In honor of Professor Baruch Fischhoff and in recognition of his time as Interim Director of the Institute for Politics and Strategy as well as his many years of exceptional service to Carnegie Mellon University.
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Dear Reader,

International development is the focus of our fourth issue of the CIRP Journal. Historically, political science at Carnegie Mellon University has not centered on development, but given the university's increasing diversity and globally minded interdisciplinary work, it has come to the forefront of student interest and professional pursuits. The Institute for Politics and Strategy, which oversees the CIRP Journal, is committed to recognizing and fostering this area of interest. We are proud to provide a platform for dialogue and policy development on issues of such importance to the CMU community, our national policy conversations, and the world at large.

This issue of the CIRP Journal features some of our most dedicated students as they examine critical issues such as international public health, gender equality, and cultural preservation. These students express their commitment to development issues not only in writing but also by working directly in the development field, raising awareness of these issues and combining their quantitative and qualitative coursework to more effectively address these global challenges. Their commitment to international development issues is a true testament to the potential impact our campus conversations can have on future policy developments. We are fortunate to have such talented, thoughtful students leading the charge. A special note of thanks to Emily Vokach-Brodsky and Kayla Lee, our guest editors for this issue, who were the real drivers behind this iteration of our policy journal.

We hope that this edition of the CIRP Journal will serve as a catalyst for discussion and critical thinking on these vital global development issues, moving our communities toward concrete, actionable solutions. We welcome your feedback and thank you for your participation in these important local and global conversations.

Sincerely,

Kiron K. Skinner
Publisher and Editor-in-Chief
Letter from the Guest Editors

Dear Reader,

In the spring of 2016, we were offered the opportunity to participate in Carnegie Mellon University’s Washington Semester Program in Washington, DC. During the semester, we interned at a public policy think tank and studied under faculty and scholars from various US institutions. A course on global development piqued our interest and became a motivating factor in putting together this issue. The curriculum covered a range of issues from youth empowerment to information and communication technologies for development (ICT4D), which allowed us to explore our interest in this topic.

As our semester in DC came to a close, we wanted to find a way to bring discussions on contemporary issues of global development to CMU’s Pittsburgh campus and we felt that CIRP would reflect our interdisciplinary research interests while facilitating academic dialogue among our peers. The following fall semester, we returned to Washington to attend the Girls’ Summit DC hosted by the Center for Global Development. At the conference, political and policy leaders discussed the importance of using empirical interdisciplinary research to guide US strategy regarding girls’ empowerment.

It is with this focus in mind that we, as guest editors of the CIRP Journal, are proud to showcase student contributions on a wide variety of development topics, including health, technology, education, and migration, among others. While this issue encompasses various approaches to the future of sustainable development initiatives, the authors are driven by a shared interest in interdisciplinary analyses. We hope this issue will serve as an example of the possibilities that an interdisciplinary education can offer.

This publication would not have been possible without the support of Dr. Kiron Skinner, Director and Taube Professor for the Institute for Politics and Strategy. Our thanks to Emily Baddock, Executive Director of the Washington Semester Program, for continued guidance and support. We also thank Dr. Loubna Hanna for her expertise in global development, and the student authors featured here, whose enthusiasm for this issue helped us achieve our goal of bringing these conversations back to campus.

Kayla Lee (CMU 2017)
Emily Vokach-Brodsky (CMU 2017)
Guest Editors
Sport for Development and Peace

EMILY JOYCE

Sport attracts, mobilizes, and inspires individuals, communities, and nations. Long viewed as having the potential to enforce social and economic order, sport has been seen more recently as a force for social change.¹ Defined broadly as the use of sport to meet global development goals, Sport for Development and Peace (SDP) programs have emerged as a growing practice within development initiatives of the early 2000s. These programs have been implemented in both global and domestic development initiatives for young and old in populations including the disabled, incarcerated, and impoverished, and in groups of underrepresented minorities, gender-awareness minorities, and those addicted to substances. The emergence of SDPs can be attributed to the growing recognition of the need for new development strategies and methods, and the broadening definition of development. The World Commission on Culture and Development Report (1995) highlighted culture and vehicles of culture as a way to create social and economic development.² Analyzed herein are arguments posed by both critics and proponents of sport for development programs, as well as a look at the challenges SDPs must face in order to meet UN sustainability goals and join the wider scholarship of development.

UNOSDP and the Sustainability Goals

The United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP) was formed to harness the impact of sport as a low-cost, high-impact tool in global development, peacebuilding, and humanitarian efforts. The UNOSDP sees SDP as capable of making an impact on each of the seventeen sustainability goals set to be achieved by 2030. Rather than luxuries, sport and play are human rights to be universally respected. The very nature of sport encourages participation, inclusion, and citizenship while honing values such as respect for opponents, acceptance of rules, teamwork, and fairness. By integrating play with non-sport components, they tailor their models to respective social and cultural contexts. Mass sports, as opposed to elite sports, are most effective for development programs.

Challenges and Critics of SDP

Literary figure George Orwell described sport as “bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness and disregard for all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence…. It is war minus the shooting.”³ Although sport is believed to have the potential to address the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), critics share a frustration in the vagueness of this broad category

Emily Joyce is a 2017 Carnegie Mellon graduate with a dual degree in International Relations and Politics and Hispanic Studies. During her time on campus, she led student organization Facilitating Opportunities for Refugee Empowerment (FORGE) and participated as a varsity athlete. After graduation, Emily traveled to Mexico City through the Fulbright Binational Business Internship Program, where she worked for Educación para Compartir as an International Project Manager. Emily is currently pursuing opportunities within international development and her passion for Latin America in Washington, D.C.

² Ibid, xv.
and the lack of sufficient research into the efficacy of SDP programs. Scholar Myles Schrag contributions that the term “sport as a tool for development and peace” is ambiguously ill-defined. A variety of implementation practices have emerged, challenging the sport and development field as it seeks an organizational structure.

As SDP develops and is endorsed by the international community, Schrag warns against SDP programs becoming overly institutionalized and overlooking the perspectives and motives of local populations. He cautions that SDP efforts are illegitimate unless they are planned by locals rather than by international outsiders. The most critical threat to SDP legitimacy is the danger of this top-down approach potentially reinforcing already unequal relations of power. A successful SDP practitioner will avoid the stereotypes of the first world civilizing the third world. They will avoid development as modernity replacing cultural traditions and history. Such critics argue that sport can often exacerbate inequalities and poverty while other researchers claim that sport, positioned within a colonial framework, reinforces gender inequalities and devalues cultural practices. Thus, SDP practitioners must carefully consider the role they wish to play within the community. To prevent these negative effects, SDPs must take deliberate measures to avoid reinforcing inequalities, to emphasize self-transformation, and to establish sustained relationships locally and with international donors.

Using a combination of theoretical literature and empirical as well as ethnographic research, authors Douglas Hartman and Christina Kwauk distinguish two different tactics of SDPs: a dominant vision and an interventionist approach. Critical of the dominant approach, in which sport functions as a tool to socialize individuals who are learning life skills and citizenship, the authors state that it maintains the existing social order and therefore, its inequalities. They argue for a more radical, interventionist strategy in which sport contributes more fundamental, systematic social change and not just development. Best practices of SDPs include individual and community development approaches. They acknowledge that sport alone cannot bring about sustainable social change or development and needs to be coupled with other non-sport programming and coordination between governmental and nongovernmental organizations.

CameroonFDP: Soccer Improving the Lives of Youth

The SDP program CameroonFDP addresses the critical concerns of the scholars mentioned above while seeking to accomplish the sustainable development goals of the UN on a community basis: improving the lives of youth through soccer in a unique model as a vehicle to promote education, gender equity, health, leadership, and life skills. In CameroonFDP’s PLAY4PURPOSE approach, each season is assigned a theme relative to the community, such as HIV prevention or conflict resolution. Every soccer match has an educational topic of the day, with additional points being awarded for achievements such as arriving on time, not earning any yellow cards, and answering questions from the coach and referee on the topic of the day. In this way, the model infuses soccer and play with education. By offering scholarships, sports equipment, school supplies, and values such as commitment, learned

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8 Justin Forzano (CameroonFDP founder) in discussion with the author, October 2016.
through the sport of soccer, CameroonFDP promotes inclusiveness in sport and education. Another value that is emphasized is that of gender equality; the organization has launched all-girls’ leagues and tournaments.

This model not only challenges athletes to gain perspective on education but also encourages the discussion of values, social change, and their own impact on communities. Teams sponsored by CameroonFDP are responsible for assessing the needs of their communities and then completing service projects such as neighborhood cleanups, field clearing, and road maintenance. SDP programs successfully adapt to the cultural context of the communities they serve by employing local individuals and coordinating with local networks and governments. Coaches and referees are purposefully trained not only in their role in the sport but also in the reinforcement of values, mentorship, and youth development. CameroonFDP also acknowledges the familiar structures within Cameroon culture, seeking the involvement of guardians and paying home visits to the families of team members to explain their children’s involvement in the league. The organization engages with Cameroonians and becomes a vehicle for them to invest in development in their own community.

Conclusion

The concept of sport for development and peace is still an emerging perspective in global development scholarship that needs more research and organization. Critics address the ambiguities of the concept that threaten its success. Yet even critics recognize the potential power of SDP programs when employed to include non-sport elements and local communities, and to carefully integrate within previously existing social structures, nongovernmental networks, and government initiatives. Noted here is CameroonFDP, an SDP organization promoting a formidable model to address these criticisms of SDP. After establishing its first site in Kumba, CameroonFDP launched its second site in Mamfe, Cameroon. In its expansion, CameroonFDP follows the process of starting with a community partnership and football festivals and then building leagues and implementing the PLAY4PURPOSE model with local support. The call for future social science research and evaluation of SDP efficacy stands, yet there is hope that sport will be a tool in meeting the UN’s sustainable development goals.

Researchers Lorena Read and Jerry Bingham describe SDPs at a crucial point in their emergence, where it is vital to leverage the experiences of the broad range of programs that use sport as a tool of development around the world. The goal is to build on evidence and increase collaboration between researchers, policy makers, and organizations. This is the next critical development phase in SDPs which will enable them to be considered within the wider scholarship of international development.

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9 CameroonFDP.
10 Justin Forzano (CameroonFDP founder) in discussion with the author, October 2016.
11 Ibid.
12 Levermore and Beacom, xiii-xv.
Linguistic Human Rights (LHR) and Intercultural Education: The Mapuche in Chile

KAYLA LEE

Half of the more than six thousand languages spoken around the world today are in danger of disappearing by the end of the century.¹ This means that the cultures and knowledge systems linked to these languages are also in danger of disappearing. As a result of this concern over the loss of language and culture, the paradigm of Linguistic Human Rights (LHR) is crucial. First included as an international human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the LHR paradigm addresses linguistic discrimination, wherein people who speak discriminated languages find it difficult to use them, often leading to the disappearance of these languages.² In 2007, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly, in Resolution A/RES/61/266, called upon member states “to promote the preservation and protection of all languages used by peoples of the world.” The following year, the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2008 as the International Year of Languages, bringing the world’s attention to the importance of language, specifically to achieve the UN’s goals of sustainable development.³

LHR has not always been at the forefront of global development discussions. In fact, it is often viewed as a means of achieving other development goals such as universal education. It is important to continue to bring LHR into the development discourse, especially to leaders in the development field such as the UN, while we are still in the early stages of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN’s 2030 agenda. There is no doubt that LHR plays and will continue to play a significant role in the 2030 agenda as it is evidently associated with Goal 4, which is to “ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.”⁴

In communities where different languages are spoken, education programs must recognize and address the needs of individuals and groups that speak minority languages. Allowing speakers of minority languages to suffer the consequences of discrimination is the equivalent of taking away their right to the freedom of expression. There are various approaches that can be taken to address the problems that arise as a result of linguistic discrimination. Intercultural education is one of those approaches. This paper will use a model of intercultural education.


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education implemented in Temuco, Chile, to explore how this approach is used to promote the LHR of the indigenous Mapuche community (one of nine indigenous groups recognized by the Chilean government) in a country where the dominant language and culture threaten the disappearance of several minority communities. Intercultural education is a response to the challenge of providing quality education for all, and it is crucial in a world that is multilingual and multicultural. While providing quality education for all indicates that the world agrees that education is a human right, it does not mean that a single approach, or several approaches, will work in every context.

Liceo Guacolda is an intercultural technical (secondary) school that is one of two intercultural schools in Chile and is home to over 400 students, 99 percent of whom are indigenous Mapuche. The school, located approximately fourteen miles from Temuco, Chile, is an ideal example of the specific goals of international education that contribute to the global mission of providing quality education for all. Liceo Guacolda serves a specific Mapuche community in Chile, and its educators and community leaders are familiar with the challenges that come with the Westernization of a country. One of these challenges is the endangerment of Mapudungun, the Mapuche language. According to the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, Mapudungun is categorized as “definitely endangered,” which means that children no longer learn the language as a mother tongue in the home. Instead, they learn Castilian Spanish, the official language of Chile. The reality of a disappearing language is the disappearance of a culture, value, and knowledge system. The goal of Liceo Guacolda is to use intercultural education as a tool to preserve the Mapudungun language as well as Mapuche values and knowledge systems.

While preservation of Mapudungun is a key part of Liceo Guacolda’s educational mission, the most important part of intercultural education is interculturalism. Interculturalism is a dynamic concept that refers to evolving relations between cultural groups. In this case, it is the dynamic between Mapuche and non-Mapuche communities in Chile. It has been defined as “the existence and equitable interaction of diverse cultures and the possibility of generating shared cultural expressions through dialogue and mutual respect.” Intercultural education has two equally important goals in Liceo Guacolda: a linguistic goal and a community-oriented goal. The teaching of Mapudungun in a public Chilean school has the purpose of preserving Mapudungun as well as Mapuche culture; it also motivates and guides both Mapuche and non-Mapuche students to communicate and treat one another with respect in a multicultural context. Intercultural education seeks to empower everyone through mutual understanding and inclusion.

Language is one of the most universal and diverse forms of expression of human culture, and it is perhaps the most essential one. It is at the heart of issues of identity, memory, and transmission of knowledge. Educators in Liceo Guacolda understand the importance of

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7 Ibid.
9 “UNESCO Guidelines on Intercultural Education.”
the influence that language has on cultural identity. Confidence and self-esteem increase as students progress within the school. In an interview, one of the students discussed how his views of himself had changed:

Antes, cuando era más pequeño, tenía ideas como que era mapuche era algo normal. Pero, ahora, me doy la cuenta de los mapuches no son cualquier cosas. Ellos tienen su origen y ellos son gran cosas en el país.10

Before, when I was younger, I had the idea that to be Mapuche was something normal. But now I see that to be Mapuche is not just anything. They have their own origin and are important in the country.

This is just one example of the many students who attend this school and appreciate their identity beyond their community boundaries.

While Liceo Guacolda has managed to cultivate a strong sense of community on its school grounds, its educators understand the limitations of intercultural education. One limitation that every educator at Liceo Guacolda expressed was the impossibility of finding certified teachers who are also fluent in Mapudungun. As a result, students are exposed to Mapudungun no more than two to three hours a day.

When one enters the front gates of Liceo Guacolda, one enters a community of students, teachers, and cultural leaders, all of whom are dedicated to the revitalization and preservation of both the Mapudungun language and the Mapuche culture. While walking among the students in the hallways and classrooms, one immediately feels a sense of community, which many students claim is the result of living together in the nearby dorms. This may be true, but one cannot ignore the significant efforts of teachers and cultural leaders as they prepare younger generations to live with confidence in a multicultural world.

Conclusion

There is no reason to expect that people would willingly abandon their languages if they enjoyed equality of status.11 Endangered languages are not just given up, they are threatened by the dominant culture. This is even referred to as “linguistic genocide” because threatened languages are pushed out within the context of forced assimilation, and choosing not to teach using a minority language is one form of forced assimilation.12 When a state’s education system does not support the use of a group’s native language, those students are forced into the dominant group. In the case of Mapuche students in Chile, this only creates tension between them and the non-Mapuche students.

This is the situation that educators and community leaders are focusing on at Liceo Guacolda. Using LHR and intercultural education as tools, educators at Liceo Guacolda work to ensure that Mapuche students become fluent Mapudungun speakers. In addition, basic knowledge of their language serves as a reminder to these students that they are resisting complete assimilation into the dominant culture. By combining the knowledge of an endangered language with the important communication skills required to thrive in a multicultural society, both the Mapuche and non-Mapuche students at Liceo Guacolda are setting an example of intercultural education and the importance of LHR in our globalizing world.

Global Spending on Family Planning and Reproductive Health

Ridhima Sodhi

Family Planning and Reproductive Health (FP/RH) are important international health concerns; hence, they take up a large majority of international donor funding. As of 2015, maternal health (10 percent), child and newborn health (18 percent), and HIV/AIDS (30 percent) totaled 58 percent of the overall donor financial assistance to health, commonly referred to as Development Assistance to Health, or DAH.

However, recent years have seen a decline in external funding, which has led local governments to look for new avenues to mobilize domestic resources to meet their FP/RH goals. But funding is not the only challenge faced by governments in meeting their FP/RH goals. Culture, religion, and behavioral preferences often are a huge factor influencing success in increasing contraceptive usage, access to family planning services, and high-quality prenatal and postpartum healthcare. Learning about the shifts in international funding and domestic strategies adopted by different governments and monitoring their progress is a step forward in understanding what works, in order to ensure universal access to affordable FP/RH services.

Overview: Why does this matter?

Each year, an estimated 303,000 women in developing countries die from complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Approximately one-third of these maternal deaths could be prevented if women who did not wish to become pregnant had access to and used effective contraception. However, 24 percent of women of reproductive age who are married or in committed relationships do not have access to contraceptives, resulting in 53 million unintended pregnancies annually. The need is disproportionately greater in developing countries, where less than half of women who are married or in committed relationships have

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2 Ibid.
4 Ibid.

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their family planning needs satisfied. Increased access to FP/RH services can ensure a variety of benefits, including maternal health, reduced infant and maternal mortality, and reduction in sexually transmitted diseases like HIV. Financing FP/RH also reduces population growth, ensuring economic development and better resource planning for the present and future.

Given the scope and urgency of this problem, it is crucial that the global community work toward achieving universal access to adequate reproductive health care. Access to contraceptives is an important component of this package, but far from the only one. Multiple programs have been developed since the start of the century to ensure the right to reproductive health across the globe. At the same time, various challenges, including drug and procurement costs, physicians' availability and skill level, traditions, cultures, and political influences have stagnated developmental efforts at both the implementation and policy levels.

**Decrease in International Donor Funding**

Even as the international community acknowledges the role of FP/RH services in ensuring economic development, funding for bilateral family planning activities has come under stress due to a host of issues, including the ongoing refugee crisis, Brexit, and other political and budgetary concerns. In 2015, donor governments disbursed a total of $1.344 billion (Figure 1), an amount that is not significantly different compared to 2014 when adjusting for effects of exchange-rate fluctuations and inflation. However, when broken down by country of origin, the FP funding from five of the major international donors (Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden) actually increased in 2015, while funding from Australia, Norway, and the UK declined. Funding from Canada and the United States remained flat.

**Figure 1: Donor Governments as a Share of Total Bilateral Disbursements for Family Planning**

**US Global Health Funding: FP/RH FY 2006-FY 2016**

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation analyses of data from the Office of Management and Budget, Agency Congressional Budget Justifications, Congressional Appropriations bills, and U.S. Foreign Assistance Dashboard

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8 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
Policy Restrictions in US Funding

The United States continues to be the biggest financial supporter of FP/RH efforts worldwide, as it has been for the last 50 years. US foreign aid for FP/RH efforts totaled $608 million in FY 2016, up from $425 million in FY 2006. The dominating role of the US government in terms of both direct absolute funding and influencing international trends makes it a crucial player in the global community’s efforts for increased access to FP/RH services. However, internal debates about various political issues have influenced US government funding and action abroad. For instance, since 1973, the Helms Amendment has prohibited the use of foreign assistance to pay for abortions as a method of family planning or to motivate or coerce any person to practice abortion. Such measures perpetuate volatility for low- and middle-income countries that are dependent on international funding.

In January 2017, President Trump reinstated the Mexico City policy (the “Global Gag Rule”) which requires foreign nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to certify that they would not perform or promote abortion as a method of family planning using funds from any source as a condition for receiving US funding. Despite its continued financial support in this sector, the United States’ aforementioned policy limitations create an increased urgency for recipient governments to find new and creative ways to fund their family planning needs, acknowledging the reduced strength and support of external donor funding.

FP/RH Domestic Efforts: Trends across Latin America

With the lack of growth in international donor investments, it is also important to consider domestic financing trends. Comparing and contrasting government efforts in Latin America provides a perspective on how we can best achieve targets in FP/RH. While financing plays a huge role in meeting the targets for FP/RH services across the region, other factors at play also influence success. The contraceptive prevalence rate and unmet need are used as proxy measures for progress in meeting FP/RH goals. These measures are the most indicative of what percentage of women either do not have access to family planning methods or do not use contraception.

In Latin America, government financing by way of universal insurance coverage is insufficient to ensure targeted contraceptive prevalence. This is as true for low-income countries such as Guatemala and Haiti as it is for high-income countries like Chile and Costa Rica. It is important to understand the various reasons for this situation. For instance, Haiti has a CPR of 35.3 percent and thus has one of the highest rates of unmet need for family planning in the world. According to a report by Health Policy Plus, persistent gender issues, a lack of resources, a largely rural population, and the destruction of facilities during the 2010 earthquake, have challenged FP expansion in the country. These factors are also evident

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12 Ibid.

Contraception Prevalence Rate (CPR) is the percentage of women who are currently using or whose sexual partners are currently using at least one method of contraception.

Unmet need for family planning is defined as the percentage of women of reproductive age, either married or in a committed relationship, who want to stop or delay childbearing but who are not using any method of contraception.
in the method of contraception used. Among women using contraceptive services in Haiti, only 3 percent rely on pills, the most commonly used method of contraception in developed countries.\textsuperscript{15}

The situation differs for developed economies. Both Chile and Costa Rica, despite providing universal access to contraceptive measures to their citizens, are far behind in achieving universal usage of contraceptive methods. Only 68.5 percent of women\textsuperscript{*} in Chile have their contraceptive needs met from public-sector facilities while this number is 75.1 percent for women\textsuperscript{*} in Costa Rica.\textsuperscript{16} In fact, even though Costa Rica is much poorer, with 65 percent of the per capita GDP of Chile, it has a higher contraceptive rate (74.7 percent in Costa Rica vs. 61.7 percent in Chile) and a lower unmet need (7.6 percent in Costa Rica vs. 13.2 percent in Chile).\textsuperscript{17}

It is also useful to note that contraceptive coverage rates are unequal among different income classes. For instance, 34 percent of uninsured Costa Ricans are in the poorest income quintile, and 58 percent belong to the lowest income quintiles, which have a higher need for family planning.\textsuperscript{18} Hence, even as governments make efforts to increase coverage, such efforts must be better targeted to ensure equitable progress across income classes. This is a topic of concern because funding often depends on gross targets, a practice that encourages interventions among the classes most likely to deliver results.

**Conclusion**

Contraceptive prevalence rate and unmet need for family planning vary widely among different countries and income classes. Notwithstanding the differing economic potentials of countries to provide for universal coverage in terms of FP/ RH services, various cultural and gender-sensitive factors often dominate the trends in usage and preferences. Even for developed economies, equitable progress is a cause for concern with varying usage patterns among different income groups. It is hence essential that equitable and consistent progress go hand in hand for low-, middle-, and high-income economies. At the same time, efforts need not be limited to ensuring funding and meeting international targets, but should also acknowledge factors like culture, religion, behavioral preferences, traditional folklore, and myths. This can be done through (a) knowledge dissemination of safe sex behaviors, (b) economic benefits of family planning, and (c) reduction of stigma for men, women, and families. The use of family planning and reproductive health services is often a private decision made by women and families. Governments should measure success not only by availability of health services but by ensuring usage and cultural appropriateness.


\textsuperscript{*} Women: Married women or women in committed relationships

\textsuperscript{16} Netherlands Interdisciplinary Development Institute, unpublished data.


\textsuperscript{18} Ministerio de Salud and UNICEF, Encuesta de Indicadores Múltiples por Conglomerados, 2011; Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social (CCSS), Indicadores de la Seguridad Social: 2008-2013 (San Jose: CCSS, 2014).
According to the World Health Organization (WHO), there are approximately 1.7 billion cases of childhood diarrheal disease that result in the death of over half a million children under the age of five every year.¹ Children from developing countries are at high risk because they lack access to clean drinking water and proper nutrition. Despite the risk, there is an easily administered, inexpensive treatment: oral rehydration salts (ORS). Each treatment of ORS costs only a few cents and can be ingested immediately. Despite its low cost and ease of administration, ORS is underutilized. Mothers of children who are sick or at risk often refuse the treatment. They do not believe ORS can help – that it is too simple a solution to prevent such a devastating, widespread disease. Their logic is incorrect, but not incomprehensible. The barrier to preventing these deaths lies not with treatment cost or lack of a solution; it stems from the failure of policy to recognize and correct the irrationalities of human decision making.

Behavioral Development Economics, the intersection of international development and behavioral economics, can address these failures. It is a branch of economics that considers psychological and social factors, among others, to understand and explain the irrationalities of decision making. This allows policy makers and program officials to utilize behavioral insights to shape policy in ways that help people make better decisions, which can in turn improve global health.²

**Behavioral Science: Applications in Preventive Global Health**

Neoclassical economics assumes that decision makers fully understand a situation’s associated risks and benefits as well as their personal preferences, and use this information to make a decision that maximizes their utility, the value of an outcome. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case in practice.

Given the high rate of return on preventive health care measures, the neoclassical model of economics assumes that decision makers would invest in these opportunities. Especially for those of low financial resources who are at high risk for medical emergencies, the benefit of many preventive health options simply outweighs the low cost. However, people cannot and do not take advantage of these solutions for a number of reasons, thus trapping them in a cycle of sickness and poverty.³

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Emily Vokach-Brodksy graduated from Carnegie Mellon University with a degree in Decision Science and International Relations and Politics in 2017. During her time at CMU, Emily volunteered with Global Medical Brigades to implement temporary health clinics and potable water systems for communities in Honduras and Nicaragua. She also conducted research to determine if beauty can bias one’s HIV risk perception in South Africa and Kenya. After graduating, she continued work in decision science research and recently accepted a Fulbright Award to teach English in Brazil.
The reason why oral rehydration salts (ORS) are rejected over more expensive treatments such as intravenous drips or antibiotics is likely because treatment makes it feel like one is doing something. It is easier to see the effects of antibiotics treating an issue than to see the effects of preventing said issue; the result of a successful course of ORS is exactly the opposite—the lack of diarrheal disease.

Behavioral economics recognizes these departures from the neoclassical model of rationality. This is exemplified by Prospect Theory, a central facet of behavioral economics. It posits that people weigh losses more heavily than they do gains. The figure below models the steeper decline in utility in the domain of losses than the increase in utility in the domain of gains. In monetary terms, this means that losing a large sum of money is “felt more strongly” than gaining the same amount of money.

This asymmetry is known as Loss Aversion. This section will outline how Loss Aversion shapes two trends—aversion to present costs and framing effects—that influence collective responses to health initiatives in developing countries. It will detail how policy makers can utilize insights about human behavior to shape policy that encourages participation in prevention efforts.

Behavioral Development Economics in Practice

Case Study 1: Malaria nets in Kenya
According to WHO statistics, Sub-Saharan Africa sees more than 90 percent of all global malaria deaths. WHO and other public health officials agree that the most practical way to prevent and control the spread of malaria is through the use of insecticide-treated bed nets. Bed nets are low cost and have a high rate of return on investment. Both the individual who uses the net and his or her community benefit in the long run from this initial investment by preventing future transmission and costs of malaria treatment. However, usage among the most vulnerable populations in Sub-Saharan Africa is worryingly low. Some public health experts believe this is due to an aversion to present costs. Decision makers are encouraged to spend on something in the present, the benefits of which may (or may not) be realized in the future. Many of those with few financial resources choose to forego the purchase because this immediate loss (of money) is “felt” more strongly than a future potential gain (of health).

6 Banerjee and Duflo, Poor Economics: A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty, 66.
To incentivize usage among these populations, public health experts have suggested that bed nets should be fully subsidized, offering a free resource to offset the aversion to present costs for poor households. Others have argued that this will reduce demand or that the nets will not be valued if the recipient does not pay. This argument suggests that a “sunk cost” effect of paying for the bed net may increase usage; the act of spending money encourages people to make use of the item they have purchased.

Theory cannot always fully or perfectly predict how human behavior will react to policy in practice. In order to find out which behavioral mechanism is present in this example, researchers conducted a randomized controlled trial in Kenya to understand how subsidizing affects decision makers’ behaviors. They found that fully subsidizing the cost of bed nets increased demand compared to when the nets were full price or only partially subsidized. This means that when present costs were offset, people’s aversion to investing in preventive care disappeared. Policy makers understand that increasing participation in malaria prevention efforts in Sub-Saharan Africa is crucial. This empirically backed insight into how decision makers think about prevention informs policy makers on how best to nudge the vulnerable communities in the right direction.

Case Study 2: Framing immunization options
A framing effect, or the way in which choices are presented, can change decisions that are made. This is especially true when comparing gain-framed and loss-framed options. Researchers compared the responses to two similar health messages to test the effect of this theory:\footnote{World Bank, Health, World Development Report 2015: Mind, Society, and Behavior (Washington, DC: World Bank Publications, 2014) 4:146-158, accessed May 5, 2017, http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2015.}

\begin{itemize}
\item Gain-framed: “If you get the flu vaccine, you will be less likely to get the flu.”
\item Loss-framed: “If you do not get the flu vaccine, you are more likely to get the flu.”
\end{itemize}

The information presented in these statements is the same. Participants in both treatments expressed a desire to get the vaccine; however, researchers found that participants presented with the gain-framed message were more likely to act on that desire and get the vaccine than those who received the loss-framed message. For policy makers, understanding the effect of loss aversion and framing policy to avoid its effect can help encourage the adoption of desirable behavior. This insight is especially important in the field of development. For those in poverty, this extra encouragement is helpful in offsetting the difficulty of spending time and money to invest in preventive measures.

Conclusion
Despite the ease and low cost of oral rehydration salts as a diarrheal disease prevention technique, the intervention has repeatedly failed across the world. Using behavioral insights, empirical research, and pilot testing, researchers and policy makers can find solutions that help guide behavior toward more effective solutions. The field of Behavioral Development Economics is an effective approach to developing preventive health care policy. It seeks to understand human behavior, specifically that of the poor, to find affordable and effective ways to encourage better uptake. Understanding these behavioral insights gives researchers and policy makers the opportunity to work together. Organizations such as the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) offer training for policy makers and implementers to better understand the role of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and behavioral science in developing policy that works. In the future, behavioral insights should continue to shape the approach to preventive health care policy.
Asylum and Gender-Based Violence in the Northern Triangle Region

MIKAELA WOLF-SOROKIN

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 21 million people fled their homeland and were unable to return due to persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a specific social group in 2015.¹ The UNHCR calls these people refugees. To qualify for asylum in the United States, a refugee must belong to one of the five categories listed above.² Notably, the definition of a refugee fails to recognize persecution due to gender as a basis for refugee or asylum status in the United States. Currently, women in the Northern Triangle Region (Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala) suffer from elevated levels of violence due, in large part, to gang violence directed against women.³ The United States has previously expanded the scope of asylum laws to encompass victims of violence in a particular region, specifically Chinese immigrants fleeing forced abortion and sterilization by the Chinese government. The United States should again amend its asylum policy to specifically protect young women fleeing from elevated rates of sexual violence in Central America’s Northern Triangle region by making them eligible for asylum.

Violence Against Women

Violence against women in the form of physical abuse, femicide (the killing of women because they are women), sexual assault, extortion, and harassment takes place worldwide.⁴ However, violence against women has recently increased exponentially in the Northern Triangle Region.

³ UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Women on the Run: First-hand Accounts of Refugees Fleeing El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Mexico (October 26, 2015): 16.

*Women from the Northern Triangle Region also flee due to extremely high rates of violence by family members. Women fleeing certain types of partner violence were previously able to seek protection under a particular social group that was recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals in Matter of A-R-C-G-. As this article was written in 2016, I aimed to address a group of people who were not included in this precedent particular social group. However, since 2016, Matter of A-R-C-G- was overturned in Matter of A-B- and there is now greater need to find a congressional solution to protect survivors of partner violence.

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(El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala). Between 2007 and 2012, El Salvador had the highest rate of female homicides in the world. Honduras and Guatemala followed closely behind. The governments in these three countries have failed to punish the perpetrators of these crimes. For example, the US Department of State found that the conviction rate for femicide in Guatemala in 2013 was between 1 and 2 percent. Due to this violence in the Northern Triangle Region, many women flee their homes in search of safety. Consequently, the United States has experienced dramatic increases in the number of asylum applicants from the Northern Triangle Region. Between 2008 and 2014, the rate of asylum applicants from the Northern Triangle Region, both male and female, increased by 370 percent. Moreover, the number of women apprehended for crossing the Southwest (Arizona, Texas, and California) US-Mexico border rose from 43,000 in 2011 to 120,000 in 2014. Significantly, in 2015, of the 16,077 women interviewed for a credible fear of persecution or torture – the first step in the asylum process – 13,116 were found credible.

**Comparative Case Study:**

**Chinese Immigrants Fleeing the One-Child Policy Under Amendment 601**

In 1985, China’s population made up 22 percent of the world’s inhabitants. To reduce overpopulation as a means of improving the standard of living, the Chinese government instituted a policy limiting each family to one child. Those who resisted the one-child policy often suffered forced sterilization or forced abortion. In 1996, Congress passed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act, which included an amendment (Amendment 601) that protected Chinese immigrants from deportation who were fleeing forced abortion or sterilization. Specifically, the amendment stated that undergoing forced abortion or sterilization constituted proof of persecution because of a political opinion that one wishes to have more than one child. As previously noted, political opinion is one of the criteria considered by the United States government in deciding asylum eligibility.

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5 UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Women on the Run*, 2.
10 Silva Mathema, “They Are Refugees.”
Consider the significance of Amendment 601. Congress enacted a new asylum rule for a specific group of people suffering from forced abortion or sterilization that was intended to respond to the current conditions in a different part of the world, in this case, China. Lawmakers identified a problem – coercive population control – inflicting violence on a specific group of people. Congress deemed this problem persecution based on political opinion, which is an eligibility criterion for asylum. However, due to China's large population and the large number of people potentially eligible for asylum under this amendment, the United States government had to place a limit on immigration under Amendment 601. Therefore, they established a quota system that limited the number of immigrants permitted entry.  

The Case for Women from the Northern Triangle Region

The asylum case for women from the Northern Triangle Region fleeing rape by male gang members bears great similarity to the case for Chinese immigrants. In 1996, Congress was motivated to act because they noticed a problem of coercive population control in China. Today, Congress should be motivated to act because they should recognize the problem of gender-based rape in the Northern Triangle Region. Congress categorized resistance to coercive population control in China as “political opinion,” an eligibility criterion for asylum in the United States. Thus, Congress should categorize persecution based on gender-based rape as “membership in a particular social group,” also an eligibility criterion for asylum in the United States. Although membership in a particular social group is different from political opinion, both cases consider current country conditions and recognize an identifiable group that should be considered for asylum.

Young women fleeing gender-based rape should be considered members of a specific social group. To be considered a member of a specific social group, asylum policy requires that:

1. All members of the group must share an “immutable characteristic.” An immutable characteristic is an unchangeable characteristic such as skin color. United States Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) consider gender one such immutable characteristic. In the case of the group from the Northern Triangle Region, all members are women.

2. The “immutable characteristic” must have “particularity” or “distinction.” This means that the group of people sharing an “immutable characteristic” must also share a trait that makes them distinct from the rest of society. Women from the Northern Triangle Region are distinct because male gang members view women as property, which results in women suffering from rape or other forms of sexual violence. Femicide in Latin America arises from the accepted belief that women are items that be-

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16 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996, Section 601.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
long to men. This culture of gender dynamics enables men to rape women because they do not see them as people.

3. The local society in which these women live must also view them as “identifiable” or as a specific group of people. This is so in the Northern Triangle Region, where women are viewed as an identifiable group. The governments in the Northern Triangle Region consistently fail to protect women from gender-based violence and prosecute the perpetrators of this violence. For example, in Guatemala, some judges refuse to convict the perpetrators of crimes against women if there is no evidence against them other than the stories of the female victims. Therefore, female victims of gender-based violence can be identified by the lack of protection they receive from the government.

While this proposed expansion of our asylum policy could permit many thousands of women to obtain legal status in the United States, Congress could accommodate any concern about the number of persons benefiting from the change by imposing a quota, just as Congress did when it enacted Amendment 601.

**Conclusion**

Both cases identify a specific group of people who have suffered either because of their political opinion or their membership in a particular social group at a specific moment in history. The elevated rates of violence against women in the Northern Triangle Region constitute specific country conditions that have created thousands of female refugees. The United States has a responsibility to amend our asylum policy, as we did before with Chinese immigrants, to expand the scope of our asylum laws to protect these women. Such an action would be logically based on an earlier precedent and, if designed similarly, would also be feasible.

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Innovation for Development and Humanitarian Aims: A Critical Overview

MINNAR XIE

The past decade has witnessed a surge of humanitarian crises entering societal awareness, an increasingly passionate millennial generation bent on using their careers for social change, and the rise of private-sector companies using their skills to work on humanitarian and global development issues. The exploding interest in private-sector strategies for global development and humanitarian response has proven to be fundamentally interdisciplinary, mixing language and practices from business management, human-centered design, and technology development to create new tools, systems, processes, and principles. Organizations buzz about innovation, hoping to discover novel ways of approaching long-standing social issues by modeling the successes of the private sector. The conversation around innovation comes as a timely opportunity to reassess the status quo of development and humanitarianism as we enter the twenty-first century. But we must question what innovation, like any and all development trends, actually contributes, and consider how innovation efforts respond to historic issues and sensitivities within the global development and humanitarian sector.

What is Innovation for Development and Humanitarian Aims?
Within the development and humanitarian sphere, the term “innovation” is used in inconsistent ways with fuzzy meanings. Many use the term simply as code for the creation of relevant technology, some talk about innovation as specific new projects, and others broadly label any and all new approaches as innovation. This inconsistency has given rise to an early backlash of criticism, dubbing innovation meaningless and just another fad. But across both the private and public sectors, innovation has been and can be a defined and systematic process. The articulated definition of “innovation” put forth by the Humanitarian Innovation Project at the University of Oxford offers clarity:

We view innovation as a process of change and adaptation. It describes a way to find solutions to problems and scale them, whether through products, processes, or wider business models based on four stages. The stages are: 1) defining a problem or identifying

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an opportunity; 2) finding potential solutions; 3) testing, adapting and implementing a solution; and 4) appropriate scaling of the solution. The stages themselves are not linear and have feedback and learning at each stage.\(^5\)

Crucial to this working definition is that innovation for global development, or humanitarian aims, does not necessarily mean creating a new product or “thing.” Instead, it is about taking an approach for nurturing and spreading new ideas that is rooted in iterative trial and adaptation in the lived experiences and real contexts of affected communities. For an organization to practice innovation, it means going beyond the creation of just a single project or idea towards building innovation capabilities and embedding it in the organization's strategy.

To illustrate with an example, the UNHCR Innovation Lab was founded in 2012 with a core goal of connecting innovators within UNHCR staff to resources.\(^6\) The lab built an online platform, UNHCR Ideas, to post challenges and crowd-source potential solutions from staff and partner organizations. In one posed challenge on preventing sexual and gender-based violence, a winning suggestion from a field worker in a Ghanaian refugee camp created a value chain around female-owned enterprises making briquette fuel from locally available dried biodegradable material such as banana peels, cassava flour, and elephant grass.\(^7\) This solution addressed the underlying issue, which was that in this particular camp, a woman's safety was often compromised because she needed to find ways to get cooking fuel. UNHCR then proceeded to build the appropriate partnerships to steer trials of the model, including soliciting land donations from the Ghanaian government, partnering with a local briquette fuel manufacturing company, and funding.

This example highlights the workings of humanitarian innovation on multiple levels. First, the UNHCR built an innovation team with the funding and liberty to focus on nurturing independent research, development, and prototyping of innovation projects. Second, the UNHCR Innovation Unit creates a crowd-sourcing platform to give voice to front-line staff who use their first-hand experiences to propose ideas to solve large-scale humanitarian goals. Third, participants’ suggestions are tried in small pilots in a particular camp with organizational support and resources. Fourth, the pilots are evaluated, providing the UNHCR with new information that is then used to refine the idea as it scales to other camps.

What differentiates innovation initiatives from the status quo is the heavy emphasis on adapting private sector strategies of rapid trial, eliciting participation and feedback from affected individuals to co-create and test ideas early, and challenging traditional models of working to generate new ideas to meet objectives. In development and humanitarian aid, it’s an accepted norm that senior staff apply for grant funding with solutions and outcomes.

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projected upfront. But in the innovation model, any level of seniority within the organization could propose ideas, and ideas themselves are prototyped quickly and cheaply with the goal of learning from failure. Ideas are continually developed through insights from both initial fieldwork and the use of participatory methods to test concepts and prototypes. Innovations also encourage organizations to adopt new methods enabled by technology, such as crowdsourcing, mobile phone service delivery, and the increased accessibility of wireless networks and inexpensive solar power.

**Who’s Doing Innovation for Development?**

Many major consulting firms, foundations, universities, and international NGOs have developed a focus on innovation and the opportunities it offers. A number of the largest private-sector consulting firms in strategy and design have recently started practices focusing on innovation for global development, including Deloitte’s Humanitarian Innovation Program, IDEO’s IDEO.org, Frog’s frogImpact, and Dalberg’s Design Impact Group. Several universities have developed research labs and programs focused on development and/or humanitarian innovation, including the University of Oxford’s Humanitarian Innovation Project, Stanford’s Center for Social Innovation, Art Center’s Designmatters, MIT’s Development Innovation Network, and the University of Washington’s Technology and Social Change Group. Appropriately, these new academic research groups and programs have developed a focus on innovation in a diversity of host disciplines: design schools, business schools, technology/information science departments, and all variations of international development studies. Foundations and funding bodies, including the Gates Foundation, the IKEA Foundation, Google.org, and the Humanitarian Innovation Fund, have specifically risen to support innovation efforts.

Perhaps most interestingly, many international NGOs have been going beyond hiring external consultants for innovation work and are creating and hiring their own internal innovation teams. A few organizations with their own innovation teams include UNICEF, UNHCR, the International Rescue Committee, MSF (Doctors Without Borders) in Sweden, and Water and Sanitation for the Urban Poor (WSUP). In most instances, the innovation teams include designers, technologists, and/or strategists who have spent time working in the private sector.

**Challenges and Obstacles to Development and Humanitarian Innovation**

In spite of the incredible momentum generated in the last decade and a half, global development and humanitarian innovation face significant obstacles. One core issue is that the nature of many global development and humanitarian organizations means that they often lack the time, space, and funding for additional efforts. Since global development and humanitarian crises are urgent and could have life or death consequences, “many donors and agencies have a strong aversion to untested approaches, and to activities that do not contribute directly to the immediate response.” Field-workers, who would be in the best position to implement relevant innovations because of their relationships and experience, often must respond to daily emergencies and lack the time for innovation work with long-term payoff. Thus, even if an organization is interested in innovation initiatives, there are immense challenges to starting them because of limited human and financial resources.

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9 Ibid, 11.
Development organizations seeking to practice innovation must devise new ways of managing projects and measuring impact. Innovation requires constant feedback loops between field-workers and management staff, but this can be difficult when the size and scale of major NGOs have created organizational silos across countries and operations. Additionally, whereas “the ‘success’ of humanitarian actors has been mainly measured by their fulfillment of donor requirements” to spur on better innovation, organizations must develop new systems to evaluate whether an idea is effective or desirable in order to modify the solution in the next iteration.\footnote{Alexander Betts and Louise Bloom, “Humanitarian Innovation.”} It can be a substantial undertaking for an organization to embrace and practice rapid feedback and to develop new and meaningful ways of evaluating prototypes.

Furthermore, the current funding structure for global development and humanitarian issues makes it challenging for organizations to take risks. As reported by the International Rescue Committee’s emerging innovation unit, “While innovation involves trial and error and experimentation, most grants are predicated on implementers projecting far into the future what they will deliver by when, with relatively little room for failure. The primary goal remains implementation rather than learning.”\footnote{Gurumurthy.} The current grant-funding model incentivizes organizations to strive for ideas that clearly lead to success. In contrast, innovation that pays off in a longer view during which change and adjustment take place needs to be seen as a good thing.

Finally, innovation efforts have the potential to exacerbate power imbalances due to issues of representation or furthering the idea that only international NGOs and agencies have the power to innovate. The success of innovation efforts depends on quality research into the lived experiences of affected communities. Without caution and care, innovation efforts can replicate power imbalances by working only with the most vocal and savvy community members, inadvertently further marginalizing certain groups. Additionally, current innovation efforts focus primarily on making agencies themselves more efficient. Little of the work being done is about amplifying or building the capacity of existing innovation within members of affected communities. This poses the risk of furthering the aid provider-recipient dynamic that is prevalent in global development and humanitarian assistance.

**Conclusion**

The opportunities offered by global development and humanitarian innovation are massive; we can shift to a future of aid and development that is truly more participatory and focused on the needs and voices of affected individuals. When people of diverse backgrounds and disciplines come together to find innovative ways of creating and discovering, new possibilities arise. We are beginning to see intentional cross-sector collaboration that is adapting and employing the skills of the private sector, academic institutions, and emerging new disciplines to bring about a better world. It is increasingly critical to co-create with many perspectives and expertises, including expertise of lived experience from those seen traditionally as ‘beneficiaries’. In light of the global challenges we face today, innovation cannot be seen simply as ‘nice to have’ but rather, essential to our strategy to bring about structural and institutional change.

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
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\bibitem{gurumurthy} Gurumurthy.
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Interview with the Rukmini Foundation President, Bibhuti Aryal: Connecting Pittsburgh and Nepal through Quality Education for Girls

Bibhuti Aryal, Founder, President, and Chairman of the Board of the Rukmini Foundation, spoke with CIRP Journal Guest Editors, Kayla Lee and Emily Vokach-Brodsky, in March 2017. During the interview, Aryal shared the story of how the foundation got started and the approaches it takes to provide quality education for girls in Nepal.

CIRP Journal: Could you tell us about the Rukmini Foundation?

Bibhuti Aryal: I’ll give you a little bit of background on myself and that probably will help. I came to this country in 1989 from Nepal. I’ve lived in Pittsburgh for most of my life now, except for a brief period when I worked in Columbus, Ohio. Pittsburgh is a big part of my life. I came here because my mother came to the University of Pittsburgh. When we talk about girls’ empowerment and girls’ education and why it matters and has a generational impact, I am living proof of what girls’ education is about. It may sound weird for a guy to be talking about it, but we all benefit; I’m a direct beneficiary of girls’ education. Upon completing my MBA at Carnegie Mellon, I worked as an IT consultant, and one of my first assignments was for one of the largest banks in the world. I felt like I was killing myself working really long hours but I couldn’t figure out what my work really meant in the grand scheme of things. As soon as I got my green card, I took the opportunity to travel back to my home country of Nepal, which I hadn’t visited since 1989.

In 2011, I went back and I saw what life was like for kids, especially girls. It really affected me because here I am, worried about my job, what I am doing, things that annoy me, and all these other things we take for granted. Then, I go there and I think, ‘Wow, my life is easy. What am I complaining about when kids are having to live like this?’ What I understood was that for a lot of kids, especially girls, economics was one of the reasons they couldn’t go to school. My initial thought was that if money is an issue, I could probably help with that for at least a few kids. Maybe we can pool a little bit more money from our family and help a few more. So, we started by supporting ten girls, providing scholarships, books, uniforms, all the stuff that they need.

That’s really how the program started. It was just me going back, seeing how things were, and thinking that I could do something. It wasn’t anything grander than that, and our initial goal was that if we could keep these girls in school until they graduated from high school, at least they wouldn’t get married when they were ten, eleven, twelve, or thirteen. That was really our modest goal: Can we keep them in school until they graduate from high school? If the first thing they do after high school is get married, at least that’s better than the alternative. That was really the genesis of the organization. The mission is to empower girls through quality education.

We added a couple of other things after what we saw in the first year, which is that many of the ten girls that we supported already came with a mindset of what their life was supposed to be like because their mothers and their grandmothers never finished school. They got married when they were very young and they had children when they were very young. They were wives and mothers – that’s it. What we realized is that we had to change their mindsets. That’s very difficult to do without mentoring and without having other female role models, maybe girls who are in college or professional women – doctors, nurses,
teachers, radio DJ hosts – things that these girls would not have imagined that girls can do.

Mentoring has become a very big part of the program. The health and wellness program is important, as well, because they need to know the basics, such as hygiene, dental hygiene, feminine hygiene, sanitation, and hand washing, and how those things affect the health of young girls and also women, pregnant women, and young mothers. The basics that we take for granted are making a big difference in that community. The program, as I mentioned earlier, is that we keep learning, we keep refining, we keep trying to add on things so our mission has become not just education but a more holistic program: education, mentoring, and health and wellness. The idea is to empower girls as opposed to making them feel like they’re getting something from us. This is something that they’re doing for themselves and for their families and for their community. We want to avoid that stigma of, ‘I’m being sponsored by this person,’ as though they owe us something. We try very hard to avoid: (1) making them feel like victims; and (2) making them feel like they’re getting something, that they owe us something. Those are two things that we’re very conscious about, maybe even overly so; we are very careful in the way that we communicate with them, how we message them on the website. Their shared stories are important to us. Sometimes it’s a tragic story and we think it’s important to share the challenges that they deal with, but we never put them in terms of, ‘Look at how terrible her life is.’ It is terrible, but we don’t want to exploit their situations.

One more thing that I will add is that the name of the foundation comes from my great-grandmother, who was given away as a wife when she was very young, between eight and ten years of age, I believe. She became a young mother with two kids. Only one survived, which happens quite a lot when you have babies when you’re a baby yourself. She was a widow in her teenage years but kept the family together. Then my grandfather instilled the idea that education is very important and he became a learned person. He became a teacher and started a school in our community; our family has been in the education game in that community since then. The organization is in my great-grandmother’s honor because this uneducated person somehow had the idea that education is important. She had this strength that not a lot of those girls had. We’re trying to instill education, but also that mental fortitude – to say that you can get through it, you can help yourself, but you need to start with the foundation of education.

**CIRP Journal: Why Pittsburgh?**

**Bibhuti Aryal:** I’ve lived here for most of my life now, so I’m a Pittsburgher as much as I am a Nepali. This is my home now. People always talk about issues of girls’ education and poverty as though they’re issues over there – third-world issues. I went to Pittsburgh public schools. What was striking for me, especially in middle school, was, ‘Wow, maybe some of my friends here have more difficult issues than the kids back in Nepal.’ The kids I went to school with in Nepal didn’t have to worry about getting killed on the way to school. They didn’t have to worry about drugs or gang violence. Things are bad in Nepal, but there was just a whole different level of issues that the young people had to deal with in the US. When you’re trapped in a cycle of poverty and nobody in your family graduates from high school or college, then education doesn’t seem that important. What’s important is basically surviving.

When I do advocacy here in Pittsburgh, I try to stress that we cannot act like these issues affect only those poor folks in Africa
and Asia or other parts of the world. This is happening in this country, the richest country in the world, where access to quality education is being denied based on where you are born, and that's resulting in generations of poverty. That's another reason why it was very important for me to advocate for education in Pittsburgh and also to educate people in Pittsburgh that these things are happening globally. Even though it's happening in a place very far away, it matters.

Why does stuff happening in Iraq matter? Why does stuff happening in Afghanistan matter? I think people are finally starting to understand that anywhere there is injustice, inequity, or strife, it's going to affect the rest of the world in some way, and in very striking ways in the last ten or twelve years. That's one of the things I like to tell people: Don't pretend this stuff doesn't matter to you. When there is inequity, guess what happens? People rise up and there's violence and war, and then countries that may not think it matters to them have to get involved. Those are some of the reasons why, for me, it was very important to make that connection between Nepal and Pittsburgh.

CIRP Journal: Can you tell us about some of the challenges that the foundation faces?

Bibhuti Aryal: We have quite a few of them. Nepal itself, with its poverty, is a challenge. That's a given because what we're working on, along with cultural challenges, is trying to change people's minds about how things are being done. People like to think that it's a cultural thing that we don't have to educate our girls and women. Well, it's mostly economic. When your parents make four or five dollars a day and you have six kids, guess what? They're going to try to make hard decisions based on what they think is the best thing to do. Between a son and a daughter, it's an easy decision for them because they think a son is going to grow up, get a job, and take care of them, but a daughter is going to grow up, get married, and be somebody else's problem.

This is the way that people have been making decisions, but we [at Rukmini] think that's a shortsighted way to look at things. Why can't a daughter also grow up, get a job, and take care of you? To look at it another way, let's say she doesn't have an education. What if she does get married? What if her husband is a terrible person and leaves, which does happen? Then you've left her with nothing and nothing to fall back on. We understand the economic reasons that people make decisions, but we're trying to explain to them the other economic reasons for educating their daughters and what the benefits are for the daughters, their families, and the entire community. It's slowly turning around, but you're changing the way things have been done for generations, and that's never easy. That's definitely one of the problems.

Logistical issues include the foundation being in Pittsburgh and work being in Nepal. If we didn't have a strong community there, if we didn't have access to that community, if we didn't have sway in that community, it would be very difficult to do what we do. I don't know how big organizations that are not based there do this kind of work. We still have trouble even though we're from that village. My grandfather and my parents have built schools with their own hands, but even then, when you're trying to change things, people say, 'Who are these outsiders?' We're not really outsiders, but when we're talking to them from America, for all intents and purposes, we're outsiders now. So you can only break through that barrier with access to community leaders who believe in what we're doing. They are the ones who carry this message, and the community buys into this. We're not telling them what to do. They are the ones leading it and we support it. We can't be heavy-handed and say, 'This is how you have to do it, because this is what
the UN SDG goals say and this is what the Millennium Development Goals are. This is not how it works. They have to buy into it. They have to lead it. They have to feel like they have ownership of this and we’re just facilitators. I think those are some of the challenges. Then, obviously, there was the earthquake in 2015, as though we didn’t have enough problems. That was certainly a challenge. Families are still trying to recover from that.

We’re working in one of the poorest countries in the world and the challenges are many. We’ve also seen a lot of success. When you see examples of success – some of those girls who are graduating from high school and coming back to be mentors to the younger girls – now that is what will get the momentum going. It’s not us doing it. It’s that girl; she’s now a leader. She can do this. It’s not us doing it. It’s the community of girls doing it for themselves.

CIRP Journal: What are some of the successes that you’ve had?

Bibhuti Aryal: Of the ten girls that we started with, all of them graduated from high school. This is a big success for us. When we first started, we had a hypothesis that girls entering high school would be the most at risk because they would be the closest to getting married, so that’s what we focused on. During our first year, we also found out that our girls are the ones who have the most fixed mindsets. We said, “If there’s a girl in trouble at any age, we will support her.” Now, we have girls as young as ten and some over twenty because they may have dropped out and are coming back. That’s one thing I want to mention. All ten of those girls who started with us have graduated. Two of those girls are now mentors and are employees of the foundation in Nepal. That, to me, is one of my biggest successes.

We have monthly calls with our team in Nepal. We had one last Sunday night – the first time I got to hear Susmita and Puja, two scholars who were on the call. I’ve never met them, but I know about them because we’ve written posts about them. We’ve shared stories about their lives on the website, but now we’re talking about how to improve the mentoring program. I was talking to Susmita and I said, “Okay, that’s a great idea. Your job now is to do it.” It was a little surreal, but in a really good way. That, to me … that’s a huge success. Twenty-four girls over the last six years who worked with us have gone on to graduate from high school and many of them are continuing beyond high school. That is success.

Helping to rebuild one of the partner schools destroyed by the earthquake – that was a huge success. Now we’re looking to build more programming like STEM and improve instruction in certain things like English; that’s success. Last year, through one of our partner organizations in New York, we had a group of girls come to the US. They came here for a weeklong summit and the CSW60 (Commission on the Status of Women) at the UN. One of the girls actually spoke at a UN function and brought people to tears. That is a huge success. We’re bringing two more girls and two mentors to New York again in a couple of weeks, and we’ll be going there to meet them.

This year, we’re also bringing a team of villagers to DC for a robotics competition. Opportunities like this are coming out of left field. We evaluate them and say, ‘I’m not sure we can do that.’ That was our initial response because they barely have electricity there, so I wasn’t sure if a robotics team was something we could support, but then we talked to our team in Nepal. They gathered the students to gauge interest and we had sixty kids – girls and boys – come out for that. Two of the robotics team members are girls.
I could talk about the different types of successes all night long, basically. Some things particularly resonate with me because of how crazy it is for me to think that a girl from a village – who maybe has not been exposed to much – gets a chance to come to New York for a week. It’s something that destroys her worldview in a good way. That’s what we’re trying to do. We’re basically trying to destroy that roof, that ceiling that everybody has placed inside themselves: You’re a boy, you’re a girl; this is not what you can dream of. That, to me, is success – seeing girls change their mindsets.

CIRP Journal: Where do you see Rukmini headed in the next few years?

Bibhuti Aryal: That is a difficult question to answer because expanding is not an easy thing to do in Nepal. Access to community makes it difficult to say, ‘Oh, yes, we’re going to support a hundred girls.’ Right now, we are supporting thirty-six scholars, and while we may not expand in the number of students, we are looking for more opportunities and putting more focus on STEM and engineering and computers and things that girls are really interested in but don’t have access to – even things like art and sports. These girls love those things but they don’t get an opportunity to do them. That’s what I see us focusing on – providing all those things besides school.

My dad said something he probably got from somewhere else, but I really like it: “We want to make these schools a place of learning and not a place of teaching.” Right now, those schools are definitely a place where a teacher gets in front of the class and tells you to memorize stuff and you take a final exam. Your grade is based solely on that final exam, not on participation, homework, quizzes, or even midterms. We want school to be a place of learning and a place of experimentation and trying new things – really discovering what you are good at as opposed to just being graded and sensing that the teachers will not teach you because you’re stupid (and that happens).

For the next five years, we’ll continue to learn and find ways to develop. How do we really provide quality education? A lot of it will be based on our learning about what that really means. What are the best practices all over the world? What could work here? What won’t work here? Why? I’m not going to say that in the next five years we’ll have girls graduating from Harvard, but I also won’t rule out the possibility that one of these girls will become a graduate of a university somewhere in the United States, because the caliber is there. I think it’s really about focusing on quality education and getting better at delivering it as opposed to saying that we’re going to expand and support a thousand girls.