (see Courville, 2006; Ford, 2006a; Hadiwinata, 2003; Mercer, 2002; and Sinaga 1994). For example, Clark (1991: 53) notes that:

[T]here is surprisingly little objective reporting of NGO projects. Northern NGOs' own writing generally concentrates on the success stories and, being aimed largely at their supporting publics, serves a propaganda purpose. (cited in Riddell and Robinson, 1995: 36)

Courville (2006: 273) argues that there are three key areas of the NGO accountability debate. Firstly, she argues that NGOs are not accountable to their beneficiaries; secondly, that NGOs are not accountable to the wider public; and thirdly, that due to their multiple roles in society they are often in the middle of conflicts of interest. Consequently, Courville (2006: 273) argues that new models of accountability must be developed to acknowledge the vast disparity of NGOs, their program areas and also the sectors (and countries) in which they work. This view is also promoted by Riddell and Robinson (1995), who argue that rational models of accountability which measure objectives in terms of 'benefit

against cost' fail to take into account unquantifiable objectives which cannot be measured.¹⁸

Many scholars have argued that in the labour sphere Durkheim's is a more applicable model of accountability, particularly in regard to NGOs' accountability to workers.¹⁹ As Ford (2006a: 168) notes:

As labor NGOs have no formal mechanisms through which they are held accountable to workers involved in their programs, it can be argued that workers have little means to hold NGOs accountable beyond choosing whether or not to participate in activities sponsored by a particular NGO.

Yet many NGOs are critical of an evaluation model which excludes them completely and opens up their work to be evaluated by external auditors with no knowledge of the program or sector within which they work.²⁰ In those cases, NGOs sometimes advocate for an internal evaluation model where they become the 'harshest critics of their own work'.²¹ As discussed in Chapter Two, in Oxfam Australia's evaluation model, a combination of internal and external evaluation methods was used in order to adequately assess their work on the ground (Interview with Kelly Dent, July, 2007).

¹⁸ According to Ridell and Robinson (1995: 47), 'There is no agreed or reliable method of judging how non-quantifiable benefits can be accurately ascertained, or how their influence ought to be integrated with more quantifiable data on benefits.'

¹⁹ Courville (2006) argues that 'While there are no formal mechanisms of accountability operating at the international level, there are a number of softer mechanisms that contribute to the accountability of NGOs. These include engaging in public debate, reputation, peer accountability through networks, and relationships with intergovernmental organizations ("IGOs").' Ford (2006a: 172) suggests that unions and labour NGOs are also 'informally accountable to their peers' and Mashaw (2006) notes that 'accountability seems to be a relational concept, but the parties to the relationship remain unspecified.'

²⁰ For example, Oxfam Australia staff member, Tim Connor, was critical of external evaluations as the evaluators knew little about the context of the program, and would often conduct brief interviews and 'not know what was going on.' (Interview, July, 2007).

²¹ Interview with Kelly Dent, Oxfam Australia Labour Rights Advocacy Officer, July, 2007.

It is striking that in the evaluation models above there is no model in which the ‘beneficiary’ organisation evaluates on their own without input from other actors. Rahman (1990) argues that more qualitative measures of evaluation are needed, based on ‘people’s self-assessment of progress’:

[T]he absence of an authentic people’s point of view remains a serious limitation on how confidently we can determine the dimensions of social development...Social development cannot begin if the people are unable to express and assert what social development means to them.’ (1990: 44)

Within this model of evaluation, Rahman suggests that the ‘target group’ or ‘beneficiaries’ of a designated program are in the best position to evaluate it as they are the ones directly affected by its impact and outcomes.²² Rahman’s model highlights that within existing models of evaluation, local organisations are often excluded from the evaluation process and are not provided with the opportunity to inform international NGOs about areas in need of improvement, or areas that have been successful. Not only does Rahman’s model demonstrate that NGOs are ‘not accountable to their beneficiaries’, as suggested in the literature, it also confirms the need for new models of accountability, as suggested earlier by Courville (2006). Chapter Three uses Rahman’s model in order to evaluate the work of OAus and GSBI from the perspective of GSBI’s women members.

²² For example, based on fieldwork in Bangladesh, Rahman (1987) observes that, ‘[G]roups of very poor rural women who became organised stated that one of the greatest gains to them from organising had been the opportunity and ability they gained just to talk in public, and as a result they did both to attend every meeting to share their problems and seek solutions. This they did both to gain some freedom and to experience a sense of solidarity with other women, in an environment where customarily they stayed in and around their immediate families and did not have the right to speak in the presence of an adult male, except close relations. For this experience alone they considered that the development of their organisation had constituted a profound change in their life.’ (in Rahman, 1990: 42)

As interview data in Chapter Two and Chapter Three suggests, NGOs working in the Indonesian labour sphere use both rational and moral accountability models in their program assessment. While rational accountability plays a formal role in NGO assessment (through written reports and evaluations to donors in their home countries), moral accountability is an informal part of day-to-day life as well, as the culture of NGO gossip is rife and NGOs' donor funding is often based on reputation and peer credibility.²³ From fieldwork for this thesis, it is clear that both Weberian and Durkheimian models of accountability play an important role in the Indonesian labour sphere, yet neither can be used on its own. As Courville (2006) and Ford (2006a) have argued, this suggests that new models of accountability are needed in the labour sphere if NGOs are to be accountable to their beneficiaries.

Conclusion

This chapter has documented the influence of transnational feminism in shaping international NGOs' development agendas for women. By examining the debates within the transnational feminist literature, this chapter has also shown that while many scholars agree the movement has reached an impasse, few are able to offer a model of a more inclusive movement for the future. By offering examples of the accountability models used to assess NGO performance, this chapter has shown that where international NGOs continue to carry out their overseas development programs with a gender focus, it becomes important to examine the measures of accountability used by international NGOs in assessing whether their programs benefit, or have an impact on, women. This chapter has argued that theoretically, partnerships across borders are able to develop a more inclusive model of transnational feminism; yet in practice, the movement still has many practical issues to contend with, and women do not always benefit from international partnerships.

²³ Information gathered from personal observation and interviews with ACILS (April, 2007), GSBI staff (January, 2007) and OAus (July, 2007).

Chapter Two

As international NGOs began to adopt feminist agendas in their overseas development work, so too did Global Union Federations (GUFs). As these organisations and western national unions' Solidarity Support Organisations (SSOs) worked in the Indonesian labour sphere, they forced gender issues onto the Indonesian labour agenda and implemented measures to increase the participation of women in the union movement. While there is a broad literature detailing the history of international NGOs working in Indonesia, little has been written to account for their motivations in 'gendering the agenda' of the Indonesian labour sphere, and the approaches used in doing so. This chapter begins to address this gap. It starts by offering a brief background of how international NGOs and unions became involved in the Indonesian labour sphere and describing the role played by international NGOs and GUFs in 'gendering the labour agenda', encouraging Indonesian unions to incorporate structures such as women's departments and quota systems in their unions. The second section of this chapter then examines the issue of NGO accountability using a comparative case study of an SSO and an international NGO, both of which have worked with GSBI, The American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS) and Oxfam Australia (OAus). The case study focuses on the strategies employed by each NGO in carrying out their programs—including gender-related programs. By measuring ACILS' and OAus' work with GSBI against Weber's model of 'rational' accountability, and Durkheim's 'moral' accountability, as well as Marsden and Oakley's (1990) three evaluation models, this chapter argues that a non-interventionist approach has been more successful in promoting collaboration with GSBI.

NGOs, Unions and the ‘Gendering of the Agenda’ in the Labour Sphere

The absence of effective independent trade unions during New Order Indonesia led to the emergence of an alternative labour movement in which both local and international NGOs played an important role (Ford, 2003b; Hadiz, 1997). In Indonesia, as in other parts of Asia, international NGOs built networks with local labour NGOs in an effort to open up democratic space and strengthen civil society, resulting in an ‘associational revolution’ (Salamon, 1994).²⁴

International NGOs had a range of motivations for working in the Indonesian labour sphere. Firstly, as noted in Chapter One, there was a shift in NGO policy from ‘relief’ to ‘empowerment’ programs, which encouraged NGOs to play a greater role in bringing about democratic change (see Sinaga, 1994). A central focus of NGOs’ ‘empowerment’ aim in Indonesia was to encourage labour activism. Workers represented a critical mass which was able to bring about labour reform through strikes, demonstrations and lobbying. Eldridge (1995: 109) observes that the ‘poverty and exploitation of both urban and rural workers’ was a key concern for many NGOs in addressing their ‘proclaimed concern with “the poorest of the poor”’. In the final years of the New Order, many of these international actors worked with local labour NGOs to create viable alternatives to SPSI (Caraway, 2002).

Secondly, there was a global increase in consumer awareness of transnational companies’ (TNCs) purchasing practices, particularly in the TGF sector. As western consumers became increasingly more informed of rights violations and sub-standard conditions in TNCs’ non-western factories, there was a growing

²⁴ Deyo (1997: 210) notes that ‘the establishment of authoritarian controls over labour in many East and Southeast Asian countries prior to the adoption of export-led industries...curtailed the possibility of effective labour movements developing in the region.’ (as cited by Hadiz, 2003); while Robison and Hadiz (2004: 134) have argued that a weak working class is ‘detrimental’ to democracy, therefore it was in the interest of NGOs to work with unions and labour NGOs in order to strengthen the Indonesian working classes, and thereby, strengthen civil society.

demand for NGOs to enforce ‘checks and balances’ on these companies. The logic was that as NGOs acted as a ‘third sector’,²⁵ external to both government and business, they were in a more objective position to pressure TNCs to adhere to core labour standards, and to raise cross-scalar awareness of workers’ rights both nationally and internationally.²⁶ For example, throughout the 1990s, initiatives such as the anti-Nike campaign attracted a strong global following and forced Nike to introduce not only codes of conduct within its factories, but also regular factory audits and evaluations (Oxfam International, 2006).²⁷ Consequently, many international NGOs, including the American Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), the Dutch Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) and OAus combined on international efforts in an attempt to raise greater public awareness of the labour practices of companies such as Nike, Reebok, Puma and adidas, producing in Indonesia and other Southeast Asian countries.

Gender issues were an important aspect of these campaigns, as NGOs responded to the increasing feminisation of the labour sphere.²⁸ By framing women as victims of globalisation and TNCs’ purchasing practices, NGOs garnered public support for labour rights campaigns via their websites, brochures and pamphlets.²⁹ For example, the CCC website states that:

²⁵ See Korten (1987) on the role of NGOs as a ‘third sector’.

²⁶ The International Labor Organization (ILO) defines the four ‘core labour standards’, as: ‘Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labor; effective abolition of child labor; [and] elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation’. (See: http://www.ilo.org/global/About_the_ILO/Mainpillars/Theightsatwork/Labour_Standards/lang--en/index.htm)

²⁷ The anti-Nike campaign gained an international momentum as a result of increased internet use and strong campaign websites. See, for example, Boje (2001) and Klein, (2000) and www.oxfam.org.au/campaigns/labour.

²⁸ The feminisation of the Indonesian labour sphere has been well documented. For example, see: Caraway (2002); Ford (2003a; Forthcoming); Gardener (2003); Grijns (1994); Hancock, (2000); Mather, (1983); Reerink (2006); White (1993); and Wolf, (1992).

²⁹ For example, the OAus, CCC and WRC websites all have a strong focus on women workers. See: www.oxfam.org.au; www.cleanclothes.org; and www.workersrights.org.

While the CCC strives to ensure that the rights of all workers in the garment and sports shoe industries are respected, the fact that the majority of these workers are women means that ultimately the work of the CCC is largely about the empowerment of women. (CCC, 2005)

Ford (2003a) argues that a key weakness in positioning women as ‘victims of globalisation’ is that women are denied agency, and the possibility that they are empowered by their own work remains largely ignored.³⁰ However, international NGOs saw advocacy around the plight of women workers as part of a two-pronged strategy, the other half of which involved the ‘empowerment’ of those women workers through raising their awareness of their labour rights, either independently of the trade union movement or in conjunction with it.

In Indonesia, international NGOs and SSOs collaborated with local labour NGOs and informal workers’ organisations in their efforts to ‘empower’ women in the last decade of the New Order. Many international NGOs worked with quota systems in their programs, and encouraged their Indonesian partner organisations to do the same, as evidence of active attempts to include women in union activities (Interview with ACILS’ Indonesia Director, Rudy Porter, April, 2007). In other instances, NGOs provided materials on gender equity and models of gender training that could be incorporated into existing programs.³¹ OAus and ACILS were two of the foreign organisations promoting gender programs during this period. After opportunities for trade union organising opened up following the fall of Suharto (Caraway, 2002), GUFs began to aggressively promote gender frameworks in their programs with mainstream Indonesian unions. However, NGOs and SSOs remain the primary international partners of smaller unions like GSBI, which had their genesis in the alternative labour movement of the late New Order period.

³⁰ These issues will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

³¹ Interview with Hera (January, 2007) regarding the educational materials FES supplied to GSBI on gender.

ACILS, OAus and GSBI: Two different approaches

Throughout the 1990s and following *Reformasi*, GSBI networked with both local labour NGOs and international NGOs in order to raise awareness of labour rights violations occurring within its member union factories, and within the Greater Jakarta area more broadly.³² This process resulted in the formation of extensive and far-reaching local, national and transnational networks, some which eroded over time, but some which are still of important value to GSBI.

Among some of their more well known international partners, GSBI has worked with: German-based *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung* (FES, Friedrich Ebert Foundation); the Dutch *Nederlandse Organisatie voor Internationale Bijstand* (NOVIB, Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation) and Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC); American Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), and the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS); and Oxfam Australia (OAus) (Interview with Yanti, April, 2007). Both ACILS and OAus have worked with GSBI on campaigning, union training (negotiating, organising and collective bargaining strategies), and gender education. In some instances, a gender focus was incorporated into existing programs, but in other cases it was carried out through specific gender programs.

ACILS has a long history of involvement in Indonesia. In 1973 the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) formed the Asian-American Free Labor Institute (AAFLI), based in over thirty countries, including Indonesia.³³ In response to the effects of globalisation on workers, and the increasingly globalised nature of labour, in 1997, the AAFLI merged with three of the AFL-CIO's other key development organisations—The American Institute for Free Labor Development, The African–American Labor

³² Prior to its formal declaration as a union federation in 1999, GSBI's original members networked informally through plant-level unions and its founding NGO, SISBIKUM. GSBI's history and development will be examined more thoroughly in Chapter Three.

³³ Information from the ACILS and AFL-CIO websites. See: www.solidarity.org, and www.aflcio.org.

Center, and The Free Trade Union Institute—to form ACILS. With a mandate to ‘achieve equitable, sustainable, democratic development and to help men and women everywhere stand up for their rights and improve their living and working standards’, ACILS is funded by both public and private bodies, such as The Ford Foundation, The National Endowment for Democracy, USAID, the United States Department of State, the United States Department of Labor, as well as the AFL-CIO itself.³⁴

In Indonesia, ACILS retained the AAFLI’s office in Central Jakarta, and continued its work with local labour NGOs and workers’ groups. Following the fall of Suharto, in May 1998, an increased budget allowed ACILS to pursue more projects in the labour sphere. As Caraway (2005: 8) has noted, ‘ACILS could not only operate more freely, but with the inflow of democracy aid into their coffers, they also had the resources to advance a broad agenda in Indonesia.’ According to ACILS’ Indonesia Country Director, Rudy Porter, labour became a key priority for ACILS at this time:

Between 1996 and 2003/2004 we had fairly large budgets for basic union development; for teaching, field organisers, collective bargaining skills... all skills at a very basic level. Everybody recognised that there was a chance for some big advances when Suharto fell. In the very beginning it was just an idea that the whole labour relations system in Indonesia was imbalanced (sic) and it was totally in favour of employers and that there needed to be development. I think they [the funders] realised that whether Suharto fell or not there needed to be stronger unions to present more balance in labor relations. (Interview, April, 2007)

ACILS began working with GSBI in 2002 on education and training programs. However, this partnership only lasted two months due to conflicts that arose

³⁴ Information from Interview with Rudy Porter (April, 2007); and from the ACILS website, <http://www.solidaritycenter.org/content.asp?contentid=409>.

between the two organisations.³⁵ Frequent reporting mechanisms such as evaluations and program appraisals meant that union officials felt that much of their time was spent reporting to ACILS and less time was spent actually implementing the programs. However, according to GSBI's Secretary General, Yanti, reporting was not the biggest problem:

I don't have a problem with the reporting – I think we have an obligation to be transparent to people we borrow money from and to report on where it went and how it could be used better next time. But from the four programs for education we had, only two were successful because ACILS was too interventionist. (Interview, April, 2007)³⁶

While ACILS' and GSBI's partnership was short-lived, it offers a useful comparison with GSBI and OAus' working relationship. OAus began working informally in the Indonesian labour sphere in the early 1990s, when it was still known as Community Aid Abroad (CAA).³⁷ During this time, CAA provided some funding to the Indonesian labour NGO, SISBIKUM, that would later go on to form GSBI. Unlike ACILS, OAus has never had a permanent office space in Indonesia, relying instead on staff visits and 'in-country' advisors to report on their projects.³⁸ Despite OAus' support for SISBIKUM between 1995 and 2002, labour was not a key priority for CAA at that time, and advocacy was conducted predominantly by CAA volunteers working on the anti-Nike campaign (Interview with Tim Connor, July, 2007).

³⁵ Rudy Porter declined to comment on the record regarding ACILS' past collaboration with GSBI. Therefore, the information regarding the breakdown of this partnership is based only on interviews with GSBI and my own observations.

³⁶ GSBI's experience working with ACILS will be further examined in Chapter Three.

³⁷ OAus was formerly known as Community Aid Abroad until 2000 when it joined the group of twelve international Oxfams. In 2001 its name changed to Oxfam Community Aid Abroad and since 2005 it has used the name Oxfam Australia (Information from Oxfam Australia website, <http://www.oxfam.org.au/about/history.html>).

³⁸ While OAus does not have an office in Jakarta, Oxfam Great Britain's Indonesia office is located in South Jakarta, and there is often resource sharing between the two affiliates.

In contrast to ACILS' relationship with GSBI, which was predominantly a funding one, both GSBI and OAus agree that while there has been some funding for certain projects, their relationship has largely been based on campaign support (Interview with Tim Connor, July, 2007; Interview with Kelly Dent, July, 2007; Interview with Yanti, April, 2007). However, in 2001, CAA—which had since affiliated with Oxfam International (OI) and had been renamed Oxfam Community Aid Abroad (OCAA)—shifted its focus to issues of urban poverty, and began to work more formally with unions and other labour groups in Indonesia and elsewhere in Asia.³⁹ In 2004, funding was provided for a second labour rights advocacy officer, and since then, OAus has funded projects with GSBI, FPBN (*Forum Pendamping Buruh Nasional*, National Forum of Labour NGOs), LBH Bandung (*Lembaga Bantuan Hukum*, Bandung Legal Aid), and KASBI (*Kongres Aliansi Serikat Buruh Indonesia*, The Indonesian Workers' Alliance Congress) (Interview with Kelly Dent, July, 2007). According to Labour Rights Advocacy Officer, Kelly Dent, OAus' increased focus on labour was:

A recognition that labour organisations and trade unions are a really important part of...giving people a voice for fighting for their rights, and they're also a pillar of democracy. So if you believe...supporting democratic and independent unions, if you see them as having a role to play within the development of the alleviation of poverty through giving people a voice, through the development of democracy, then trade unions and workers' rights are a key pillar in that. (Interview, July, 2007)

As a result of this focus, OAus has provided funding to GSBI for paralegal training, English language courses, and internet and media training, as well as campaign support for unfair dismissals, equal pay, and lobbying international buyers to support workers' rights. According to OAus:

³⁹ Aside from Indonesia, OAus also works on labour rights in Thailand and Sri Lanka (see Oxfam International, 2006).

With unions we're really aware of not funding core activities, so we don't fund trade union elections because then we could be accused of interfering in the union democratic processes. So we try to fund stuff that's 'value-aimed', things that might help strengthen and improve the capacity of the union without making the union dependent on external funding, which is a really difficult thing to do. (Interview with Kelly Dent, July, 2007)

The case studies of OAus and ACILS illustrate two different approaches taken by international NGOs working in the Indonesian labour sphere. It is useful to reflect on the different strategies and tactics employed by these organisations in order to understand why ACILS' relationship with GSBI ended and why OAus' relationship has continued. As noted earlier, GSBI officials maintain that ACILS was too 'interventionist'. Rigid reporting mechanisms, imposed program agendas and a lack of consultation with members led to GSBI feeling they were being controlled (Interview with Yanti, April, 2007). ACILS' evaluation models were similar to Marsden and Oakley's (1990) first two models: that is, evaluations conducted by external agents and evaluations conducted by ACILS staff. As GSBI were not involved in evaluating ACILS' programs, ACILS' programs failed to impact on women members, as Yanti describes:

ACILS would say, 'The education has to be like this', or 'Use these materials'. They asked us to have a session on training trainers. They gave us materials that had been used and written by SPSI! How could we use those? Everyone knows that SPSI just stands for management, and that's not what GSBI is about. So we didn't use those materials, and that's why we didn't continue the programs with them. But really, it was the intervention that didn't work, the materials they used were imposed and we didn't have a say in writing them. (Interview, April, 2007)

On the contrary, GSBI claims that OAus has been less interventionist, allowing a greater degree of autonomy. OAus' evaluation model has included both internal and external evaluators—as described in Marsden and Oakley's (1990) third model—and where project staff have conducted internal evaluations they have sought input from GSBI staff (Interview with Kelly Dent, July, 2007; Interview with Tim Connor, July, 2007). From the outset, GSBI and OAus had explicit discussions about their working relationship and their program aims. According to Yanti:

The agreement was written together so that we could understand where we were both coming from. They've never said to us, 'Here's some money for a program, use these materials, do it like this.' Instead, it's more like, 'Oh we have this idea for a program.' 'Does it fit with our standards? Yes or no?', and that's what determines whether they'll fund it or not. We respect that because they're standards that we both agreed on before we set out. (Interview, April, 2007)

By comparing ACILS' approach with OAus', it becomes clear that a non-interventionist approach has been more beneficial for GSBI.

When framed as 'interventionist' versus 'non-interventionist'—as Yanti's comments suggest—it becomes clear that the ACILS and OAus examples highlight the difference in Weber's rational and Durkheim's moral models of accountability. ACILS' approach sits clearly within a Weberian model of rational accountability, while OAus' approach is based on a Durkheimian model of moral accountability. ACILS' insistence on formal audits and financial reports resulted in mistrust from GSBI leadership, and a feeling that they were 'constantly being watched' (Interview with Yanti, April, 2007). On the contrary, OAus had encouraged GSBI to participate in its evaluation process and had fewer reporting requirements than ACILS, which resulted in a greater level of

autonomy for GSBI, and a greater level of trust between the two organisations. According to GSBI and OAus, ‘mutual trust’ has played an important role in their relationship, along with open dialogue (Interview with Yanti, April, 2007; Interview with Kelly Dent, July, 2007). In that sense, while OAus has formal reporting mechanisms in place, such as evaluations and reports, it has also relied on the critical feedback and input of GSBI in creating a more balanced culture of accountability.

The case studies of ACILS and OAus raise other important questions. NGOs have often been criticised for the ways in which they select partners in host countries. Some scholars suggest that NGOs only choose partners located in urban, accessible locations (Mercer, 2002). It could be argued that GSBI and OAus were able to work together because GSBI was based in Jakarta. That GSBI is located in Jakarta has a significant impact on its members’ access to resources, networks and international funding, and OAus could be criticised for not working with groups in less urbanised areas.⁴⁰

Other scholars suggest that in many cases NGOs and SSOs only work with groups which ‘fit’ their own selection criteria.⁴¹ For example, OAus’ decision to work with GSBI was largely based on a normative definition of democracy. In OAus’ definition, GSBI qualified as a ‘democratic union’ on the basis that it had women members, open elections, transparent dues reporting, and was not affiliated to a political party (Interview with Kelly Dent, July 2007; Interview with Tim Connor, July, 2007). OAus’ decision to work with GSBI also highlights problems with the ‘framing’ model outlined in Chapter One. The fact

⁴⁰ While Mercer’s (2002) argument is valid, this is difficult in the Indonesian labour scene where NGOs work in larger, more industrialised cities because that is where production is situated. OAus also works with labour groups on the industrial outskirts of Bandung, Bogor and Surabaya, which was a response to a growing ‘urban poverty’ in the 1990s (Interview with Tim Connor, 2007). OAus still has many other programs in rural areas, though its labour rights program is largely concentrated in the West Java region.

⁴¹ Ford (2006a: 163) accuses international funding bodies of choosing ‘winners’ who fit their ‘expectations of what a union is and does.’

that it was selected on ‘democratic’ merit suggests that GSBI—or SISBIKUM in the mid 1990s—had some understanding of the need to frame their issues as ‘rights violations’ or ‘gender rights’ issues. However, as Ford (forthcoming) argues, women are often used as tokens in order to give the impression of a ‘democratic’ union, and in order to make up numbers according to donor quota systems. While GSBI has a number of strong women in positions of central leadership, this is not necessarily the case at many of its plant level unions, where there are often few or no women leaders.⁴²

In addition to critiques of NGOs’ selection criteria, scholars also criticise short term, ‘issue-based’ or ‘fad’ campaigns which come to an end when that issue is ‘out of fashion’ or funding in that area stops (Baccaro, 2001; Sinaga, 1994). This was the case with both ACILS and OAus, as the interview data earlier illustrates. For OAus, funding for labour issues ran out in the mid-1990s when OAus’ focus shifted to other program areas. As Tim Connor notes:

Oxfam Australia’ priorities changed...they moved the staff person from Jakarta to Kupang in West Timor and they decided to focus on programs in that part of Indonesia. I wasn’t really privy to why the decision was made...but there was no funding again until probably 2003, 2004. (Interview, July, 2007)

And while ACILS had an increase in its budget for labour-related programs in 1998, this funding came to an end. When interviewed, ACILS’ Rudy Porter noted that ACILS would ‘like to be working with more groups but we just don’t have as much money as we did around ’98 to be doing as much.’ (Interview, April, 2007)

⁴² At the time of fieldwork there were two women leaders at the PERBUPAS union in Tangerang, but this was known to be quite an exception among other plant-level unions in the area.

Yet with regard to the criticism of ‘fad’ campaigns, Tim Connor maintains that this does not apply to OAus’ labour rights advocacy work. Regarding a long term campaign at the PT Panarub factory in Tangerang, he says:

In general, I think it’s a very valid criticism of development NGOs, that they jump from issue to issue based on what’s ‘trendy’... but we’ve been working on that campaign since 1995—twelve years—so it’s not really justified to criticise that as a ‘short term’ campaign. In terms of Kelly’s and my personal commitment, our commitment is to trade union rights rather than to sportswear because it’s ‘trendy’. What we’re trying to do is put pressure on sportswear companies to cooperate in systems that create space for workers to organise...we want to build on [that] and include other industries. (Interview, July, 2007)

Ford (2006a: 171) argues that workers have little control over programs carried out by NGOs—‘control they theoretically would if those programs were funded from union dues or on a user-pays basis’. While this may have been the case with ACILS’ intervention, where programs and materials were imposed upon GSBI, this has not been the case in the collaboration between OAus and GSBI. In both OAus’ internal evaluation, as well as interviews with GSBI staff, the importance of dialogue between the two parties was stressed, as was the sense of reciprocity inherent in their working relationship. As OAus stated:

What’s really, really key in all of this is that it’s about building networks, building relationships, building trust, and that’s a huge amount of the work that we do...This has been developed with GSBI through having a long relationship with them and being able to discuss and work out where strengths and weaknesses are, in a relatively open manner. When you work with someone intensely on a campaign, it becomes pretty clear where some

of the strengths and weaknesses are. It's a process of dialogue. (Interview with Kelly Dent, July, 2007)

GSBI also agreed that the dialogue between OAus and GSBI was an important factor:

Each program will last for six months. At three months we have a review and talk about how it's going and what the program needs are. For example, recently, the English course has been the most useful. We decide who gets to go, who would benefit the most from it. (Interview with Yanti, April, 2007)

While there are shortcomings within this model, as will be discussed in Chapter Three,⁴³ on the whole GSBI has played more of a role in determining OAus' programming than it did with ACILS'.⁴⁴

Many factors determine the success or failure of a donor-recipient relationship. However, the ACILS and OAus examples suggest that where ACILS took on an interventionist role with GSBI, based on rational accountability, tension built between the two parties and few results have been achieved. On the contrary, GSBI has maintained its autonomy and has participated in decision-making and evaluation processes in its relationship with the less interventionist OAus. The ACILS and OAus examples illustrate the need for a more integrative model of

⁴³ Chapter Three argues that while OAus has sought the input of GSBI at a central level, it has not sought enough input from ordinary, rank-and-file women union members in local areas such as Tangerang. Nonetheless, when compared with ACILS, OAus has had a much more open dialogue with GSBI regarding its program and funding needs (Interview with Yanti, April, 2007; and Interview with Kelly Dent, July, 2007).

⁴⁴ In addition, Ford's (2006a) argument does not necessarily guarantee that workers would be able to 'control' how funding was spent even in a union the size of GSBI. While theoretically this model seems the most suited to representing workers' needs, in practice, it may be unrealistic to suggest that 10,000 workers would have more control over how dues were spent, particularly due to the lack of check-off systems in plant-level unions, and the fluctuation in GSBI's monthly income this results in.

accountability. Such a model would offer significant opportunities to the labour movement in forging relationships in which NGOs and unions can equally participate in the planning, implementation and evaluation of their collaborative programs.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the differences between two approaches adopted by international organisations, and the impact this had on their relationship with GSBI. By examining the history and the motivations of international NGOs, SSOs and GUFs working in the Indonesian labour sphere with feminist agendas, this chapter has shown the specific role these organisations played in ‘gendering the agenda’ of Indonesian unions. By implementing structures such as quota systems, women’s departments and women’s forums, these organisations sought to ‘empower’ women union members, and encouraged their Indonesian partners to do the same. Through the case study of GSBI and two of its international partners, this chapter has examined the different approaches and models of accountability used within these relationships, and questioned which has been more useful in an Indonesian context. It has argued that ACILS’ interventionist approach was of little benefit GSBI; while OAus’ ‘non-interventionist’ approach was more successful and has resulted in a continuing relationship. Chapter Three will examine the GSBI case study in further detail, incorporating interview data from GSBI women members to analyse the GSBI and OAus partnership from women members’ perspective.

Chapter Three

This chapter examines the collaborative working relationships between GSBI and Oxfam Australia, from the perspective of its women members.⁴⁵ While Chapter Two measured ACILS' and OAus' programs against Weber's and Durkheim's models of accountability, this chapter takes as its central framework Rahman's (1990) model of 'people's self-assessment of progress' and evaluates OAus' work with GSBI from the perspective of its women members. This chapter begins by outlining a brief history of GSBI, its leadership structure and the origins of its transnational links with OAus. It then looks specifically at GSBI's formal and informal approaches to gender prior to their partnerships with international NGOs. In the third section, it evaluates whether OAus' work with GSBI has been beneficial for women union members from the perspective of women union members, drawing on interview and survey data gained from fieldwork in Tangerang and Jakarta. This section outlines clear discrepancies between the lived experience of women union members in Tangerang with those of women union members in Jakarta and highlights the ways in which Tangerang women have been excluded from decision-making and evaluation processes. Finally, this chapter situates the interview data from GSBI's women members within Durkheim's framework of moral accountability, highlighting the importance of this accountability model in the Indonesian labour sphere. This chapter argues that for international NGOs to effectively benefit or 'empower' women through their programs, not only must their programs reach women at all levels, but women union members must play an integral role in evaluating any program where the 'empowerment' of women is a specific aim.

⁴⁵ As ACILS has not worked with GSBI since 2002, interview data was primarily in response to OAus' working relationship with GSBI, and as a result, this chapter will only examine this relationship.

The History and Development of GSBI

Like many other unions in the late New Order era, GSBI was established by a local labour NGO in an attempt to offer workers an alternative to the state-sanctioned SPSI. SISBIKUM (*Saluran Informasi dan Bimbingan Hukum*, Channel for Social Information and Legal Guidance), formed in 1988, is one of a number of Indonesian labour NGOs established in an attempt to raise awareness of workers' rights and to offer workers an alternative to SPSI.⁴⁶ Based in Jakarta, SISBIKUM worked informally with workers to provide training, legal assistance and a basic understanding of unions. From 1995, SISBIKUM organised workers through informal study groups at several Tangerang factories, offering workshops and training on collective bargaining and workers' rights. Following these sessions, SISBIKUM established two plant-level unions in Tangerang that would later become key members of GSBI: PERBUPAS (*Perkumpulan Buruh Pabrik Sepatu* The Association of Footwear Workers) in December 1996, and ABGTeks (*Asosiasi Buruh Garmen dan Sepatu*, The Association of Garment and Footwear Workers) in August 1997.⁴⁷ PERBUPAS and ABGTeks members began organising informally throughout the final months of the New Order, as workers and activists took to the streets calling for Suharto's resignation and for political reform. Following years of trade union repression under SPSI, GSBI's founding members stressed the need for independent, democratic trade unions that would truly represent workers and encourage a strong union culture once again in Indonesia. Following Suharto's resignation in May 1998, the Habibie government ratified the ILO Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association, and within months, hundreds of new unions had formed in Indonesia (Ford, 2003b; Hadiwinata, 2003). After consolidating

⁴⁶ Personal communication with Michele Ford regarding research involving SISBIKUM in 2000. For a detailed study of Indonesia's labour NGOs see Ford (2003b).

⁴⁷ Email correspondence with GSBI Secretary General, Yanti, September 2nd, 2007. In GSBI's development it is important to clarify that the New Order government allowed unions other than SPSI to form at the enterprise level; however, above the enterprise level they were prohibited. Consequently, SISBIKUM was able to form PERBUPAS and ABGTeks in two Tangerang factories. For more information see Ford (2005).

its membership and building a strong following, GSBI formally registered as a trade union federation in March 1999.

As a labour NGO, SISBIKUM built up many local and international networks, and it was through these networks that GSBI began collaborating with NGOs such as Community Aid Abroad (now Oxfam Australia), The Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) and Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC). While this mediated networking continued for some years, it ceased when GSBI eventually fell out with SISBIKUM as it began to feel the NGO lacked transparency and would not allow GSBI any autonomy in its working relationships. According to GSBI's Secretary General, Yanti:

SISBIKUM imposed certain limitations on us—we felt that as an organisation we didn't have our own authority. They wanted to know who we were working with, and every organisation we worked with had to be through them. They weren't transparent in their financial support with international organisations. We felt like we weren't an independent union anymore. (Interview, April, 2007)

GSBI no longer works with SISBIKUM, and since 2001 has worked directly with its international partners and has sought funding and campaign support independently. They sought out a partnership with the American WRC and continued working with OAus and CCC on their existing campaigns. Some of these campaigns included raising awareness of mass dismissals in factories producing for international brands such as Nike and Reebok, while others included campaign support to increase meal allowances, minimum wages and overtime rates.⁴⁸ According to Yanti, 'breaking away from SISBIKUM became

⁴⁸ Information provided by workers and GSBI union staff through group discussions, January, 2007; information from OAus' website: www.oxfam.org.au and from CCC's website: www.cleanclothes.org.

a positive thing for us, because it forced us to build our own networks' (Interview, April, 2007).

Based in South Jakarta, GSBI operates as a federation of sectoral and plant-level unions within the Jakarta-Bogor-Tangerang-Bekasi (Jabotabek) area. GSBI estimates its total membership to be approximately 10,000 members, from five sectoral and twenty-nine plant level unions, predominantly from the Textile, Garment and Footwear (TGF) sector. GSBI's central leadership board consists of 23 representatives (four women and nineteen men) from its member unions. Every six months this board meets to discuss funding, program and campaign areas. Eleven members of this board also work in the Jakarta office in daily administrative roles such as Chairperson, Secretary General, and Treasurer of the union federation.

GSBI bases its work on its core constitution, which was drafted in 1999 by its founding members. In its constitution, GSBI's six key program areas are identified as monitoring the development and protection of member unions' Freedom of Association (FOA) (as based on ILO Convention No. 87); advocating for governmental labour policies which ensure workers' rights; providing education and training to workers on basic union education, legal rights and the labour movement more broadly; facilitating and encouraging the establishment of new enterprise and sectoral unions; encouraging social and economic gender awareness; and advocating and assisting with Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) negotiations.⁴⁹

According to Yanti (2007), GSBI carries out the work of its constitution on many different levels: 'There's the one-on-one work with workers, then we might all work together as a group, then there's the broader programs that affect the whole community.' Throughout the period of fieldwork conducted for this

⁴⁹ Information taken from an educational worksheet for new members, *About GSBI*, published by GSBI, 2005.

thesis between December 2006 and January 2007, and again in April 2007, this multi-dimensional advocacy work was evident in many different ways. In its one-on-one advocacy work, GSBI often held individual consultations with workers at the Jakarta office regarding disputes in pay or unfair dismissals. Where mass dismissals or suspensions had taken place, GSBI staff accompanied workers as a group to the Labour Dispute Arbitration Committee (*Panitia Penyelesaian Perselisihan Perburuhan* or P4P) and spoke with workers afterwards as a group. And through its work in the broader community, GSBI regularly organises rallies and educational seminars open to the public. During the fieldwork for this thesis, GSBI staged rallies in Jakarta and Tangerang on the issue of Labour Market Flexibility (LMF) and the unfair dismissal of workers,⁵⁰ and coordinated public seminars with local members of parliament, academics and activists in the lead up to the 2007 May Day activities in Jakarta.

An important part of GSBI's multi-dimensional work is its transnational networking, as seen in its partnerships with NGOs such as The Worker Rights Consortium (WRC), Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), OAus and ACILS (as discussed in Chapter Two). According to Yanti, these partnerships are mutually beneficial:

At the time [we began working together] there were a lot of international NGOs looking to work with local Indonesian worker organisations, to base their work on the ground. Their campaigns centred around sportswear production and I think they felt they needed to establish a relationship at the grassroots level to see how things really were on the ground. So I think there really was a mutual need to get involved. (Interview, April 2007)

⁵⁰ GSBI's May Day 2007 campaign was particularly centred on raising awareness of conditions at local Tangerang factory, PT Panarub. Many union leaders at this factory had been dismissed and were awaiting a decision from management regarding their reinstatement. In this campaign, GSBI and its international partners (such as OAus and CCC) lobbied PT Panarub's key buyer, adidas, to pressure management in reinstating the workers. Information and photos of this campaign are available at: <http://www.oxfam.org.au/campaigns/labour/action/07adidasprotest/>

Aside from raising GSBI's campaigning to an international level, GSBI also maintained these partnerships in order to increase its funding. In order to remain independent, GSBI's primary source of funding comes from members' dues (Interview with Yanti, April, 2007). Yet often these dues do not cover the monthly costs of staff wages, union activities, office rental, transportation and other associated costs. In GSBI's dues system, a worker pays dues of 0.5% of their monthly salary to their plant level union, and GSBI then receives half of this amount. From an average Tangerang Minimum Wage salary in April, 2007 of Rp. 800,000.00,⁵¹ a worker would pay Rp.4,000.00 per month to his or her local union, Rp.2,000.00 of which GSBI would receive. Yet as Yanti explains, GSBI's budget cannot always rely on members' dues, as monthly income often fluctuates:

Some months we'll receive Rp. 4 million, some months it's Rp. 2 million, others it's Rp. 3 million. There's fluctuation in this because not all of our unions use a check off system – if they did it might be a bit easier because everyone's name would be marked off and guaranteed that they'd paid. But we can't enforce that on the plant level unions – that's up to them. (Interview with Yanti, April, 2007)

Other unions in Indonesia have experienced similar problems with members' dues. As Jeon Je Seong (forthcoming) observed in his study of an SPSI union in Sidoarjo, East Java, if unions increase members' dues, they face the possibility of losing members to another union at the factory, or of workers abandoning the union movement altogether. Yet if they keep members' dues low, while it may attract new members on a competitive basis, they run the risk of not being able to offer their members adequate services due to a lack of funds. Consequently, many unions seek out other funding options, such as local labour solidarity

⁵¹ Wage information from GSBI staff, April, 2007. Approximately AU\$103, xe.com Currency Converter at 1st September, 2007.

networks, labour NGOs, and Global Union Federations (GUFs) (See Ford 2003b; 2006b). For GSBI, combining members' dues with international funding in its budget has meant that it has been able to continue its multi-dimensional work both within the union and within the broader community, which it would not have been able to do relying on members' dues alone.

GSBI and Gender Issues

Since its formation, GSBI claims to have prioritised gender equality in its work. According to Yanti, a gender focus for GSBI means 'recognising that women have specific problems of their own, such as reproductive rights and sexism at home and work... so it's about raising an awareness of their own rights and encouraging them to be active through education' (Interview, April 2007). In addition to GSBI's six key program areas outlined earlier, GSBI also identifies five key values in its constitution, namely that it is democratic; non-violent; gender sensitive; independent; and pro-solidarity.⁵² GSBI considers it 'unrealistic' to strive for workers' rights without striving for women's rights at the same time, particularly in the TGF sector where the workforce is comprised of approximately 80% women (Interview with Yanti, April 2007). As a result, GSBI prioritises a focus on gender issues, and prior to collaborating with international NGOs such as ACILS or OAus, GSBI ran several small workshops on gender equity, and published several leaflets for members on women's rights at work.

Despite the lack of balance in the ratio of women to men in GSBI's leadership board (four women to nineteen men), GSBI's focus on gender can be seen in the establishment of a women's department and through the implementation of gender training for its union members. While GSBI insists that gender issues are integral to all of the programs it carries out and should not be separated from its

⁵² Information taken from an educational worksheet for new members, *About GSBI*, published by GSBI, 2005.

programming overall, results can most clearly be seen through the Women's Department. As in other cases, the creation of a Women's Department has yielded positive results for women members, creating an autonomous space in which women's demands can be raised and women's rights as workers ensured. Ford (forthcoming) notes the success of a women's department at FSPMI (*Federasi Serikat Pekerja Metal Indonesia*, The Indonesian Metal Workers' Union) in improving the position of women within the union, as does Reerink in her 2006 survey of eighteen Indonesian union federations.⁵³ GSBI's Women's Department has achieved some positive results for union members, including an increase in women members, training on women's rights as workers' rights and gains in some factories with maternity and menstrual leave (Interview with Yanti, April, 2007). Until recently, the Head of the Women's Department, Hermawati (Hera), was the Secretary General of plant-level union PERBUPAS, and is still in regular contact with PERBUPAS' women members. This has had positive results for women at the grassroots, with one PERBUPAS member claiming that, 'if I can't talk about it with my local union, I know I can go to GSBI and talk to Hera there about it' (Interview with Anonymous A, January, 2007).

Not all members of GSBI support this focus on gender, with some arguing that 'gender' separates issues into 'men's and 'women's' issues, and creates divisions within the union. In interviews carried out for an earlier research project,⁵⁴ one male union member noted that:

⁵³ In this report, Reerink (2006: 59) found that from eighteen trade union federations, thirteen had separate structures for women, working towards 'advocating for women's rights, organising activities to increase women's participation, and giving advice to the central leadership on women's issues.'

⁵⁴ Preliminary research was conducted with GSBI in December, 2005, for my undergraduate BA International Studies 'In-Country' research component.

If women only fight for ‘women’ and men only fight for ‘men’, where is the solidarity? Isn’t a union supposed to build solidarity?⁵⁵

While another male member, who agreed with GSBI’s gender focus, put it this way:

I support women’s rights just as I support men’s rights as workers – but it doesn’t mean you need to separate the two. I don’t think there is any difference between the two.⁵⁶

When asked about GSBI’s gender focus, one female respondent replied that:

Just because there are more of us [women] that doesn’t mean that it’s not important for men to understand about these issues.⁵⁷

It is clear from such responses that there is a mixed understanding of GSBI’s gender focus, and indeed, of the term ‘gender’. That ‘gender’ here is used synonymously with ‘women’ highlights an important trend regarding the usage of the word ‘gender’ in Indonesia (Reerink, 2006: 45).

Citing several examples of Indonesian unions, Reerink (2006) notes that it is common for union members to view the term ‘gender’ with suspicion, even in the unions which had well-established women’s departments or factions. As a

⁵⁵ (Interview with Anonymous B, December 2005)

⁵⁶ Interview with Anonymous C, December, 2005. However, these responses are not just limited to GSBI’s experience. OAus notes that in its work in Indonesia, male union leaders have also viewed ‘gender’ as a divisive factor, worried that it is ‘creating barriers within the union’ (Interview with Kelly Dent, July, 2007).

⁵⁷ Interview with Anonymous D, December, 2005.

result, it can be argued that ‘gender’ itself remains a contested and misunderstood term in Indonesia.⁵⁸

While having a Women’s Department represents a formalised approach to addressing gender issues, fieldwork for this thesis also suggests that GSBI’s members experience its gender focus more informally, through the presence of women leaders and the experience of living and working with other women workers. As Hadiz (1997: 128) and elsewhere Tran⁵⁹ have observed, where women workers live and work in close proximity to one another, it is easy for a culture of solidarity, activism and education to grow. Many women living in Tangerang have gained an understanding of their rights as women—and of GSBI’s gender focus overall—as a result of conversations after work, meetings with friends and speaking with local women leaders. Throughout the primary period of fieldwork for this thesis at the PERBUPAS plant-level union in Tangerang, a clear culture of solidarity and education was evident among women union members. Workers living in *kos* (dormitory) or *kontrakan* (rental) accommodation would travel to work together, work a nine hour day together (and sometimes an extra three hours’ overtime), return from work together, and often attend union meetings together at night. In the PERBUPAS union office, groups of workers would gather at the end of their shift to socialise, read newspapers, and to meet with other workers from neighbouring factories. On several occasions older union members would lead group discussions on workers’ rights. The majority of these group members were women and conversations often turned to ‘women’s rights as workers’ rights’. When asked why she came to the PERBUPAS office after work, one woman replied:

⁵⁸ Yet as Oxfam Australia’s Kelly Dent observes, “‘Gender’ meaning ‘women’ doesn’t just happen in Indonesia, it happens in the West, too. People confuse the two all the time.” (Interview, July, 2007)

⁵⁹ In a presentation at The University of Sydney in August, 2007, Dr Angie Tran (Columbia University) commented on the lived experience of women workers in Vietnamese Export Processing Zones, and the solidarity that grew out of shared living and communal activities such as fetching water together from the well, washing up together and doing their weekly laundry together.

I get the opportunity to meet women from other factories, and to talk with women [at my factory] who work in different sections. We started to talk about menstruation leave one day. I think some of the men in the room think that this is something women should just talk about on their own but I think it's good that we can talk about it in a group.⁶⁰

Former Secretary General of PERBUPAS, Hera notes that:

People often drop in here on their way home because many of them live nearby. Even though it gets quite crowded, it's good because it gives people a chance to listen to other people's conversations, and to ask questions. Women sometimes miss out on this, though, because of overtime or their family responsibilities, so it's important for those who do come here to talk about these issues with them when they get home later that night.⁶¹

For GSBI women members in Tangerang, technology—particularly sms messaging—has also played an important role in mobilising women and informally disseminating GSBI's gender focus. It has been suggested elsewhere (see Greene and Kirton, 2003: 320) that the internet can increase women's union participation through online forums and online recruitment drives. For GSBI, the internet has been an important tool in building and sustaining these networks, enabling it to seek out international partners who match its ethos of building democratic and independent unions, ensuring workers' freedom of association, and ensuring gender rights are respected. For example, in 2006, GSBI sought out

⁶⁰ Informal discussion with PERBUPAS female member, January, 2007. In Indonesian law, two days' menstrual leave per month is stipulated for women workers, but due to the intrusive examinations women must undertake in order to 'prove' they are menstruating, many women regularly choose to forgo this leave. In other cases, it is simply not provided at all (Oxfam International, 2006).

⁶¹ Informal discussion with Hera, Head of the GSBI Women's Department (former Secretary General of PERBUPAS), January, 2007.

funding from the Children Labour Aid Foundation (CLAF) to support its program areas, and in return have lent their support to the campaign to end child labour. Through the internet, GSBI has been able to participate in cross-scalar networking, which has raised awareness of its programs and in particular, its gender programs. However, its potential with regard to more intensive engagement of grassroots members in union activities is extremely limited as few internet cafes can be found in the industrial belt outside Jakarta. Consequently, many workers—both men and women—have embraced mobile phone technology, especially sms, as even on workers' low wage sms is a viable option for mobilising, staying in touch with fellow activists and recruiting new members to the union. As one woman unionist observed:

If I send a sms to my friend then she can show the five people she's with then they'll talk about it wherever they go that day amongst their friends. The next day you might have thirty people turn up to a meeting just from that one sms. (Anonymous E, Group Interview, January 2007)

These approaches suggest that GSBI's gender focus is not only experienced by its women members through formalised channels, such as the Women's Department, but also through informal, everyday activities that empower women in their working environments. By combining the two approaches, Yanti believes that women will slowly begin to have an understanding of their rights:

From one hundred women I see there might be one woman who has an understanding of some of these issues, one woman who knows about gender and its implications in her life. When I started this work my parents didn't agree at first – they thought it was too dangerous because I'm a woman. But after talking with them for over three years now they can see that I'm determined in my actions. Now my mother believes me, she sees that it's important. It wasn't easy, but she's started to change. So if women

are able to change the way their families think about these issues, they can change the way their workplace or their union think, too. (Interview, April, 2007)

As Yanti's comment illustrates, bringing about change in this area is a slow process. While GSBI can be seen to be incorporating a gender focus through its formal and informal approaches, members still have a mixed understanding of gender issues, highlighting that gender equity has not yet been fully embraced by the union, or incorporated by its programs completely.⁶² International partners have also observed that incorporating a gender focus into union programming is difficult, both in western and non-western contexts.⁶³ In that sense, as GSBI continues to work with international partners on gender issues, it is important to examine whether women in GSBI have benefited from an external gender focus, as well as its own internal focus. This chapter now examines GSBI's collaborative gender program work with OAus from the perspective of its women members.

Women Evaluating the Reach of OAus' Gender Programs

As discussed in Chapter Two, OAus has worked with a gender focus in its programs with GSBI since the mid-1990s. Whether lobbying around workplace campaigns, or funding small projects, OAus carries out its work with GSBI with a clear gender focus which seeks to 'empower' GSBI's (predominantly women)

⁶² As with Reerink's (2006) study, it is important to note that these issues are not limited to GSBI alone, but also relate to a broader understanding of 'gender' in Indonesia.

⁶³ For example, according to OAus' Tim Connor, while GSBI's central leadership might prioritise gender issues, several member unions within GSBI still do not emphasise this enough. As he says, 'I think there is a lot of sexism in GSBI... You can go to a meeting with the men and then there'll be another room with the other men sitting on, and then all the women will be standing outside, and that's in a factory where it's 90% women, so there are pretty massive issues within GSBI on gender stuff, although there are lots of strong women...[O]ur approach is to tackle that issue when we're being asked to provide campaign support to say, 'Look, it's pretty obvious here that women aren't getting a look in, and for that reason we can't prioritise that case.' (Interview, July, 2007)

union members.⁶⁴ Yet while OAus has worked with GSBI for several years, fieldwork for this thesis suggests that in women's own evaluation, OAus' work is not reaching many women members outside Jakarta. This section highlights the clear discrepancies in union experience between women union members in Tangerang and women union members in Jakarta. It argues that there is a strong dialogue between OAus and GSBI, and between GSBI and its plant-level unions, but if gender programs are to truly benefit or 'empower' women in the future, there needs to be an increased dialogue between OAus and women at plant-level unions, who are often excluded from decision-making, training and evaluation processes.

In his 1990 model of evaluation, Rahman argues that 'people's self-assessment of progress' must be included in the evaluation process in order to assess whether 'empowerment' has been an outcome of NGO projects. The rationale behind this model is that no-one is in a better position to evaluate a program than the people it is designed for, as they are the ones who will experience and be affected by it. Rahman's model suggests that "people's self-assessment of progress" should form the starting-point for evaluation and not externally determined performance criteria' (Riddell and Robinson, 1995: 51).

When examining OAus' work with GSBI from the perspective of GSBI's women members, a key issue which emerges is the scope of OAus' interaction with union members. As noted elsewhere,⁶⁵ NGOs have often been criticised for working solely in large, urban centres, and not where the majority of their 'constituents' are. GSBI holds a membership base of 10,000 workers who predominantly reside in the industrial area of Tangerang, yet both ACILS' and

⁶⁴ As noted in Chapter Two, gender is a key consideration in OAus' selection criteria for choosing partners 'on the ground' (Interview with Kelly Dent, July, 2007; Interview with Tim Connor, July, 2007).

⁶⁵ See Baccaro (2001); .Hadiwinata (2003); and Mercer (2002).

OAus' interaction has primarily been limited to a Jakarta level.⁶⁶ OAus' Labour Rights Advocacy Officer, Kelly Dent, maintains that OAus does work on the ground. Its staff have interacted with women union members at both a central as well as a regional level, making trips to Tangerang to speak with union organisers and to conduct interviews regarding their collaborative campaign work. However, without an office in Indonesia, these trips are infrequent, and usually are no more than a week long. According to Dent, 'We do go out there [to Tangerang], but it's hard to see 10,000 people.' (Interview, July, 2007). Fieldwork findings suggest that while there is a good dialogue between OAus and GSBI office staff in Jakarta, many women union members in Tangerang had never heard of Oxfam Australia, had never met with its staff, and did not know that GSBI had a working relationship with it.⁶⁷ As one woman member observed:

I've seen some booklets from FES [*Frederich Ebert Stiftung*, a German NGO], but I've never heard of Oxfam. Maybe they just work in Jakarta? (Interview with Anonymous F, January, 2007)

While another had heard of OAus, but had never met its staff in Tangerang:

I heard they came here and did some interviews, but I don't know who they interviewed. They only stayed for a couple of days. (Interview with Anonymous G, January, 2007)

⁶⁶ For example, in ACILS' model, contact with GSBI was conducted solely at a Jakarta level and field trips to areas outside Jakarta were rare. ACILS staff spoke primarily with GSBI's administrative staff in the Jakarta office and where 'training sessions' on gender were held—such as those described by Rudy Porter in Chapter Two—they were predominantly held in Jakarta as one or two-day workshops with workers coming in from surrounding industrial areas. As a result, aside from these occasional training seminars, the majority of women members living outside the Jakarta area were not given an opportunity to meet with ACILS staff, or to participate in the programs aimed at them. Moreover, they were not provided with a chance to evaluate whether these programs were suitable for them, or whether ACILS' funding could have been used in other areas.

⁶⁷ Information from women PERBUPAS members' questionnaire responses in Tangerang, January, 2007.

Generally, those who were aware of GSBI's relationship with OAus were union leaders. Leaders of the plant-level union, PERBUPAS, Ali, Hera and Taryo were all familiar with OAus staff as they had been interviewed by them and collaborated with them before in the union office. In November 2006, OAus called on these leaders, as well as other leaders from plant-level unions in the Tangerang area to be interviewed for its internal evaluation. While there was an equal balance of male and female interviewees in this evaluation, all interviewees were familiar with OAus' work and were involved in their own unions in a leadership capacity of some sort. Rank-and-file union members were not interviewed by OAus, denying them the opportunity to participate in OAus' program evaluations.

Several problems emerge when examining the reach of OAus' interaction with women union members. Firstly, it is clear that a good dialogue exists between OAus and GSBI in Jakarta, who are in regular contact with each other and have access to email, fax and telephone technologies. Between GSBI Jakarta and plant-level unions such as PERBUPAS there is also solid communication, as members are often in contact with one another and many also commute between Tangerang and Jakarta. Yet there remains a lack of dialogue between OAus and GSBI's women members at the plant level. In this sense, the transnational links between GSBI and OAus have become exclusive, meaning that OAus' programs are not directly informed by the women they are intended for.

Secondly, if women are denied the chance to speak with international partners and their central unions are busy and overworked—as is the case with GSBI's eleven office staff—important contributions and suggestions from women are lost. A clear example from interviews with women at the PERBUPAS union when asked what they would like GSBI and its international partners to work on was English training and basic education. According to one woman member:

When we're not doing overtime we could be doing something else. A lot of women want to continue their education but they can't because of their work or their young children. But if the union provided an opportunity for that, I know a lot of us would like to get involved.⁶⁸

In early 2007 OAus provided funding for English training and media skills at GSBI, yet this training was only available to several key staff members in Jakarta (Interview with Kelly Dent, July 2007; Discussion with GSBI staff, April, 2007). While this training has been useful to those involved,⁶⁹ this again highlights that OAus' funding is distributed primarily to projects at a Jakarta level, while this money could perhaps have been used in establishing English classes or basic education programs for women members in Tangerang. As a result, OAus' current model of interaction is flawed in two ways: GSBI's women union members at a local level are missing out on the opportunities on offer to women at a central level; and OAus does not gain from the experience and contributions of women in Tangerang that could be used to shape its future programs more effectively.

The Importance of Moral Accountability

While OAus sought to incorporate input from women at both a local and a regional level, the majority of the women whose opinions were sought were in leadership positions and/or were very familiar with OAus' work. The evaluations and experiences of ordinary, rank-and-file union members were not included. This suggests that while in theory OAus' evaluation model includes internal as well as external agents—as suggested in Marsden and Oakley's

⁶⁸ Interview with Anonymous H, January, 2007.

⁶⁹ According to Yanti, 'The English course has been good. I've been able to talk with some of our international partners and it's building on the limited English I had before.' (Interview, April, 2007), while Head of the Women's Department, Hera, says that, 'It's hard but will really help in the long term.' (Group discussion, April, 2007)

second model—in practice, the inclusion of internal agents is limited to elite union women, or those who had directly benefited from OAus programs.

In the absence of more inclusive formal mechanisms of evaluation, women spoke to each other about OAus' work in the union office or their homes; in union meetings at the PERBUPAS office; and through informal networking with workers from other factories. Their responses in informal discussions, group and one-on-one interviews during fieldwork demonstrated that these kinds of processes play an important role in providing a platform for rank-and-file women to evaluate the work of GSBI and OAus, especially since grassroots women unionists' recommendations and evaluations of OAus' program work were not included in OAus' formal evaluations. As noted in Chapter One, Hilhorst (2003: 127) argues that these kinds of interactions are a key feature of alternative accountability regimes: 'What the report and the statistical record are to rational accountability, stories, ironic remarks and gossip are to moral accountability.' Thus women union members' informal assessments of OAus' work with GSBI not only fit Rahman's (1990) model of self-evaluation, but also sit clearly within a Durkheimian model of 'moral' accountability.

Moral modes of accountability are important in the Indonesian labour sphere more generally. Moral accountability is actively practiced through meetings with NGO staff, interviews with union members, and at events such as rallies and demonstrations, as different actors retold their account of events, and shared insights from their perspectives. By offering a variety of subjective narratives, moral accountability allows for a level of plurality not possible in rational accountability. For example, in describing the many voices that have contributed to the anti-Nike campaign, OAus activist Tim Connor (forthcoming) uses literary theorist's Boje's (2001) theory of 'antenarrative' to account for a plurality of voices. 'Antenarrative' is:

non-linear, almost living storytelling that is fragmented, polyphonic (many voiced) and collectively produced...[It attempts to] shatter grand narrative into many small stories and to problematize any linear mono-voiced grand narrative of the past by replacing it with an open polysemous (many-meanings) and multivocal (many-voiced) web of little stories (Boje, 2001; cited in Connor, forthcoming).

In this context, Boje's 'little stories' represent the informal methods NGOs, unions and workers use to report to each other, operating at a multi-dimensional level.

As the PERBUPAS case shows, these interactions are necessary in order to include the voices and opinions that might otherwise be marginalised, and to create the type of broader accountability, as suggested by Courville (2006) and Ford (2006a). In short, while these kinds of exchanges may not be considered in the formal evaluations of international organisations, mechanisms of moral accountability offer an alternative to the formal reporting mechanisms associated with rational accountability, and in giving women a space in which to evaluate programs which have a direct impact on them.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined GSBI's working relationship with OAus from the perspective of GSBI's women members. In particular, this chapter has drawn on Rahman's (1990) model of 'people's self-assessment of progress', as OAus' evaluations have tended to neglect women union members in assessments of their gender-focused program work. From fieldwork conducted with GSBI in Jakarta and its member union, PERBUPAS in Tangerang, this chapter has highlighted several discrepancies in the lived experience of women union members and their interaction with GSBI's international partners. This chapter has shown that OAus has tended to work more at a Jakarta-based level, leaving little opportunity to speak with women in regional areas, such as Tangerang.

Through a model of moral accountability, this highlights that while women union members in Jakarta are often included in the decision-making and evaluation processes of OAUs' work, women union members in Tangerang are often excluded from this experience. Where women in Tangerang have been included in these processes, they have predominantly been women in positions of leadership, or key campaign organisers in their workplaces. By highlighting the key issue of OAUs' scope of interaction, this chapter has shown that in order for NGOs' gender programs to have a specific impact on women members, women must be given the opportunity of shaping, participating in and evaluating programs where the 'empowerment' of women is a specific program aim.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined the issues of women's empowerment and NGO accountability through the case study of GSBI and its international partners, ACILS and OAus. In doing so, it has examined the influence of transnational feminist theory in shaping international organisations' agendas in the labour sphere. In response to the growth of transnational feminism throughout the 1980s and 1990s, international NGOs, SSOs and GUFs began to 'gender the agenda' of their overseas development programs in labour seeking to increase the participation and representation of women. Working within a framework of 'empowerment', these international organisations encouraged local Indonesian unions to adopt structures such as women's departments and quota systems as measures, designed specifically to 'empower' women. This thesis has interrogated the definition and the working model of 'empowerment' used by ACILS and OAus, and the rational and moral models of accountability used in their relationships with GSBI. In doing so, it has shown that it is important to question issues of empowerment and accountability as international NGOs continue to work with feminist agendas in the labour sphere and international donors continue to fund them.

The first chapter of the thesis established a framework in which these issues could be examined, outlining transnational feminism's background and development. It described how transnational feminists used 'framing' to identify 'women's rights as human rights', in doing so, 'gendering the agendas' of international UN conferences, NGOs and SSOs. The chapter argued that international organisations have imposed requirements on Indonesian unions that forced women to 'frame' their issues in certain ways in order to gain access to international funding. This calls into question the ethical credibility of framing, and also the power relations within these 'partnerships'. The chapter concluded by proposing that a framework incorporating Weber and Durkheim's

accountability models provide a tool with which to examine these power relations.

Using Weber and Durkheim's models of accountability, Chapter Two compared ACILS' and OAus' different approaches in their working relationships with GSBI. From this case study it was clear that while ACILS and OAus have both worked with a gender focus in their relationships with GSBI, their approaches were markedly different, and as the ACILS' example shows, transnational partnerships do not always benefit women. ACILS was too 'interventionist' in its approach with GSBI, and as a result, this relationship ended, with few gains for women. In contrast, OAus' approach was less interventionist, allowing GSBI a greater level of autonomy in carrying out its gender programs. ACILS' 'interventionist' approach demonstrates that power structures within 'partnerships' often determine the outcome of a program, and play an important role in deciding what measures are used to achieve women's empowerment.

Finally, Chapter Three showed that despite international organisations' aim of 'empowering' women, in practice, many women remain excluded from the decision-making and evaluation processes of NGOs' gender programs even where good relationships between international and local partners exist. While OAus sought input into its programs and evaluations from GSBI's women members, research conducted with GSBI's women members in Tangerang suggests that it was predominantly women at a Jakarta level who were involved in this dialogue. Where women from Tangerang were included, they were often in positions of leadership or familiar with OAus' work.

This thesis has demonstrated that gender programs may not always achieve their aims. This suggests that while NGOs have taken on a model of 'empowerment' based on feminist theory, it is necessary to question the outcomes achieved through the 'empowerment' framework, and the actors involved by more

thoroughly examining the different approaches used by NGOs and the measures used to assess whether their programs have been successful. As international NGOs continue to work in the Indonesian labour sphere with the aim of ‘empowering’ women, it is important to continue questioning these issues in an effort to assess whether women union members have actually been ‘empowered’ as a result of NGOs’ gender programs.

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