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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND SEX WORK IN CAMBODIA: DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES AND FEMINIST AGENDAS

This project focuses on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Cambodia that deal, either directly or indirectly, with sex work and sex workers. The NGOs outlined in this study have goals ranging from preventing Cambodian women from entering the commercial sex industry to empowering Cambodian sex workers through the formation of sex worker unions. Through the textual analysis of documents and web materials disseminated by these NGOs and from interviews with representatives from the NGOs, I seek to analyze how underlying assumptions about development and about the commercial sex industry shape the ways in which the personnel leading these NGOs think and act. Examining seven Phnom Penh-based organizations, I seek to answer the following research questions:

- What are the self-stated aims of NGOs in Cambodia that either directly or indirectly deal with the commercial sex industry in the country?
- What assumptions about development are embedded in the various programs being carried out by these NGOs?
- What assumptions about the nature of sex work are embedded in the various programs being carried out by NGOs working in Cambodia?
- What effect does the work of these organizations have on the lived realities of sex workers in Cambodia?

KEYWORDS: Cambodia, Development, Nongovernmental, Prostitution, Feminism

Jessica Catherine Schmid

May 5, 2011

NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
AND SEX WORK IN CAMBODIA:
DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES AND
FEMINIST AGENDAS

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Jessica Catherine Schmid

The Graduate School

University of Kentucky

2011

NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND SEX WORK IN CAMBODIA:
DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES AND FEMINIST AGENDAS

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the
College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Kentucky

By

Jessica Catherine Schmid

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Susan Roberts, Professor of Geography

Lexington, Kentucky

2011

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CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT, TO CAMBODIAN POLITICAL HISTORY, AND TO THE CAMBODIAN NONGOVERNMENTAL SECTOR

This project focuses on nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in Cambodia that deal, either directly or indirectly, with sex work and sex workers. The NGOs outlined in this study have goals ranging from preventing Cambodian women from entering the commercial sex industry to empowering Cambodian sex workers through the formation of sex worker unions. Through the textual analysis of documents and web materials disseminated by these NGOs and from interviews with representatives from the NGOs, I seek to analyze how underlying assumptions about development and about the commercial sex industry shape the ways in which the personnel leading these NGOs think and act.

The following seven organizations were included in the study: AFESIP (Agir Pour la Femme en Situation Precaire/ Acting for Women in Distressing Situations), American Assistance for Cambodia (AAfC), the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC), Gender and Development for Cambodia (GAD/C), Pact Cambodia, the Womyn's Agenda for Change (WAC), and the Women's Network for Unity (WNU). Examining these organizations, I seek to answer the following research questions:

- What are the self-stated aims of NGOs in Cambodia that either directly or indirectly deal with the commercial sex industry in the country?
- What assumptions about development are embedded in the various programs being carried out by these NGOs?
- What assumptions about the nature of sex work are embedded in the various programs being carried out by NGOs working in Cambodia?

- What effect does the work of these organizations have on the lived realities of sex workers in Cambodia?

Currently, there is a burgeoning group of researchers, activists, sex workers and non sex workers who argue that it is harming women in the commercial sex industry for distinctions to be made between those who have been coerced into the industry and those who have not been trafficked/coerced/forced in any manner. This has not yet worked its way into the mindset of the majority of policy makers, many of whom still support programs that promote the elimination of the commercial sex industry. It is, therefore, important to provide further studies about how such discourses are shaping sex workers' realities. Specifically pertaining to US funding requirements, the Obama administration has made some changes to ultraconservative Bush-era policies. The current administration's views are still in the process of being shaped, and so further research on the effects of anti-prostitution views will be crucial in adding to the body of information used in determining policy.

It is the geographic component of the debate about sex work that has advanced scholarly writings beyond moral argument. Looking at this issue through a geographic lens adds historical and social context to a complex phenomenon that manifests itself quite differently depending on the place where the sex work is being carried out. A place-based evaluation of a sex worker's situation can vary significantly from an assessment that lacks context. For example, if a sex worker is living and working in a state with laws that forbid prostitution or where a blind eye is turned to abuse of sex workers at the hands of police, he/she is in a constantly vulnerable position. An analysis that omits the implications of the policy that criminalizes sex workers could easily

conclude that prostitution is an inherently oppressive industry. An analysis that takes the specifics of place into consideration could conclude that the government's policy is the cause of the majority of hardships faced by sex workers. The contextualized analysis would ask the following questions: What is the condition of other workers of the same socio-economic standing? Are sex workers necessarily oppressed because of the nature of what they do, or are they left feeling so as a result of being poor? What factors, at various scales, are contributing to sex workers remaining poor?

While a lot has been written on these matters about Thailand, a much smaller amount of academic work has focused on the specificities of the industry as it pertains to Cambodia, a country that differs historically and economically from its larger, wealthier neighbor. Furthermore, though the country is underrepresented in current literature, Cambodia lies in a region that has shaped policymakers' and activists' ideas about sex work for decades. According to sociologist and sex work scholar Kamala Kempadoo, feminist interest in sex work reemerged in the 1970s with those "concerned with the social impacts of the reconstruction and development of the Southeast Asian region in the aftermath of the Vietnam War and the continued stationing and servicing of US military troops in the region" (Kempadoo, 2005, p. xi). Kempadoo also explains the reason why her edited collection *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered* (2005) has a geographically specific focus:

Given that Asia, especially South and Southeast, is the area of the world where the recent international interest in trafficking originated, and where the majority of the [contributors]... conducted their research, we have focused the collection on writings that deal with and speak to Asian experiences, realities, and debates (Kempadoo, 2005, p. viii).

This thesis seeks to add to development literature and feminist theories of sex work using the example of the commercial sex industry in the context of Cambodia.

1.1 A Political History of Cambodia

In order to understand the larger role of this industry in the context of Cambodia, it is first important to understand the political and economic environment in which the industry exists. Additionally, an understanding of the historical circumstances leading up to the current political and economic situation is necessary in order to grasp the present state of Cambodia. Any discussion of the current political economic status of Cambodia is incomplete without first looking to the devastation caused by colonialism, the Vietnam War, the Khmer Rouge regime, the invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam, and the resulting civil war. The volatility of the country's political order and the violence endured by the Cambodian people during the entire second half of the twentieth century has led to a present-day Cambodia still severely scarred by its past. A look at Cambodia's political history also demonstrates the enormous impact of long-term foreign influences on the country.

French colonial rule of Cambodia lasted from 1863 to 1953, excluding a brief interlude of Japanese occupation during the Second World War. Then, throughout much of the Cold War and the Vietnam War, Prince Norodom Sihanouk attempted to maintain independence and neutrality, moving leftward or rightward as needed. In 1965, Cambodia broke diplomatic relations with the United States for four years until Lon Nol, the right-leaning Prime Minister appointed by Sihanouk convinced the Prince to resume diplomatic ties on May 11, 1969. All the while, the Nixon administration began planning

and executing a series of secret bombings in rural Cambodia, along the Vietnamese border.

As 1970 began, Cambodia was a seriously troubled country. Its economy was in shambles. Industrial output and agricultural production were at all time lows. Imports totaled \$77 million, \$27 million more than exports, the worst balance of payments deficit in Cambodian history. Inflation was rampant and taxes exorbitant (Lipsman and Doyle, 1983, p. 142).

The economic situation would only continue to worsen. The majority of Cambodians were unhappy, and as a result Sihanouk's reign was nearing an end. While the Prince was away on vacation in France, approximately 10,000 anti-communist protestors attacked the North Vietnamese and Vietcong Embassies in Phnom Penh on March 11, 1970. Sihanouk quickly planned trips to the Soviet Union and China to soothe relations. While riding to the airport to catch his flight from Moscow to Beijing, Sihanouk was informed that the Cambodian National Assembly, after being asked by Lon Nol to come decide the future rule of the country, voted him out of power 92-0 (Lipsman and Doyle, 1983, p. 142-143).

Shortly after his arrival in Beijing, Sihanouk met secretly with the Prime Minister of North Vietnam, forming a government in absentia, backed by the North Vietnamese, the Vietcong, and the Laotian Communist Party. Sihanouk offered his support and the support of his allies to the Khmer nationalist guerilla group, that would later be nicknamed the Khmer Rouge, who were seeking to overthrow the Lon Nol government. Working alongside the Khmer Rouge, the North Vietnamese broadcasted Sihanouk's radio messages in the rural areas they controlled, but to the Prince's dismay, the immediate unified support he expected never really materialized amongst the rural poor. Isolated acts of Cambodian on Cambodian violence occurred, including the gruesome murder of Lon Nol's brother. However, most of the anger of Cambodians across the

entire socioeconomic spectrum was geared toward ethnic Vietnamese. The government used this hatred to increase army enrollment and spurred the killings of ethnic Vietnamese civilians at the hands of the army and other civilians by air dropping leaflets on Phnom Penh recalling a historic massacre of Vietnamese in Cambodia. In multiple incidents, the Cambodian army fired on masses of detained Vietnamese civilians, killing hundreds. Lipsman and Doyle describe the horrific scene in Phnom Penh after the army detained and executed hundreds of Vietnamese men: “On April 15 [1970], the bodies of 800 Vietnamese men came floating down the Mekong River.... For days, bloated bodies flowed slowly by the ferry, staining the water” (1983, p. 144).

The fall of Sihanouk and the rise of pro-American Lon Nol were viewed by the United States as an opportunity to openly invade the North Vietnamese-controlled border regions. Nixon’s public announcement of American forces entering Cambodia, an escalation at a time when most Americans thought the war to be coming to an end, faced massive resistance at home. The eventual withdrawal of American ground troops from Indochina in 1972 did little to restore peace to Cambodia.

The Khmer Rouge gained strength and loosened their ties with North Vietnam, eventually ordering North Vietnamese troops out of the territory they now controlled after recognizing that they would not need the support of North Vietnam to achieve victory. The Lon Nol government was losing its grip on power.

It soon became clear that only American bombing was saving the Lon Nol government. In six months of bombing during 1973, the U.S. dropped more than 250,000 tons of explosives on Cambodia, more tonnage than had been delivered on Japan in all of World War II (Lipsman and Weiss, 1985, p. 53).

In the summer of 1973, the US ended all funding to Cambodian bombing campaigns. Following this change in policy, the victory of the Khmer Rouge was almost inevitable.

The morale of the soldiers in the Cambodian army was extremely low. Many defected to go be with their families and forage for food. The officers stole money and food from their own troops, and Lon Nol did nothing to correct the rampant corruption (Lipsman and Weiss, 1985, p. 121-122). The Americans tried to negotiate peace with Sihanouk and the Khmer Rouge, but talks were rejected. The years of war took an enormous toll on the country. Life for the average Cambodian was unbearable and the country's infrastructure in shambles.

After three years of American bombing and civil war, the Cambodian economy barely functioned. The nation's small rail system had been utterly destroyed, along with 40 percent of its roads. Four-fifths of the rice mills, 75 percent of the sawmills, and the only oil refinery in the country had ceased operation. Production of timber and rubber, Cambodia's only significant commercial exports, had declined by 80 percent. The 1972-73 rice harvest was less than a quarter of what it had been in the last prewar year (Lipsman and Weiss, 1985, p. 118).

Later in 1974, the U.S. refused to negotiate a cease-fire based on the return of Sihanouk and the victory of the Khmer Rouge, still choosing to back the failing Lon Nol Republic. Across Cambodia, people were suffering in one way or another. Reports of murder, torture and forced relocations came in from Khmer Rouge-ruled areas, foreshadowing the misery that would later take hold throughout Cambodia. The overflowing refugees in Phnom Penh were starving to death (Lipsman and Weiss, 1985, p. 171). After a visit to China during which Khmer Rouge leader, Khieu Samphan, secured the funding and arms to finish the fighting, they officially took Phnom Penh on April 17, 1975, establishing the communist state of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1978).

The Khmer Rouge sought utter and complete national self-reliance in order to achieve its view of a utopian communist society. The new regime's leadership immediately began taking steps to achieve this goal. Days after taking control, the

Khmer Rouge emptied Cambodia's cities, in the new regime's first step toward drastically restructuring life in Cambodia. Though initially explained as a last-minute decision geared toward saving urban Cambodians from food shortages in the city, protecting the people from American bombings, and stifling thoughts of counterrevolution, it is now widely known to have been a thoroughly planned and meticulously executed strategic operation (Quinn, 1989, p. 181). In the eyes of the Khmer Rouge leadership, cities were problematic on myriad levels. The city was viewed as the realm of trade and greed, an unproductive, profiting drain on its rural surroundings. Furthermore, the Khmer Rouge leadership saw that, in China, the cities spawned political opposition to communist plans (Quinn, 1989, p. 182). The cities were viewed as being dominated by foreign entities and corrupted by US cultural influences (Jackson, 1989, p. 46-47).

The base of the Khmer Rouge's new society would be agriculture, and thus rooted in the countryside. National self-reliance would be acquired through a return to an agrarian society. Khieu Samphan, arguably the chief ideologue of the Khmer Rouge, wrote his doctoral thesis in economics at the University of Paris on Cambodia's dependence and subordinate position in an international system controlled by a few dominant actors (Jackson, 1989, p. 42). Much of what he wrote was not uncommon; "The set of principles integrating dependency theory with Marxism [had] become fairly standard among aspiring radical elites in the Third World" (Jackson, 1989, p. 44). Many researchers aim to explain how the leaders of the Khmer Rouge progressed from fairly common Marxist ideological thought to such extreme actions.

The truly extraordinary aspect of the Khmer revolution is the doctrinaire literalism with which they applied these abstract principles without regard for the awesome costs to Cambodia in terms of diplomatic isolation, economic devastation, and massive human suffering. Other elites have talked long and loud on these subjects

while out of power but have implemented their rhetoric very selectively once sobered by the responsibilities of power. The scope and extreme literalism with which the Khmer Rouge elite pursued the ends of complete sovereignty and self-reliance are what make them virtually unique (Jackson, 1989, p. 45).

In an additionally violent divergence from usual forms of indoctrination amongst communist movements, the Khmer Rouge preferred to eliminate anyone who questioned their goals, as opposed to winning over the hearts and minds of the people using “mass rallies, banners, heroic photos of the leader, and blanket mass media coverage that have characterized communist regimes in other parts of the world” (Jackson, 1989, p. 243). The leaders of the Khmer Rouge were intensely suspicious to the point of paranoia. Systematic, mass executions took place to eliminate those suspected of being disloyal to Democratic Kampuchea. The now famous killing fields site just outside of Phnom Penh is the location of mass communal graves. Evidence from Tuol Sleng, a high school turned prison/ torture center under the Khmer Rouge, demonstrates the intensity of the Khmer Rouge’s mistrust and fear of average Cambodians. Prisoners were tortured until they made false confessions and then turned over the names of multiple others who conspired with them. Any names would do. The prisoners were then executed, the others named rounded up, and thus the cycle continued. The following statement attempts to summarize how this horrific time in Cambodian history came to be. “A human tragedy of almost unprecedented proportions occurred because political theoreticians carried out their grand design on the unsuspecting Khmer people” (Twining, 1989, p. 110).

Those who did not perish in the executions were not spared the misery of the Khmer Rouge rule. The staunch pursuit of total disconnectedness from the outside world brought about massive amounts of suffering inside Democratic Kampuchea.

Starvation and pestilence stalked the land because the regime's pursuit of complete independence led it to sever access to most aid and trade, thereby insuring death-dealing shortages of food... and modern medicine. Successful communist revolutions emphasize national sovereignty and self-reliance, but no other movement has applied the academic theory of dependence in such a doctrinaire and literal manner, thereby inflicting on Cambodia severe diplomatic isolation, economic devastation, and massive human suffering (Jackson, 1989, p. 3).

Jackson gives an estimate of the death tolled, resulting from both the executions and starvation: "Out of 7.3 million Cambodians said to be alive on April 17, 1975, less than 6 million remained to greet the Vietnamese occupiers in the waning days of 1978" (1989, p. 3).

The fall of Democratic Kampuchea started on December 25 as Vietnamese troops crossed the border into Cambodia. By January 7, 1979 they had taken over what was left of Cambodia's capital city, establishing The People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) (1979-1989). The Vietnamese installed a government of Khmers, whom they controlled in almost every sense. The Eastern Bloc immediately recognized the Vietnamese-installed government, while China and the United States accused Vietnam of aggression against a sovereign state. The United States did not express outright support for the Khmer Rouge, but it did not condemn China's doing so. Also, the US skirted around use of the word "genocide" to describe atrocities committed under the Khmer Rouge (Gottesman, 2003, p. 42-43). In his book *Cambodia After the Khmer Rouge*, Evan Gottesman describes the complicated politics during the entirety of the PRK's existence.

From 1979 to 1991...Cambodia was a divided nation caught in the middle of a geopolitical standoff. The regime in Phnom Penh survived by virtue of the Vietnamese occupation and the political and economic support of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc. Meanwhile, along the Thai-Cambodian border, some three hundred thousand Cambodians lived in refugee camps controlled by resistance factions that included exiled royalists, republicans, and the Khmer Rouge. Bound together only by their opposition to the Vietnamese occupation, these groups received the support of China, the West (including the United States), and the noncommunist countries of Southeast Asia (Gottesman, 2003, p. xiv).

Average Cambodians initially welcomed Vietnamese liberation. People began to move around, some in search of food, some returning to their native villages. The Vietnamese allowed this at first, but they soon started requiring people to produce travel documents. Phnom Penh was barricaded, and shantytowns grew up on its outskirts. Soon visible signs of communist ideology began to reappear, invoking fearful reminders of the Khmer Rouge. At this time, a lot of the educated people who remained decided to flee to Thailand. Party documents illustrate the intense concern with winning over “the masses” juxtaposed with the paranoid fear of losing control. The Vietnamese initially encouraged the people to select local government leaders, and they later removed and replaced the majority of them. They also allowed people to again practice their Buddhist faith and later sought ways to control religious expression (Gottesman, 2003, p. 39-71).

Throughout this period, the opposition, operating from the Thai side of the Thai-Cambodian border, conducted guerilla attacks on government entities in Cambodia. In 1982, the opposition formed the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, creating a united resistance against PRK (Gottesman, 2003, p.139). Following a series of Vietnamese military victories securing the border areas, opposition forces adjusted their strategy. They sneaked into the interior of the country in small groups. The PRK estimated that by 1987, there were 21,000 “enemies” operating from within Cambodia’s borders (Gottesman, 2003, p. 224). Support from inside Cambodia for the PRK government and Vietnamese authorities would increase and decrease throughout the years of occupation. From the border regions, the resistance spread anti-Vietnamese propaganda, which caused people inside Cambodia to be generally suspicious of the occupiers’ intentions (Gottesman, 2003, p. 138). In 1984, the Vietnamese began the

conscripted Cambodians to build a defensive zone along the Thai border. The project became known as K5, and it included the construction of a wall, spiked ditches, barbed wire, and minefields. Conditions for laborers were deplorable. There was not enough food and people were overworked. Many died of starvation and more died from malaria. Exploding land mines killed others. It is estimated that approximately 500,000 Cambodians were forced to labor on this project (Gottesman, 2003, p. 231-237). This project understandably fostered vast resentment for the Vietnamese within the country.

Under internal and international pressure, in 1989 the Vietnamese withdrew their advisors and troops from Cambodia. What this time period in Cambodian history meant was and still is a hotly contested subject. It undoubtedly plays a major role in present Cambodian political discourse. Current leaders of the ruling party in Cambodia were originally installed by the Vietnamese. A national holiday celebrates the day the Vietnamese overthrew the Khmer Rouge. Supporters of the present-day opposition party view the current government as Vietnamese “puppets” and the period of Vietnamese rule as oppressive and exploitative (Gottesman, 2003, p. x).

It was clear to the PRK government that they would not survive in the absence of Vietnamese support. PRK Prime Minister Hun Sen reached out to all displaced Cambodians, including those in opposition groups, but excluding high-ranking officials of the Khmer Rouge (Gottesman, 2003, p. 278). All invested groups took part in years of negotiations aimed at restoring peace in Cambodia before the eventual signing of the Paris Peace Agreement (1991). Under this agreement, The United Nations installed a transitional governing body known as UNTAC (United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia), designed to fill the void of government during Cambodia’s transition to an

independent state. It was not until 1993 that Cambodia held UN-organized elections, and the country has since been organized as a multi-party democracy under a constitutional monarchy.

Given the trauma faced by Cambodia for nearly the previous half century, the transition to sustainable peace and democracy would clearly not happen overnight. P.P. Karan sums up the effects of the country's past on the political economy: "Cambodia's economy, long held hostage to violence, radical politics, and ideology, has teetered on a knife's edge. After decades of bloodshed at the hands of autocratic leaders and a fourteen-year civil war, the country is struggling with serious economic problems" (2004, p. 280).

The following section explores the role played by NGOs in Cambodia, the majority of which began operations following the 1991 Paris Agreement.

1.2 The Role of NGOs in the Context of Cambodia

At the time of the 1991 signing of the Paris Agreement, the promotion of civil society was (and largely still is) seen as the key to creating peace and stability. "In the 1990s, a momentum emerged behind the drive to international civil society promotion in Cambodia, which reflected both contemporary thinking in international development circles, and the interests of individual donors and agencies" (Hughes, 2003, p. 144). NGOs were already being viewed as the best way to provide points of access to governments. NGOs were aware of this potential, thus taking the opportunity to "grab" civil society, claiming it as their niche (Whaites, 2000, p. 126). The first post-war Cambodian elections took place in 1993, and the NGO sector continued to expand in the newly democratic state.

In *Cambodia Reborn?*, Grant Curtis (1998) explains that there was a core group of international NGOs that had been working in Cambodia since as far back as 1979, the end of the Khmer Rouge rule. Another category of NGOs had been working throughout the entire conflict period on the Thai side of the Cambodia-Thailand border with Cambodian refugees. This group moved into Cambodia at approximately the same time the peace agreement was signed in Paris in 1991. In addition to these NGO groups who had been working in Cambodia or with Cambodians for quite some time, many other NGOs established themselves at the time of the peace process and during UNTAC. Others still moved into Cambodia in the years just after UNTAC, at approximately the same time the first elections were being held in 1993. This was a time of heightened international attention on the area, and the majority of these NGOs served as “implementing agencies for donor-funded activities” (Curtis, 1998, p. 137). Phnom Penh saw the fastest boom of NGOs in the early 1990s, and it is estimated that by 1996 at least 164 NGOs were working in Cambodia (Yonekura, 1996 in Hughes, 2000, p. 142). By 1999, estimates range from 400 to 900 NGOs working throughout the country (PONLOK, 1999 in Hughes, 2000, p. 142).

During the same general time frame as Cambodia’s transition, much discussion occurred in academic writing about the politics of NGOs, their roles in development, and the overall desirability of the nongovernmental sector. J. Pearce (2000) identifies four critical themes that come out of the debates about development and the politics of NGOs. These themes are: “NGOs and neo-liberalism; the roles and relationships of international (Northern) NGOs and local (Southern) NGOs; NGOs and the state; [and] theory, praxis and NGOs” (Pearce, 2000, p. 19). Using this framework below, I discuss each of the

themes set forth by Pearce and how they relate specifically to the case of post-UNTAC Cambodia.

NGOs have been critiqued on two levels in terms of their implication in the expansion of global capitalist ideals throughout the world. In one sense, it has been argued that NGOs, while comprising a “third sector,” meaning a part of neither the private (business) nor the public (government) sector, serve to facilitate the spread of neoliberal ideals by providing a “safety net” (Pearce, 2000, p. 21) that allows their donors' neoliberal policies to operate without resistance due to the fact that the NGOs are providing necessary welfare services in place of government. The harmful ramifications of neoliberal economic policies are offset slightly by the NGOs, thus creating an environment where economic violence can continue on the part of the governments and the private sector. Others have argued that NGOs are more directly implicated in so far as they, themselves, act as businesses and/or work to directly promote neoliberal forms of development.

The neoliberalization of development policies is one half of what Robinson (1993) has termed the New Policy Agenda. Moore, following Robinson, writes that, “this agenda is not monolithic, its details vary from one official aid agency to another, but in all cases it is driven by beliefs organized around the twin poles of neo-liberal economic theory and liberal democratic theory” (1993, p. 5).

Stephen Commins argues that the main forces shaping the world economy are transnational corporations, governments of large, developed countries and international institutions whose agendas are determined by those same countries, and that NGOs merely play the role of “handing out meager comfort amidst harsh economic changes and

complex political emergencies...” (2000, p. 70). According to Commins, while many NGO workers are comfortable with the status quo, seeing themselves as occupiers of the moral high ground, the vast majority of them are involved in facilitating the economic violence that is being wrought on most of the world today.

Arguments such as that put forth by Commins tend to suggest that NGOs act altruistically, and that their work ends up, despite the original purpose, serving the needs of neoliberal interests. Others, however, draw a distinction between value-driven organizations and “NGOs which function as market-oriented non-profit businesses serving public purposes” (Robinson, 1997, p. 59). Using the term “public service contractors” (PSCs) coined by David Korten (1990), Robinson argues that some members of what is known as the 'third sector' of NGOs “sell their services to aid donors and government agencies to implement projects and programmes” (1997, p. 59).

Gino Lofredo (2000) sees all NGOs in a more critical light, calling the NGO project a “fairy tale.” Lofredo uses a Cinderella analogy: the poor as Cinderella; the NGOs as her friends, the mice and birds; International agencies as the Fairy Godmother, and their funding the magic stagecoach. If marrying the prince is achieving sustainable development, “it's the birds and the mice who marry the prince” (2000, p. 65). The work of NGOs works to sustain the NGOs. Just as businesses must continually market themselves to stay competitive, NGOs must keep up with the newest development fads and the trendiest catch phrases to secure funding and preserve their own existence.

The term 'aid market' is used by Curtis (1998) to describe Cambodia of the early 1990s, suggesting that those in the business of 'aiding' or rather of administering aid viewed Cambodia as a prime target. Curtis argues that two factors led to the

development of the intense international interest in Cambodia and its development in the 1990s, the first being international guilt over what was allowed to occur in the country and the second being the country's status as “virgin territory for players of the 'aid game’” (1998, p. 72). While Curtis sympathizes to some extent with the views of those behind this 'influx', it is not difficult to view what he has described in terms of Lofredo's (2000) assessment of what really motivates NGOs. Cambodia was, quite simply, *the* hot new place to develop, making Lofredo's “Sustainable (Self) Development” easy for NGOs working there. Or in the words used by Curtis, “Careers were to be made in Cambodia” (1998, p. 72).

Lofredo's “Sustainable (Self) Development” (2000) concept does not refer solely to international NGOs who moved into Cambodia when they saw this 'virgin territory.' A study conducted by the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) found that many indigenous NGOs spent a great portion of their time and resources working to secure further funding. Also, many local NGOs took on projects that were outside the organization's realm of expertise and/or goals to receive funding and to continue to have a reason to exist (CDC report in Curtis, 1998, p. 143).

Similar to the argument above, that the work of NGOs helps to minimize resistance to the spread of neoliberalism by providing the poor with just enough to keep them obedient, is the argument put forth by many critics of NGOs about the effects NGOs have on the state: the kind of work done by NGOs serves to reduce the responsibility put on the state. When NGOs step in to provide basic services, citizens' expectations of the state are diminished. Edwards and Hulme write, “NGOs have a long history of providing welfare services to poor people in countries where governments

lacked the resources to ensure universal coverage in health and education; the difference is that now they are seen as the preferred channel for service provision in deliberate substitution for the state” (1997, p. 2). In the long run, this harms the poor in places where the government has been permitted to scale back and let NGOs deliver necessary goods and services. Christopher Collier, upon completing fieldwork in a study assessing the role of NGOs in Zambia, found this to be the case. “By providing goods and services directly to the poor, NGOs can reduce the accountability of local government to these people, undermining the foundation upon which future and longterm improvements in their lives must be built” (2000, p. 116). Cutbacks in the state's dealings with such services characterize the ideals of the New Policy Agenda (Robinson, 1993; Edwards and Hulme, 1995; Goodhand and Chamberlain, 2000), where governments are seen to be much less efficient than NGOs or other private entities at providing social services.

This specific grievance, while it surely applies to certain NGOs who carry out social welfare programs, does not rule out the possibility of NGOs having desirable qualities. Some of the NGOs working in Phnom Penh simultaneously delivered food and healthcare to the poor while organizing people to demand certain policy changes and services of their government (Hughes, 2003). Also, such arguments all start from the assumption that it is the responsibility of the state to provide its citizens with amenities like education, health care, etc. The argument here works only once a state is capable of, but not willing to, provide these services.

In the case of Cambodia, at the time of UNTAC, it could be argued that the state did not have this capacity. Fischer (1998, p. 49) describes the Cambodian government as eager to cooperate with NGOs due to a lack of resources on the part of the government.

If this was the case, and NGOs were, from the outset of the 'new' Cambodia, the providers of welfare to the citizens, it is difficult to know exactly what the capacity of the state would be or could have been to take on this role.

Curtis paints a very different picture of the capacity of the state at the beginning of the 1990s. He claims that UNTAC was responsible for dismantling every institution that existed prior to its inception: “the particularities of the UNTAC-led peace process *created* the institutional vacuum by further diminishing or otherwise handicapping already weak institutional structures” (1998, p. 72-73, emphasis in original). When the state began, after the end of UNTAC, to retake control of certain activities that had been taken over by NGOs during UNTAC, different reactions resulted on the part of the NGOs. Some expressed relief at the opportunity to hand over more responsibility to the state, while “other NGOs had more difficulty adopting to the post-UNTAC environment, somewhat jealously pursuing their same range of activities and trying to retain their former position of influence” (Curtis, 1998, p. 136).

Hughes (2003), however, presents still a different version of events. NGOs were viewed suspiciously by the post-UNTAC state, as they worked primarily in the capital to defend the citizens' rights from the state. The NGO sector in Phnom Penh created a space for non-state political action to happen, which is now used by grassroots movements not associated with international NGOs.

Both representations are probably true, or at least they are not mutually exclusive. The NGO-state relationship is bizarre in that the role of NGOs is often twofold. NGOs, in their commonly held role of service providers, oftentimes work to relieve the state of its responsibilities to its people. At the same time, they can be the means through which

people can hold their government accountable. NGOs provide access to the government for citizens and provide a forum through which concerns can be made heard. Such contradictory outcomes are not difficult to imagine as resulting from even the same project of an NGO, let alone from one single organization. One could even see how the work of NGOs must necessarily be contradictory in this sense if dealing with matters thought to be of crucial importance. For instance, let us say that an NGO is working to organize people to demand something from their government that is lacking, but that is necessary to physical survival. If this NGO realizes itself to be the only source through which whatever is lacking to be delivered (in the meantime, while the government is not providing), should it deny the people out of principle, in order to force the government to take up this responsibility? In the case of, say, a vaccine, this would seem barbaric. The argument, however, could also be extended to apply to routine health care or education, etc.

Paternalism on the part of Northern/INGOs toward Southern/local NGOs plays a major role in shaping the ways in which NGO networks function in Cambodia. The trauma caused by the Khmer Rouge regime and the subsequent occupation and civil war are frequently given by international aid agencies as reasons why local organizations are inherently flawed. The belief is that Cambodia's past has left the nation irreparably damaged, both psychologically and socially (Hughes, 2003), and thus incapable of creating a functioning democratic society without outside help. Hughes writes that “many international analyses of Cambodian civil society took, as a starting point, the inadequacy of Cambodian efforts to engage in partnership, rather than questioning the possibility of genuine partnership in conditions characterized by a marked inequality in power” (Hughes, 2003, p. 147).

The manner in which aid is usually channeled through INGOs also leads to vast discrepancies in the extent to which different voices are heard. Resulting from the paternalistic attitudes outlined above, INGOs usually receive large sums of money from donors, which they then distribute to their local partners, tightly controlling how the money is used. When funds are moved in this fashion, the criteria established by the INGOs is used to determine which local NGOs receive money.

Curtis (1998) writes of paternalism on the part of the INGOs that governed the entire NGO network, citing a Buddhist monk and head of a local NGO who “forcefully reminded international NGOs that they should not strive to create local organizations in their own image” (1998, p. 136). Additionally, the NGO Forum on Cambodia raised concerns that INGOs are not truly concerned about fostering the creation of indigenous-minded organizations (Curtis, 1998). There has been a movement, on the part of Northern governments, toward directly giving funds to local, Southern NGOs. Though possibly a method of attempting to resolve problems of unequal power relations between NGOs, this does not change the fact that the aid money is still coming from the North (Pearce, 2000). It is safe to presume that money flowing directly from the North goes to local NGOs who meet certain criteria in terms of their professionalization. Hughes writes that inequality of this sort between INGOs and local NGOs developed from the beginning of UNTAC, and is, therefore, now deeply embedded in the way money is moved through NGOs in Cambodia. “It was clear, from the emergence of these organizations, that it was international policies and practices that sustained the political space in which they operated, building an inequality into the relationship between international and local organizations from the very beginning” (Hughes, 2003, p. 145).

It is furthermore important to note that Southern NGOs, particularly of the type likely to receive aid from Northern governments, are not necessarily more in touch with the needs of the local majority than INGOs. The patronizing attitudes that developed during UNTAC towards local NGOs in Cambodia persist today. Developing within a system dominated by views from outside, whose standards by which they are judged and chosen for receiving funds, those who work for local NGOs learned to speak the language of and conduct themselves in the manner preferred by the Northern NGOs and governments. International dominance and leadership became the norm in Cambodia, and the availability of international funds has entailed that those Cambodian NGOs who conformed to international agendas have flourished, permitting the consolidation of the international perspectives (Hughes, 2003, p. 146). In other words, there is pressure on NGOs to professionalize if they expect to receive any sort of substantial funding. In the process of professionalization, NGOs learn to speak a specific institutional language and to conduct themselves in a certain manner. The changes experienced by an organization who undergoes this process work to increasingly move the organization away from the aspects of it that had originally made it a better choice for reaching local people.

In observations from a yearlong organizational ethnography with a “successful,” highly professionalized, intermediary NGO in Oaxaca, Mexico, M. Walker et al. found that the NGO made decisions based on the needs of funders rather than the needs of targeted beneficiaries. The organization, Fundacion Comunitaria de Oaxaca, was put in charge of administering a \$500,000 program aimed at providing technical assistance, mostly in the form of educational workshops, to village groups in five diverse regions of Oaxaca state who were producing goods or services for sale. Five field workers were

hired specifically for this project. Field workers noted that some regions would require more work than others, but funding allotments to each region had already been decided. Despite having people to offer feedback from the field, “the program’s management ignored underlying issues of spatial difference and promoted a ‘one-size fits all’ approach with inflexible timetables and fixed budgetary allocations” (Walker, Roberts, Jones, & Fröhling, 2008: p. 534). Standardizations that were illogical at the level of the fieldwork were implemented in order to suit the needs of funders. Such standardizations, “while potentially useful for cross-contextual data gathering, continually frustrated the field workers who saw the need for different approaches in different settings” (Walker et al., 2008, p. 534). Fulfilling funders’ expectations ultimately took precedence over crafting a program that provided something of value at the village level.

Furthermore, those who may technically be counted as 'insiders' or 'locals' on the part of unfamiliar funding organizations could potentially be just as disconnected from the concerns of the target beneficiaries as anyone working for an INGO who comes from the global North. In the example of the NGO studied by Walker et al., only the Executive Director and the secretary of the NGO were from the state of Oaxaca, the Executive Director having ties with local politicians and family members amongst the elites, and while three of the ten staff members spoke fluent English, none of them spoke any of the sixteen indigenous languages of Oaxaca (2008, p. 532). Sixty percent of the beneficiaries of the programs they administered were intended to be indigenous (2008, p. 533). Educated in formal institutions and part of the Mexican middle class, the staff members of the local NGO are arguably more culturally similar to those running the funding institutions than they are to most villagers in remote parts of Oaxaca. The same holds

true in much of the Cambodian NGO sector. Educated, elite members of Cambodian society hold the positions of importance in local NGOs. In a country where jobs for university graduates are scarce, there is widespread speculation that salaries are what entice the 'local experts' to join the world of NGOs (Hughes, 2003, p. 153).

Academics have criticized the work of NGOs for failing to ask themselves for whom it is they are working. This involves putting forth weak, at best, efforts to create human-centered development and rarely looking critically at what the consequences are of their work and of their type of development. NGO workers have likewise accused academics of generating useless theory from the ivory tower. Jenny Pearce (2000) calls the split between the 'real world of NGOs' and 'the impractical theory of the academy' a false dichotomy. She writes, "The more explicit the theoretical assumptions that inform our understanding, the more responsible we are in our commitment to the people whose lives we claim to improve" (Pearce, 2000, p. 35).

The structure of aid and the pressure on NGOs to prove themselves in very specific ways exacerbates the divide between theoretically, well-informed approaches to development and what can be feasibly accomplished with restrictions on funding, the essential task of proving themselves fund-worthy, and the very real question of organizational survival. Goodhand and Chamberlain believe that one of the most important requirements to being considered 'fund-worthy' is to match agendas with the political goals of donors (2000, p. 91). Official donors use NGOs as a means to siphon money into projects that support their own political agendas.

Commins, in his research on the NGO World Vision and its relationship with donors, found that there is no simple cause and effect relationship between receiving

funding from an organization and not being able to criticize or contradict the policies of that organization. About his experience on the matter, he says the following, “What is very apparent through working with the staff of both bilateral and multilateral agencies is that these are not monolithic structures and that, while NGO criticisms will vex some within a particular agency, the same criticisms will be welcomed by others within the same agency” (1997, p. 153). Commins' analysis of his experiences would suggest that ethical, theoretically-informed work on the part of the NGOs is possible, even within the current structure of funding. Opinions, therefore, differ about how much, if any, reworking of the system and of people's attitudes it would take to begin to close the gap between theory and practice.

Many of the above debates and critiques demonstrate that the world of development and NGOs is imbued with contradiction. In some analyses, efforts put forth by NGOs in an attempt to help the poor lead to the creation of a system that hinders genuinely progressive change and upholds the power structures that are already in place. It can be argued that the very existence and sustenance of the nongovernmental sector can be attributed to the ideas behind the New Policy Agenda. The New Policy Agenda, based on neoliberal economic principles and liberal democratic political principles, validates the work done by NGOs through the belief that greater efficiency is achieved through the use of such non-state actors. Examples proliferate, however, that demonstrate how economic violence is justified through the language that characterizes the New Policy Agenda. Therefore, from an ethical and ideological standpoint, one of the roles of NGOs is to put into question the very underpinnings of the New Policy Agenda, which is the very justification for their presence.

Another of such contradictory aspects of the role of NGOs lies in the manner in which NGOs are evaluated by donors. Many donors have recently been convinced that local NGOs are better at reaching local people in many circumstances. However, donors still want to see facts and figures about success rates, proof of accountability, and other signs of professional capacity in order to be convinced enough to put their money into an organization. However, in the process of becoming an organization that Northern donors are willing to fund, most NGOs sacrifice their ability to truly understand concerns at the local level.

The authors, whose arguments I have used, vary in the degree to which they view the flaws of NGOs. For the most part, however, in these debates, there is a generally uncritical take on development itself. Mostly, the goal is to assess how and why the development objectives of NGOs get skewed while being put into practice. The answers to these 'hows' and 'whys' then lend themselves to different analyses as to whether or not NGOs are a desirable piece of the development apparatus. The next section will cite those who question the desirability of development itself.

CHAPTER 2: THE NEED TO DEVELOP AND THE NEED TO CONTROL: CRITICAL VIEWS ON DEVELOPMENT, THE COMMERCIAL SEX INDUSTRY, AND WHERE THE TWO SETS OF IDEAS INTERSECT

2.1 Development and Anti-Development Literatures

The manner in which development is spoken about in politics and in the media today, while perhaps questioning specific policies or objectives, tends to assume a general desirability of development. Furthermore, ideas about development are such a pervasive, unquestioned part of our language that it is quite easy to view development as a natural process and to assume development projects to be an inherently good, humane aspect of our society. Many scholars have, however, taken on the project of tracing out the historical roots of the idea of development in order to show that it is not a universally-valued objective and was, in fact, born out of very specific ways of viewing the world. Additionally, many have shown that development, a word that carries a generally positive connotation in Western societies, was and is used as an ideological tool to justify violent and oppressive acts of domination. My research aims to answer the question of what the projects being carried out by the selected NGOs say about how these NGOs see development.

According to Gustavo Esteva, on January 20, 1949, “two billion people became underdeveloped. In a real sense, from that time on, they ceased being what they were, in all their diversity, and were transmogrified into an inverted mirror of others' reality...” (1992, p. 7). Esteva is referring to the date on which President Truman delivered a speech that set America on the path of developing the 'underdeveloped'. Prior to the end of WWII, the term development primarily referred to the (colonial) exploitation of natural resources, in no way connected with the welfare of people (Arndt, 1981). In the

postwar years, modernization theory formed among scholars who sought to 'fix' the economic backwardness of the 'Third World' in the belief that a properly functioning economy (one that they would coerce and mold into acting as a proper economy *naturally* acts) would then bring prosperity to the countries of the 'Third World.' For the most part, modernization theorists concentrated on the wealth and well-being of countries as a whole, but there is an implicit assumption in much of this writing (see Lewis, 1954) that by increasing the wealth of nations, the general population would benefit. However, the manner in which the wealth would trickle down is never explicitly addressed. The focus in this writing and on development in general was now, no matter how skewed, on the welfare of the populations to be 'developed.'

Dependency theory, which arose as a direct critique of modernization theory, charges that the 'one size fits all' economic model will never succeed in bringing prosperity to nations in need of development. Proponents of dependency theory argued that the assimilation of developing countries into the world economy further exacerbated their dependence on and reinforced their subservience to the West. Andre Gunder Frank (1966) argues that the West's 'developed' state is both cause and consequence of the rest of the world's 'underdevelopment.' In this project, I plan to analyze how the conflicting views of modernization theorists and dependency theorists of the 50s and 60s take shape in projects being carried out today by these NGOs in Cambodia.

The late 70s and early 80s saw the arrival of what John Toye (1993) calls the 'counter-revolution' or the rise of what is commonly referred to today as neoliberal economics. The counter-revolutionaries attacked Keynesian economic practices (or dogmatic dirigisme in their terminology) and the idea that the economies of developing

countries should be run any differently than those of developing countries, which they said wrongly denies the universality of basic economic principles (Lal, 1985). Toye (1993), in *Dilemmas of Development*, traces out the way in which neoliberal economic theories made their way into Washington to become *the* set of ideas used to set policies concerning foreign aid. The neoliberal views of academics in the Chicago School of economics were in conflict with what was, at the time, the reigning paradigm in economic theory, Keynesian economics, with its core group of followers in prestigious east coast schools. Thanks to the support offered to the Chicago School from financial institutions who benefited from advancement of free-market policies, the success of media campaigning on the part of academics at the Chicago School, and the rise of a conservative, anti-establishment government, the counter-revolution's neoliberalism became the dominant approach in development policies (Toye, 1993). This project asks how prevalent are the views of the counter-revolution in shaping the thinking of the NGOs in Cambodia. What role do the ideas expressed by the proponents of neoliberalism play in the policies and projects of the NGOs in question?

Many have critiqued the resulting development projects that were to follow the rise of neoliberalism. Some of these critics do not question the economic principles upon which neoliberal economic theory is based, but rather they take issue with the manner in which these theories were translated into policy. Joseph Stiglitz (2003), former chief economist and senior vice president of the World Bank, believes in the eventual benefits of economic liberalization for countries who choose to adopt policies at the right times and under their own terms. Stiglitz asserts, however, that policies imposed on much of the world by the IMF, masquerading as development, have caused incredible damage, the

reason being that “the West has driven the globalization agenda, ensuring that it garners a disproportionate share of the benefits, at the expense of the developing world” (2003, p. 7). Of the NGOs that will be later discussed in detail, two take definitive stands against the policies implemented by international organizations in Cambodia. The work done by others, however, pushes forth, either directly or indirectly, a neoliberal agenda.

Anti-development criticisms, arising mainly in the early 1990s and coming primarily from non-Western scholars, question the desirability of development *at all*. Some anti-development scholars have chronicled the disastrous consequences that projects forged in the name of development have had on the environment and on public health, and some have criticized the insidious routes taken by development to discipline, to make 'developable', those whose traditions may stand in its way. For example, Arturo Escobar (1992), in his critique of planning projects of the 1970s and 80s aimed at developing the rural poor of the 'Third World,' details the manner in which the World Bank, through the language used to describe its policies, effectively recreated the societies in question to mold them into the type of places that the policies of the World Bank seek to 'assist':

All of these rhetorical devices that reflect the 'normal' perceptions of the planner contribute to obscure the fact that it is precisely the peasants' increasing integration into the modern economy that is at the root of many of their problems. Even more fundamentally, these statements, which become translated into reality through planning, reproduce the world as development knows it... (Escobar, 1992, p. 139).

In Escobar's account, the rhetoric used by the World Bank to describe the realities of the 'Third World' actually become reality, a self-fulfilling prophecy. I seek to understand whether these NGOs working in Cambodia question the assumptions behind the

development agenda or whether they work from the basis that development is inherently desirable.

The reality of development, despite its having been severely attacked, reconceptualized, redeemed, and declared dead all at various points over the past few decades, is that it lives on and thrives in the minds of those not negatively impacted by it and in the everyday lives of many, many more. In today's political arena, most oftentimes imagined at a national level, neoliberal economics and the market still are regarded as the potential saviors of the 'developing' world. Other development initiatives have taken on board the criticisms posed by those theorizing development and have reworked various strategies, reshaping the face of development, with the types of reform varying greatly in the degree to which they have fundamentally changed what was initially criticized. The next section outlines differing feminist theories on sex work. Immediately following that, I look at the intersection of development and feminist perspectives on the commercial sex industry.

2.2 Debates in Feminist Theory about Sex Work/ Prostitution

Prostitution reinforces all the old dumb clichés about women's sexuality; that they are not built to enjoy sex and are little more than walking masturbation aids, things to be DONE TO, things so sensually null and void that they have to be paid to indulge in fornication, that women can be had, bought, as often as not sold from one man to another. When the sex war is won prostitutes should be shot as collaborators for their terrible betrayal of all women.

– Julie Burchill (1987)

The prostitute is not, as feminists claim, the victim of men, but rather their conqueror, an outlaw, who controls the sexual channels between nature and culture.

– Camille Paglia (1994)

When prostitution is a crime, the message conveyed is that women who are sexual are “bad,” and therefore legitimate victims of sexual assault. Sex becomes a weapon to be used by men.

– Margo St. James (1979)

The only way to stop this trafficking in and profiting from the use of women's bodies is for prostitution to be legalized. Legalization will open it up to regulation; and regulation means safety.

– Jeannette Angell (2004)

Prostitution is criminal, and bad things happen because it's run illegally by dirt-bags who are criminals. If it's legal, then the girls could have health checks, unions, benefits, anything any other worker gets, and it would be far better.

– Jesse Ventura

Prostitution will always lead into a moral quagmire in democratic societies with capitalist economies; it invades the terrain of intimate sexual relations yet beckons for regulation. A society's response to prostitution goes to the core of how it chooses between the rights of some persons and the protection of others.

– Barbara Meil Hobson (1990)

Author and journalist Julie Burchill, in the name of feminism and in defense of women's sexuality, condemns prostitution and, moreover, prostitutes themselves (1987). Feminist author and social critic Camille Paglia, taking what she deems the counter-feminist perspective, renders prostitution the ultimate expression of female sexual power (1994). Sex-positive feminist founder of COYOTE, Margo St. James, in the name of feminism and in defense of women's sexuality, promotes decriminalized views of prostitution and prostitutes (1979). The quotations of feminist academic and sex worker Jeannette Angell (2004) and of politician Jesse Ventura both avoid questions concerning the desirability of prostitution, addressing policy issues that take the reality of sex work as a starting point. And finally, feminist historian Barbara Meil Hobson (1990) nicely sums up the previous grouping of stances in pointing out the inevitability of “a moral quagmire in democratic societies” concerning the issue.

Views on and representations of prostitution in mass media, pop culture, political and academic debate, etc. vary drastically, as do the circumstances and experiences of sex workers. Self-identifying feminists, all of whom presumably wish to advance the status

of women in society, have debated the desirability of sex work from many angles. As can be assessed from the selections of citations above, most of which come from the works of feminist authors, debates in feminist theory about sex work rage on, hosting a broad range of views.

Dr. Melissa Ditmore, research consultant for The Sex Workers Project (SWP), a New York-based sex worker advocacy organization that provides legal services to sex workers, attended deliberative meetings of the United Nations, as policy makers listened to lobbying efforts while drafting new UN protocol concerning trafficking in persons in 1999 and 2000. Two blocs were formed, comprised of non-governmental entities, to inform the decisions being made concerning UN views of sex work and the UN definition of trafficking. Both blocs, the Human Rights Caucus and the Human Rights Network, were primarily made up of self-identifying feminist organizations and individuals. Despite both blocs' feminist leanings, Ditmore describes the tensions created as a result of the groups' differing views concerning sex work as it relates to women's rights.

Their stances on what are often deemed women's issues, particularly those addressing female bodily autonomy, such as reproductive rights, abortion, family planning, and promoting the use of condoms against HIV, were generally similar. Yet, despite the potential common ground, the two groups were most often bitterly divided (2005, p. 113).

Ditmore's description of what she observed conveys a sense of frustration and incomprehension, as she undoubtedly views herself as a devoted feminist who works for an organization that seeks to alleviate sex workers' problems, a lot of which she sees as having been directly created by the work of other feminists. Why is it that the issue of prostitution has, for quite some time, been such a divisive matter, creating resentment and

animosity between those whose views and goals (and oftentimes life's work) are geared toward advancing the status of women in society?

Just as the theories of development discussed above all arose within a particular historical context, feminist views of sex work developed and changed with different waves of feminist thought. However, as with development perspectives, all of the standpoints discussed below currently still coexist in shaping feminist literature on the topic.

Feminist scholar, Allison Murray (1998) offers a taxonomy of feminist 'camps', divided around the issue of sex work. Though overly simplistic, Murray's groupings are useful to understand a general, historical progression of feminist thought on the issue. An abolitionist view deems sex work inherently oppressive in any and all of its forms. However other feminists began to recognize a need to distinguish between sex work that is voluntarily carried out and forced prostitution. Most recently, others have begun to argue that creating a false binary between free and forced sex work is counterproductive to empowerment efforts.

The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), founded in 1988, is perhaps the most influential, well-known abolitionist group. CATW has been a leading consultant to the United Nations in issues concerning sex trafficking and sex work. CATW defines sexual exploitation as anything ranging from sex work to rape, incest and other forms of violence against women. In specific regards to sex work, CATW's website states the following: "All prostitution exploits women, regardless of women's consent" (An Introduction to CATW, n.d.).

Sociologist and co-founder of CATW, Kathleen Barry has written two books that find their way into any abolitionist writings on prostitution, *Female Sexual Slavery* (1979) and *The Prostitution of Sexuality* (1996). Barry's views mirror those of the organization she founded. *Female Sexual Slavery* reads as an expose of the present-day trafficking in women for sexual exploitation. Barry sought to study "why and how female sexual slavery has remained invisible" (1979, p. 7). She took a more holistic approach to the cultural environment surrounding women's entrance into sex slavery, studying "attitudes that accept female enslavement," whereas she states that previous work focused on the psychology only of the women themselves- a method which led to prostitutes being labeled "deviants" and "somasochists" (1979, p. 7). Furthermore, Barry rejects purely economic analyses of the sex industry. An entire chapter of the book is dedicated to discussing the cultural effects of pornography and the effect it has on normalizing violence against women. This book has since been criticized as sensationalist and lacking in citing any form of agency on the part of women involved in prostitution.

Many feel that Barry wrote *Female Sexual Slavery* in response to Margo St. James, who founded COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics) in 1973, an organization that advocates for decriminalized prostitution. St. James and the prostitutes' rights movement, in response to abolitionist feminists' views that all prostitution is abusive, sought to open the discussion about sex work to allow for the recognition of it as a viable job option (Doezema, 1998, p. 17). In *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores* (Pheterson, 1989), an anthology including contributions from sex workers and sex worker rights supporters, St. James' preface focuses on the movement to decriminalize

prostitution in the United States and Europe. The compilation includes contributions from sex workers who are primarily from Western countries (the United States, England, the Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France, Canada, and Israel) though there are linkages to the non-Western world (one Brazilian and one Thai sex worker, researchers based in India and Indonesia, and Southeast Asian sex workers living in the Netherlands). The anthology's editor, Gail Pheterson, argues for people to listen *to* prostitutes, as opposed to those who have historically spoken for or about them (1989, p. 3-4). These women work to change views of the profession of sex work, debunking perceptions of the prostitute as a victim, forced into conditions that no one would willfully choose.

Those who fought to have forced prostitution differentiated from sex work as a chosen form of earning money did not intend for the recognition of this distinction to have negative consequences in the lives of sex workers. However unintended, some feminists argue that this is exactly what results when such a distinction is made. Jo Doezema (1989) argues that the forced/voluntary dichotomy takes on the notion of innocent/guilty; this is a result of the same stigmatized view of prostitution that the recognition of free prostitution did not effectively work to dissolve. It is through the interpretations of NGOs, governmental and intergovernmental organizations that this harm is being bestowed on those who are deemed guilty: the women who chose sex work. Rather than fighting for the rights of these women as sex workers, the recognition of the distinction between prostitution as a chosen occupation or as a forced situation has merely meant that organizations now concentrate their energies on the rights of 'the innocent': those who have been forced into such an oppressive lifestyle of prostitution.

Allison Murray (1998) also points out that this dichotomy creates divisiveness between sex workers around the world, reinforcing racial stereotypes about the self-asserting Western women, i.e. the Western prostitute who has chosen such a career path in her best economic interest, versus the “Third-World” victim of trafficking, i.e. she who has been tricked into selling her body for the pleasure and economic gain of others. Kempadoo notes the disempowering effects of such language. “Seen to be trapped in underdeveloped states, Third World prostitutes continue to be positioned in this discourse as incapable of making decisions about their own lives, forced by overwhelming external powers completely beyond their control into submission and slavery” (Kempadoo, 1998, p. 12).

The Cambodian NGOs evaluated in this study range from being vehemently opposed to the existence of the commercial sex industry to supporting the unionization of sex workers in Phnom Penh. Some take a milder stance on the issue, perhaps officially opposing prostitution while working closely with sex workers who remain in the field. This type of stance may possibly be determined with issues of program funding in mind. The following section looks at, among other things, how an organization’s stance on sex work can play a role in determining its access to development dollars.

2.3 The nexus of the feminist debate on sex work and views of development

The views espoused by the United Nations affect an enormous amount of programming run by the UN agencies and other organizations receiving UN funds. The UN’s views on prostitution/ sex work can be most clearly traced through the organization’s policies concerning human trafficking. Historically, UN policies on human trafficking have focused primarily on sex work, signifying the commonplace conflation of the two issues (Ditmore, 2005).

The idea of human trafficking, as we know it today, emerged during the late nineteenth/ early twentieth centuries, in reference to “the large-scale international relocations and massive displacements of people that followed the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century, and which accompanied the internationalization of waged labor embedded in the period of globalization of capitalism between 1850 and 1914” (Kempadoo, 2005, p. x). The nature of migrant communities was seen as the cause that made poor, working migrant women to act immorally:

Ideas about the mobility and trade of women’s labor and bodies that emerged around nineteenth-century indentureship and debt-bondage systems ignored the impacts of colonialism and demands of patriarchal, racialized capital, and attached prostitution and “loose” sexual relations to notions of degraded migrant women’s sexuality.... In the nineteenth-century narrative, women were often portrayed as coerced, deceived, lured, trapped, kidnapped, and forced into prostitution... (Kempadoo, 2005, p. x).

Following this thought, in the early twentieth century, the League of Nations held a number of international conventions concerning trafficking, which focused almost exclusively on issues of sexual morality. What resulted from the conventions was “a plethora of nationally defined law enforcement and policing efforts to eradicate prostitution” (Kempadoo, 2005, p. x).

The 1949 UN Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others demonstrates the continuous conceptual link made in international discourse of trafficking and prostitution. The document unambiguously condemned all forms of prostitution, stating that it and “the accompanying evil of the traffic in person for the purpose of prostitution are incompatible with the dignity and worth of the human person and endanger the welfare of the individual, the family, and the community...” (Convention for the Suppression, 1949).

Additionally, the 1949 Convention exhibited the same paternalistic assumptions about women who enter into prostitution, ignoring the possibility of agency on the part of the sex workers.

The parties to the present Convention agree to punish any person who, to gratify the passion of another (1) procures, entices or leads away, for purpose of prostitution, another person, *even with the consent of that person*; (2) exploits the prostitution of another person, *even with the consent of that person* (Convention for the Suppression, 1949, emphasis added).

In 1996, forty-seven years following the 1949 Convention, the UN's "Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Radhika Coomaraswamy, commissioned a worldwide research project on trafficking... to reestablish the parameters of the problem" (Kempadoo, 2005, p. *xii*). In the resulting report, Coomaraswamy recommended that the international community begin to view prostitution as a legitimate form of work and to no longer conflate trafficking in women with prostitution (Kempadoo, 2005, p. *xii*).

The bitter divide between feminist groups lobbying the United Nations, as described through the accounts of Melissa Ditmore (2005) in the previous section, transpired during the drafting of the 2000 UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which replaced the 1949 United Nations Convention for the Suppression of the Trafficking in Persons and the Exploitation of Prostitution of Others. The 2000 UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children came to state the following:

(a) "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation

of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used (Protocol to Prevent, 2000).

The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) lobbied heavily during the formation of this UN Protocol as part of the Human Rights Network. On the CATW website, the organization explains their victory in achieving some of the wording desired by the prostitution abolitionist bloc:

The definition of trafficking, in the new UN... Protocol... was launched and advocated by the Coalition. CATW organized the International Human Rights Network (IHRN), a coalition of more than 140 NGOs, to successfully advocate for a definition of trafficking that protects all victims, not just those who can prove that they were forced. Many of the measures to prevent trafficking, protect victims, and punish perpetrators were also initiated by CATW (An Introduction to CATW, n.d.).

Ditmore, a member of the sex worker rights bloc, the Human Rights Caucus, expresses her frustration with the process and her disappointment in the two feminist groups' inability to work together, thus resulting in no human rights protections for trafficked persons being written into the protocol:

When one Caucus representative asked a Network representative why her group made no efforts to promote human rights protections in the protocol, she was told that the Network chose to focus their limited resources on the definition of trafficking alone. This response suggested that the Human Rights Network prioritized anti-prostitution activism over and above human rights. This... prevented NGOs from presenting a united front, which in all likelihood prevented the inclusion of mandatory human rights protections in the protocol (Ditmore, 2005, p. 112).

What resulted in the new protocol was a shift in focus away from the international sex trade and toward grouping trafficking in persons with other forms of cross-border smuggling (Kempadoo, 2005, p. *xiii*). Kempadoo goes on to say that, "by prioritizing crime, punishment, and immigration control, the global government approach departs

from perspectives that have been generated from concerns with social justice and human rights” (2005, p. *xiv*).

Examples of the negative ramifications of this new focus on the criminalization of all forms of trafficking have manifested themselves throughout different parts of the world. Anti-trafficking programs have emerged that serve the real purpose of funding immigration control for richer, destination countries. Senior UN policy advisor Phil Marshall and Susu Thatun, Deputy Regional Program Manager to the UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking, explain how migration is becoming increasingly dangerous due to programs being carried out under the anti-trafficking banner, citing an example from the Thai/ Burma border. A “‘closure’ of Thailand’s border with Myanmar... did not stop people from crossing the border but it became more dangerous and potential migrants were forced into using more organized criminal groups” (Marshall and Thatun, 2005, p. 51).

Additionally, Kempadoo expresses concern “that the framework adopted by the UN supports the neoliberal economic interests of corporations, multilateral agencies, policy experts, and national governments, rather than those of the world’s working and poor people” (2005, p. *xiv*). Large transnational corporations have access, uninhibited by national borders, to raw materials and laborers. Furthermore, professional, highly skilled workers are free to move around as they please, afforded the legal means to do so. It is the poor, unskilled workers who are targeted by efforts to restrict people’s movement across borders.

The United States and its official funding sources are a large player in the realm of international aid distribution. Policies set by the U.S. have enormous effects on how a lot of the money flowing to other parts of the world in the form of aid can be used. In

2003, The United States Congress passed two separate acts, the United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act (Global AIDS Act) and the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA), an amendment to the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, that restricted the funding of any programs or organizations that do not explicitly oppose prostitution. President Bush again extended the TVPRA in December of 2008. This has become known as the Anti-Prostitution Pledge or the Anti-Prostitution Loyalty Oath. The Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act states the following:

No funds... may be used to promote, support, or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution.... No funds... may be used to implement any program that targets victims of severe forms of trafficking in persons... through any organization that has not stated in either a grant application, a grant agreement, or both, that it does not promote, support, or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution (Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, 2003).

The Center for Health and Gender Equality (2005), in a policy brief titled, “Implications of U.S. Policy Restrictions for Programs Aimed at Commercial Sex Workers and Victims of Trafficking Worldwide,” outlines the numerous adverse effects such a law has on those who work closely with sex workers. This group raises concern with the negative ramifications such laws have on efforts to address public health issues related to the commercial sex industry, primarily regarding HIV/AIDS. Additionally, these laws, when put into practice, produce detrimental effects to the work of those seeking to eliminate human trafficking, as noted by the policy brief (2005, p. 2).

Women and men in prostitution... are among the most marginalized persons in any society. The organizations with the most effective anti-AIDS and anti-trafficking strategies build their efforts on a sophisticated understanding of the social and personal dynamics faced by marginalized populations... (Center for Health and Gender Equality, 2005, p. 2).

To force an organization that works with sex workers to “explicitly oppose” sex work, at risk of losing program funding, is akin to forcing the organization to express disapproval of its clients’ lives and decisions, thus damaging carefully-forged trust.

The policy brief goes on to site numerous examples of programming that ceased due to organizations’ fear of losing USAID funds. One example from Cambodia is the cancellation of English language training classes for sex workers. The USAID-funded NGOs running these classes did not want these classes to be interpreted as a way of supporting prostitution. The brief goes on to note that this oftentimes places sex workers seeking to leave the industry in a difficult situation. In Phnom Penh “the rapid growth of job opportunities in government, non-governmental organizations, and in the tourist industry makes English language skills a valuable commodity and a means of accessing opportunities outside the sex sector” (Center for Health and Gender Equality, 2005, p. 3).

A U.S.-based family planning organization filed a lawsuit against USAID, calling the anti-prostitution policy “an unconstitutional infringement of speech that is undermining international efforts to stem the spread of HIV” (Fischer, 2005). In a news article about the lawsuit, the president of the organization that filed the lawsuit, DKT International, said that organizations worldwide hated the mandatory anti-prostitution pledge. In contrast to the law’s patronizing views, he went on to say, “We deal with sex workers as equals... We accept what they do as a reality... and we do our best to empower them.... To do this work under an ‘anti-prostitution’ policy would be dysfunctional” (Fischer, 2005). The Womyn’s Agenda for Change and the Women’s Network for Unity, Phnom Penh based groups discussed below that support sex workers rights, display posters in their offices that express their outright disdain for USAID.

Other groups discussed receive funding from USAID or from the US Department of State to carry out projects that coincide with what these organizations seek to do in the name of anti-trafficking.

Following the aforementioned lawsuit, a judge found in 2006 that the anti-prostitution pledge does, in fact, infringe on First Amendment rights of US-based organizations. A timeline by Carol Leigh from the website of SWAN, Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, details the hotly contested nature of the injunction following the 2006 ruling. The decision was reversed under appeal in 2007. In a 2008 appeal, the enforcement of the pledge as a requirement of funding was once again deemed unconstitutional. Just prior to leaving office, the Bush administration filed a further appeal to the injunction. In July 2009, with the Obama administration in place, the Department of Justice dropped the appeal (Leigh, 2009). The results of this ruling, however, will only legally apply to US-based organizations protected by the US Constitution.

In terms of funding internationally based organizations, the Obama administration recently loosened Bush-era restrictions that required organizations to outwardly express their opposition to prostitution. While US government aid funds still may not go toward any programs that support prostitution, funds may be received for other projects by entities that support sex work in other aspects of their work (Daly, 2010). While recent changes can be viewed as a step in the right direction by sex worker rights advocates, aspects of the policy still assume a general undesirability of the commercial sex industry. Just as Don't Ask Don't Tell seemed to be a positive move under the Clinton administration, allowing homosexuals to serve in the military without being interrogated

in matters regarding their sexuality, it still implies that homosexuality is something that needs to be hidden. Such is the case with the new funding rules. Organizations that support sex workers can receive funds for certain projects, so long as the project does not support prostitution. This implies that there is something inherently wrong with sex work, and it is yet to be seen exactly how this will unfold and what will fall within and outside of what is permitted.

Additionally, this issue could potentially become another policy that changes along party lines with every shift in the White House. The Mexico City Policy, nicknamed the Global Gag Rule, which outlaws funding to organizations that perform or promote abortions, was adopted under the Reagan administration and has been revoked or reinstated with each US presidential party change. Searches of articles from the past twelve months show that there has been no coverage of the sex work policy changes by the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. Conservative, religious news outlets and groups opposed to the changes have been quick to express their disapproval, very deliberately conflating sex work and sex trafficking. An article in the *National Catholic Register* with the telling title, “Obama Administration Eases Ban on Funds for Sex Trafficking Groups,” the author asserts that there are growing trends toward treating sex trafficking and prostitution as one in the same. “The rule change comes as more advocates of controlling both sex trafficking and prostitution view the two activities as both inherently linked and requiring a new approach to resolve” (Daly, 2010). If freeing up funds for sex worker rights groups becomes another intermittently-supported policy, Cambodian NGOs, like those across the globe, will be forced to choose between shifting

strategy or losing funding every four to eight years, depending on who is voted into office by people on the other side of the world.

Whatever US policy makers decide has enormous impact throughout the world. In the following Cambodian examples, US influence manifests itself dually through government-to-government pressure and through NGO funding mechanisms. A report by human rights NGO ADHOC explains the details of a brothel raid conducted by government official and USAID-funded AFESIP, one of the organizations discussed later in detail:

Of all the measures taken by the authorities against human trafficking, the case that drew the most attention was the massive crackdown on Hotel Chhay Huor II. After finding out during an investigation that Hotel Chhay Huor II was a brothel, the non-governmental organization AFESIP coordinated an operation against the hotel together with authorities working against human trafficking. The coordinated operation failed to detain or bring any suspects to trial. After all the unsuccessful efforts against human trafficking, the United States downgraded Cambodia to the lowest rank of the USA worldwide watchdog list... (ADHOC Human Rights Situation Report, 2005, p. 28-29).

Following a government crackdown on brothels, ADHOC, itself a sex work abolitionist group, questions whether the Cambodian government acted solely to gain US approval. “It can...be questioned whether these actions will continue or if they simply were undertaken to please the United States, who downgraded Cambodia to tier 3 on 21 September 2005, so that Cambodia now can move up to tier 2” (ADHOC Human Rights Situation Report, 2005, p. 28). This citation refers to a three-tier system used by the United States’ State Department to rank countries in terms of their efforts to combat human trafficking. The effectiveness and effects of brothel raids will be discussed later. However, here it is important to take away the fact that US policies regarding sex work are having enormous effects on what happens in Cambodia. Similarly, USAID has a

recently developed framework for determining countries' deservedness in receiving development assistance, a major factor of which is a country's willingness to adopt neoliberal reforms (Essex, 2008).

Similarities abound between those who argue against an uncritically assumed desirability of development and those who work to combat assumptions about the nature of women involved in the commercial sex industry. A development project that promotes an extremely broad set of ideas, based on the assumption that certain parts of the world and certain people need to change they ways they think and act to fall more in line with global economic ideals, works to impose the label of the 'un(der)developed' on much of the world's people. By nature of where and how one lives and by how much or how little one is embedded in global markets, s/he can be unknowingly slapped with this label. Once labeled, s/he is then ready to be a beneficiary or recipient of development aid. A sex worker, labeled "oppressed" by nature of what s/he does by anti-prostitution discourses, is unknowingly stripped of agency. In these examples, "underdeveloped" and "oppressed" are disempowering labels almost always applied from the outside by more powerful entities with the ability to determine what is and what is not.

However powerful these notions, they exist in a continually contested arena of what it means to be un(der)developed and what it means to be oppressed. The final section of this chapter looked at the ways in which these powerful ideas have been embedded into the policies of national and international organizations. This demonstrates the need for the continued contestation of assumptions that are shaping policies that have very real effects on the lives of many. With this in mind, informed by the arguments put forth in this chapter, the next chapter analyses the work of seven Phnom Penh-based

NGOs that are linked in different ways to networks of development institutions and whose work affects women in the commercial sex industry.

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CHAPTER 3: THE EFFECTS OF DISCURSIVE CHOICES AND ASSUMPTIONS IN THE WORK OF SEVEN PHNOM PENH-BASED NGOS

During the summer of 2006, I visited Phnom Penh and met with representatives from several different nongovernmental organizations, which I had located online. These meetings gave me further insight into the organizations and the overall picture of the non-governmental sector of Cambodia. I was then able to identify the NGOs that I would include in my study. Additionally, I traveled to Robib, a small cluster of villages in Preah Vihear province in the northwest of Cambodia. This is a focus area for various projects carried out by American Assistance for Cambodia (AAfC). I stayed overnight in the guesthouse of a village resident and personal friend of Bernard Krisher, AAfC's founder, and toured different AAfC initiatives.

Upon my return to the United States, I began to research more thoroughly the identified organizations using web-based sources, compiling as much information as possible about each of them. The majority of the organizations/ programs included have their own websites, which provided varying degrees of information to answer the questions asked in this paper. I developed interview questions specific to each organization, tweaking them in order to have the respondents elaborate on the information posted on the Internet and to fill in gaps left by web-based sources.

I returned to Phnom Penh in May 2007 to visit organizations' sites, conduct interviews, and gather non web-based materials. I visited the offices of and met with representatives from the Womyn's Agenda for Change, the Women's Network for Unity, Pact Cambodia's WORTH Program, Gender and Development for Cambodia, and the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center. I visited the office of AFESIP, spoke informally with some employees, gathered materials, but I did not conduct a formal interview. I did

not speak with a representative from American Assistance for Cambodia's Girls be Ambitious project. All of my findings for this organization come from web-based materials and observations from the previous year's trip to Preah Vihear province.

This chapter includes a description of the work of each organization, the goals of the organization, and an analysis of how they relate to women in the commercial sex industry. I then seek to analyze each organization's views on development and sex work using the following primary and secondary sources: web-based documents generated by the organizations; materials gathered on site including annual reports, brochures, and posters; newspaper articles; personal interviews with representatives from the organizations; and, in the case of AFESIP, academic articles written about the organization. Embedded in the discussion of each organization and through further analysis in the fourth and final chapter, I seek to answer this project's four research questions:

- What are the self-stated aims of NGOs in Cambodia that either directly or indirectly deal with the commercial sex industry in the country?
- What assumptions about development are embedded in the various programs being carried out by these NGOs?
- What assumptions about the nature of sex work are embedded in the various programs being carried out by NGOs working in Cambodia?
- What effect does the work of these organizations have on the lived realities of sex workers in Cambodia?

Table 3.1 offers a brief summary of each organization studied:

Table 3.1: Summary of Organizations Studied

Organization Name	Overview of Mission	Development Perspectives	Views of the Commercial Sex Industry
The Womyn's Agenda for Change (WAC)	To empower Cambodian women workers	The WAC is staunchly opposed to neo-liberal development policies.	The WAC supports sex worker empowerment and helped launch the WNU.
The Women's Network for Unity (WNU)	To unionize and empower Cambodian sex workers	The WNU is closely tied to the WAC. WNU reps expressed disdain for U.S.-led initiatives in their country.	The WNU supports sex worker rights and empowerment.
Pact Cambodia's WORTH Program	To eliminate risk factors associated with trafficking and prostitution through economic security	Pact carries out neo-liberal development practices, such as micro-lending and micro-enterprise creation.	Pact seeks to eliminate the sex industry through the creation of economic alternatives for women in rural areas.
AFESIP/Acting for Women in Distressing Situations	To remove/rescue and rehabilitate sex workers	Neo-liberal assumptions are embedded in rehabilitation programming.	AFESIP is staunchly opposed to the commercial sex industry.
Gender and Development for Cambodia (GAD/C)	To ensure that a 'gendered' perspective of development is applied to projects	Very little information is available that sheds light on the GAD/C's development perspectives.	GAD/C's literature conflates sex work with domestic violence and rape.
The Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC)	To empower women and offer support during times of crisis	The CWCC's limited development objectives are founded in neo-liberalism.	The CWCC seeks to eliminate the sex industry through creation of economic alternatives.
American Assistance for Cambodia (AAfC) Girls Be Ambitious Program	To reduce the drop-out rate for girls in order to keep them from entering the commercial sex industry	AAfC carries out projects founded in neo-liberal ideals. Statements by and about AAfC's founder are imbued with neo-colonial undertones.	AAfC is opposed to the commercial sex industry.

3.1 The Womyn's Agenda for Change (WAC)

A stationary boat on the Tonle Sap River, set in the water just off of Phnom Penh's Sisowath Quay, houses the offices of the Womyn's Agenda for Change (WAC) and the WAC's close partner, the Women's Network for Unity (WNU). Upon entering the WAC's floating office building, one is greeted with the sight of posters, drawings, and t-shirts, all adorning the walls and on display, expressing the organization's views on global issues of development, free trade, and the United States government.

Two anti-World Trade Organization posters feature different parts of women's bodies, both reading, "Our bodies. Our lives. Our future." One poster goes on to read, "Say no to the WTO!" The other says, "Our world cannot be traded." A t-shirt, hanging amongst other items for sale, shows a picture of George W. Bush surrounded by missiles. The caption on the shirt reads, "End the occupation in Iraq." A poster on the wall in another section of the office advises, "When Bush comes to shove- RESIST!" The following images depict a few examples of the anti-neoliberal posters that covered the walls of the WAC's office space.



Figure 3.1: "Say No to the WTO"



Figure 3.2: "Our World Can Not Be Traded"



Figure 3.3: Anti-USAID Poster

Upon entering the WAC's homepage (www.womynsagenda.org), one is greeted by a slide show, depicting the debt problems faced by many poor, Cambodian women. The show explains, "I borrow money to buy: a pig, rice seed, pesticides, fertilizer, water, a cow, to eat, health and medicine. To pay back my loans I sold: my land, my food, my labour, my house, my cows, my pigs, rice seed. But I still have a debt!" ("Welcome", n.d.).

The immediate images welcoming a visitor to both the WAC's office and to the WAC's homepage signify many of the organization's views on development. The WAC website attacks outright neoliberalism and its effects on poor people in Cambodia. "Fifteen years of neoliberal policies in Cambodia have failed to yield the promised improvements in the livelihoods for the poor" ("About the Programs", n.d., para. 2).

In terms of the organization's views on sex work, the WAC does not take a predetermined ideological stance. The website states the goals of the WAC's work as follows:

The WAC program's core objective is to provide a grassroots Speak-Out process through which women can explore and analyse their feelings and insights, articulate their own aspirations as women, and feel able to initiate collective mutual support action.... The program envisages women speaking with their own voice in conferences and gatherings at all levels, rather than being solely represented by middle-class NGO workers ("Sex Worker Empowerment Program", n.d., para. 1).

The WAC has an additional focus working with garment workers. Sex workers and garment workers are both viewed in the same manner by the WAC. The primary focus of the organization is to empower women to collectively organize so that they, as workers, can earn a living in a fair and dignified manner. On the top left corner of the WAC webpage there is a small image of a circle divided into three different sections. In one of the three sections a stick figure lies in bed, in the second section a family stands in front of a house, and in the third stick figures sit at sewing machines. Below the image, written in Khmer and English, the caption reads, "8 hours a day" ("Welcome", n.d.). This image depicts the WAC's belief that women should be able to work in an environment free of exploitation, earn a living, and also have a life outside of work.

Though the organization does not distinguish, on a moral level, between sex work and garment work, the WAC representatives did note, however, that sex work is usually a

preferable alternative to garment work in factories, the latter of which does not offer flexibility and requires long hours of difficult labor. Single mothers find it especially difficult to adhere to demands of work in a garment factory. Sex workers also usually earn a higher wage than garment workers (Cy Pisey, personal communication, May 19, 2007).

At the same time as the WAC does not take an ideological stance toward sex work, allowing sex workers themselves to establish their own goals and make their own choices, they publish materials that could easily be criticized, as like materials have, by those feminists in the third ‘camp’ who contend that it is harmful to focus on stories of the ‘victimization’ of ‘innocent’ women. For example, in the WAC-produced report titled *Women’s Voices: Frustration, Anger and Despair* (2004), the accounts of different women’s experiences oftentimes reinforce commonly held perceptions about deceitful trafficking and debt-bondage:

One day I decided to run away. A villager invited me to go with her to Veal Reang district in Kampot province. She said I could work as a cook for a group of loggers... The woman from the village brought [me] to an area which [I] would find out later was a brothel area (*Women’s Voices*, 2005, p. 58).

Though most of the stories in this report detailing the lives of sex workers do, in fact, involve either deceit or a lack of alternatives that in one way or another forces the woman into sex work, the WAC report does not distinguish the plights of sex workers from that of other female workers in Cambodia:

Their stories echo the same needs, lack of options, discrimination, and exclusion as we have seen in the stories of other woman workers. However, in the case of sex workers, violence dominates their experience, and extreme discrimination and stigmatization increase the weight they carry (*Women’s Voices*, 2004, p. 57).

The WAC does not distinguish between forced and free prostitution or between sex workers and garment workers, the group merely gives sex workers a venue through

which to have the particularities of their stories heard. Representatives of the WAC reiterated the reality that poor Cambodian women lack employment options. “If the government does not want women to sell sex, then they give them something else to do” (Cy Pisey, personal communication, May 19, 2007). Cy Pisey noted that various NGOs teach sex workers skills in the hopes that they will use their new skills and quit sex work. A lot of the time, women are not able to find jobs with the new skills and re-enter the sex work industry (personal communication, May 19, 2007).

The views of the WAC are theoretically open for judgment from all sides of the ideological arguments about sex work. The strictest of abolitionists see arguments that seek to diminish the stigmatization of prostitution as harmful. This can lead to the normalization of something that is believed to be inherently oppressive and a human rights violation in and of itself. The most radical of sex worker rights advocates, on the other hand, would take issue with the WAC’s emphasis on the lack of options, once again painting the picture of victims without agency. The WAC could fall subject to the following critique expressed by Kamala Kempadoo (1998, p. 12): “Seen to be trapped in underdeveloped states, Third World prostitutes continue to be positioned in this discourse as incapable of making decisions about their own lives, forced by overwhelming external powers completely beyond their control into submission and slavery.”

3.2 The Women's Network for Unity (WNU)

The Women's Network for Unity espouses many of the same views on neoliberal development policies as those of the WAC, as the two organizations share the same office space decorated with the aforementioned materials. The WNU, however, focuses much more energy dealing directly with issues pertaining to the everyday lives of local

sex workers. In 2000, the Network was formed as a place for sex workers to come together to speak about issues involved with the industry, voicing their concerns on a range of topics. Local NGOs would then advocate for better laws to protect sex workers, representing them at meetings with governmental officials. In 2002, members of the Network decided that this structure was not meeting their needs, and at that point they began to represent themselves. The Network is still closely aligned with the WAC, but they have been separate entities, with different agendas, from the time of the sex workers' decision to self-advocate (“The Women’s Network for Unity”, n.d.).

The history of the WNU epitomizes sex worker empowerment through organization and self-representation. However, quotes from members found in press releases posted on the WNU website and comments made by the elected secretaries show that the collective's members have a more personal, realistic stance toward the realities of sex work in Cambodia than those writing academic articles about sex worker empowerment. Most women express the desire for alternatives, but recognize and act within the existing circumstances. Two examples follow: "I don't want to be a sex worker but if you close the brothels and karaoke bars can you give me some capital to start a business? If I had this, I would stop sex work" (“Women’s Network for Unity, n.d., para. 12). “[I]f you think my work is not good for Cambodian society, then the government should find land for us to build a house and make a living" (“Women’s Network for Unity”, n.d., para. 11).

The words spoken by these WNU members neither glorify nor vilify the work they do. Their words, most of the time unexceptionally stated, represent the choices they have made based in the reality of limited options for poor women who need to support themselves and oftentimes other members of their families. More likely than not, similar

words could be spoken by a garment worker who chose the line of work for lack of options. The garment worker, in exchange for the absence of social stigma, experiences poorer wages and longer hours.

The following story about an HIV drug trial, as recounted by Ms. Keo Tha and Ms. Pichsok Chea, two of the seven secretaries of the WNU, sheds some light on the organization's mistrust of powerful countries involved in the lives of Phnom Penh sex workers. Many of the comments made by those telling this story indirectly give some insight into the WNU's development views.

Researchers from the United States wanted 960 sex workers to take part in testing a new HIV drug. In determining the way the tests would happen and the type of compensation and benefits given to the participants, the researchers only dealt with NGOs who deal with sex workers. Never did they speak directly with sex workers during the entire planning process. Ms. Keo and Ms. Pichsok believed that the name of the NGO who worked most closely with the drug company was NCHA. Although unsure of the exact name of the organization, they were sure to mention that the organization's funding came primarily from USAID (personal communication, May 21, 2007).

Once the WNU became aware that their members had been contacted to take part in the drug trials, they wanted to get involved in the negotiation process. However, when the WNU's secretaries attended a meeting between the NGOs and the drug company's researchers, only English was used during the entire meeting. The only information that was translated for the WNU representatives was that the sex workers would receive \$3/month for their participation and that they were seeking 960 women to take part in the study (personal communication, May 21, 2007).

The WNU representatives asked the drug company representatives if the participants would be provided with health insurance after the completion of the study, and they were told that they would not. Ms. Keo and Ms. Pichsok made it clear that this remained a sticking point for the sex workers. The WNU representatives asked why the company was not performing its drug trials on sex workers in the United States. Ms. Keo noted, during the interview, that the drug had only previously been tested on monkeys, and she felt that Cambodian sex workers were no more than monkeys in the eyes of the drug company. The drug company representatives explained that they wished to conduct the trials in Cambodia to help the sex workers there (Keo Tha, personal communication, May 21, 2007).

After leaving the meeting, WNU representatives called all of their members to tell them that there will be no insurance for participants after the end of the drug trials. The WNU members decided that they would demand long-term health insurance in order to take part in the trials. At this point, the company started taking different measures to try to persuade the WNU to change its stance. They began inviting WNU representatives to all of their meetings, and they started to offer free transportation to and from these meetings. Many NGOs began to position themselves against the WNU, trying to persuade sex workers to take part in the trials (Keo Tha and Pichsok Chea, personal communication, May 21, 2007).

The researchers held a press conference to answer questions about the benefits of the drug to be tested, and at one point a researcher told WNU representatives that the drug had been tested in Thailand and Hong Kong. The WNU, linked into the Asia Pacific Network of sex workers organizations, found this to be a lie, saying that no such tests had been carried out in either of those two places (personal communication, May 21, 2007).

The NGOs continued to try to get sex workers to join, and the company's age range for eligible participants was changed from 18-25 to 18-30 years old. Still no one joined the trials. The popularity of the WNU amongst Phnom Penh sex workers rose during this period. Ms. Keo and Ms. Pichsok explained that the WNU would hold press conferences of their own during this time period, and certain NGOs would hold competing meetings, offering incentives for sex workers to attend their meetings as opposed to the WNU press conferences. Such incentives included transportation, free food, and cash compensation. When asked why the NGOs did this, Ms. Keo answered that it is, "because they get funds from the US" (personal communication, May 21, 2007).

The WNU representatives expressed much mistrust in many of the Phnom Penh NGOs. They explained that sex workers working with certain NGOs are not permitted to work with any other organizations, but the members of the WNU are free to work with whomever they choose. They can go to any NGO for services and remain a part of the WNU.

The drug trials eventually failed, never taking place in Cambodia. Following the whole ordeal, the WNU was stronger than ever, with many sex workers understanding the importance of an organization comprised of sex workers for sex workers (Keo Tha and Pichsok Chea, personal communication, May 21, 2007).

An account of the incident from the *Washington Post* stated that the researchers running the trial, funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, believed the highly organized opposition to be organized by foreign activists. The article goes on to state that, "in trying to get a better deal for those women, [the activists and protesters] have managed to slow what most scientists consider

the best hope to stop AIDS in the underdeveloped world” (Cha, 2006). An article on an AIDS/HIV resource website also states the unfortunate nature of the trial’s cancellation, citing tenofovir’s (the generic name of the drug) potential to save countless lives. The article, however, portrays the WNU and other organizations involved in protesting the trial in a positive light, arguing that the protesters’ sticking point, thirty years of health care for any drug-related side effects, does not seem unreasonable in a country where many people do not have access to adequate health care (James, 2004). Other media accounts had incorrectly reported that the sex workers were demanding thirty years of general health care, a large incentive for participation that would put the trial’s ethics into question. The article ends by saying, “Hopefully these issues can be resolved satisfactorily. Many people may live or die depending on whether the tenofovir HIV prevention trials are completed” (James, 2004).

All accounts of the incident, whether viewing the trial cancellation as a tragic misunderstanding or a victory for unionized sex workers, cite the intense distrust on the part of the sex workers in the United States-based company and the United States in general. The Washington Post article notes that during a protest, Phnom Penh-based prostitutes shouted, “The U.S. says it wants to help poor people, but it is killing the poor people” (Cha, 2006). During the interview, the WNU representatives stated again and again that they want nothing to do with anything funded by USAID (Keo Tha and Pichsok Chea, personal communication, May 21, 2007).

The goals of the WNU sex worker collective are clear: "to promote the rights of Sex Workers to earn a living in a safe environment, free from exploitation and social stigma" (“The Women’s Network for Unity”, n.d.). The WNU works in many different capacities,

offering various support services, to uphold its goal of bettering the lives of Phnom Penh sex workers. In the realm of safety, sex workers educate other sex workers about the risk of HIV/AIDS and the more experienced train the less experienced in client negotiation skills. Elected representatives from the group advocate for better laws to protect the rights and safety of all sex workers in Cambodia. The children of sex workers are provided informal education in Khmer and English among other subjects. These children, many of whom would not have otherwise had the opportunity to attend school, are then able to later attend a formal school (Keo Tha and Pichsok Chea, personal communication, May 21, 2007).

3.3 Pact Cambodia's WORTH Program

Pact Cambodia established a very different type of empowerment program from that of the WAC. Pact's WORTH Program, funded by the United States Department of State, takes an abolitionist stance toward sex work, stating that the industry is a result of social disenfranchisement of women in Cambodian society. The WORTH Program, therefore, "seeks to eliminate many of the risk factors associated with human trafficking and prostitution by empowering women socially and economically and providing them with a positive, constructive alternative to the sex trade" ("WORTH Program", n.d.). The program is modeled after a USAID-funded program in Nepal that "helped 125,000 women attain basic literacy, increase their net annual income from \$1.2 million to over \$10 million, and augment their savings by over \$1 million." ("WORTH Program", n.d.).

The objectives of the WORTH Program, as laid out on the website, are:

1. To improve the literacy and numeracy skills of more than 2,000 women, allowing them to increase their social and economic status.
2. To increase the income of more than 2,000 women through the establishment of microenterprise.

3. To empower program participants to initiate advocacy actions in their communities regarding trafficking and other issues of priority as identified by the community of women (“WORTH Program”, n.d.).

Pact Cambodia does not make a distinction between trafficking and prostitution and sees them both as equally harmful, thus adopting the same stance as the CATW in the abolitionist category. Whereas the WAC sees stigmatization and discrimination as the main factors that cause harm in the lives of sex workers, Pact Cambodia views the job itself as that which is harmful. This view of Pact, it could be argued, leads to further stigmatization of sex work and sex workers, both informally and now formally. Pact and the CATW, however, would argue that these women, when given alternatives, would not opt for a life in the sex trade. Thus they work to offer economic alternatives to women who are at risk of becoming involved in sex work.

From the perspective of a sex worker advocate, Pact’s work is open to both an internal and external critique. The WORTH program came to exist as a result of a report where Cambodian sex workers were the informants. Pact conducted a study about the origins of sex workers, indentifying the provinces where women are highly vulnerability to entering the commercial sex industry (Arensen, Schantz, Thavy, Tha, & Dina, 2004). This research was carried out with the goal of determining locations to implement the WORTH program. The information given by the sex workers was then utilized in order to help potential victims of trafficking. There was never any intention on the part of Pact to introduce this program amongst current sex workers. If the organization were to remain true to its own philosophy that all sex workers are victims of the trade, Pact should work to implement the WORTH Program with current sex workers as well as with those who have been determined to be at high risk of trafficking. The program

deliberately, however, focuses solely on those who are not in any way currently involved with the commercial sex industry. As noted above, Pact is funded by the USDOS. The total avoidance of working with sex workers could be linked to funding restrictions.

Furthermore, Pact adopts the common abolitionist view that all sex work is forced upon women in one manner or another, using the type of language that, when perpetuated, harms women currently in the industry. In speaking with me, Hor Sakphea, the WORTH Program Officer, used terms that demonstrated her poor view of sex workers. For example, she said that Pact tries to help women so that they do not “fall down into prostitution” (Hor Sakphea, personal communication, May 21, 2007). However, interestingly enough, she did acknowledge her belief that there is some income threshold that could entice some women into the industry. However, the money is not to be made in Cambodia. “Women in Thailand will enter sex work because they can make a lot of money. This is not the same as in Cambodia” (Hor Sakphea, personal communication, May 21, 2007). This, therefore, reinstates the abolitionist idea that, at least in Cambodia, women do not choose sex work.

From a development perspective, The WORTH Program’s methods of helping women establish microenterprises is neoliberal in nature. Katherine N. Rankin conducted ethnographic research looking at similar programs that promoted small business creation through microcredit lending aimed at women in rural Nepal. Rankin asserts that such initiatives work to create neoliberalized female subjects, what she calls the “rational economic woman” (2001). Shifting development from being state-led to market-led then shifts the women’s role from “beneficiaries with social rights to clients with responsibilities to themselves and their families” (Rankin, 2001, p. 20). Ground-level

normalization of neoliberal ideals results as well. In Rankin's analysis, following a Foucauldian notion of governmentality, she "rejects an understanding of neoliberalism as the natural and inevitable outcome of unleashed market forces" (2001, p. 22). She asks the following question: "How is the *idea* of self-regulating markets to be established as a legitimate and ethical objective... of government" (Rankin, 2001, p. 22, emphasis in original). Microenterprise-promoting endeavors like Pact's WORTH Program are one type of tool used to this end.

3.4 AFESIP/ Acting For Women in Distressing Situations

AFESIP focuses on issues of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and rescuing and rehabilitating women who were once part of the commercial sex industry. AFESIP's service programs include an HIV/AIDS outreach initiative for commercial sex workers. The organization's website explains that this is done for the purpose of developing trust amongst sex workers so that AFESIP can "gain access to prostitutes" ("Methodology", n.d.). AFESIP offers free transport to sex workers wishing to receive check-ups at the AFESIP clinic. "The brothel and non-brothel based sex workers who visit AFESIP Clinic are provided advice, counseling, and encouraged to quit prostitution by a counselor" ("HIV/AIDS Outreach Program", n.d.). Many private and public international donors fund AFESIP, one significant donor being the US Department of State. Perhaps qualifications as to why AFESIP assists sex workers are added to the organization's official documents in order to comply with the anti-prostitution pledge. They provide transit and condoms to sex worker *for the purpose of* gaining their trust in order to get them to stop working as prostitutes.

From the stance of pro-sex work feminists, AFESIP could carry out many of its goals and its current activity in a more empowering manner were the organization to focus less on the idea that women in the commercial sex industry are victims. Were AFESIP to address sex workers in a less paternalistic manner, more women would feel comfortable taking advantage of the organization's resources, particularly the medical services offered. Women could come to the clinic for non-judgmental, dignified treatment and could decide for themselves whether to find work outside of the commercial sex industry. Myriad problems arise when sex workers feel isolated from society and ashamed about what they do.

The views expressed through the language used by the organization convey a sense of paternalism that emphasizes the powerlessness of those served by AFESIP, reinscribing the idea that sex workers are agent-less people who have things done to them. AFESIP materials are strewn through with victim-oriented wording, demonstrated in the following examples. "The dire situations of thousands of victims forced into sex slavery are the reasons why AFESIP exists today" ("Background", 2009). AFESIP calls its own anti-trafficking methodology a "Victim-Centered Approach."

Perhaps in an attempt to back up such sensationalist language, AFESIP has carried out research studies on trafficking, some of whose credibility has come into question. In a recent study, carried out by the Asia Foundation, which looked at ten years worth of reports on the situation of human trafficking in Cambodia, researchers found that almost all of the findings reflected the interests of the organization carrying out the study. Furthermore, it was found that the interests of donor organizations, who oftentimes determined the scope and approach of the study, were nearly always reflected

in the findings as well (Derks, Henke, & Vanna, 2006). AFESIP is one of the organizations in question in this report. Others have critiqued AFESIP's research as using an "Ivory Tower" approach to assess trafficking, a method that clearly does not work for determining the situation of such an underground phenomenon (Steinfatt, 2004). Thomas Steinfatt found that AFESIP reported a first person account from an area that was never actually visited by a representative of the organization (Steinfatt, 2004).

Arguably the most damaging of the activities in which AFESIP takes part are brothel raids, carried out in conjunction with local police forces. When a brothel is raided, no distinction is made between those who wish to be "rescued" and those who do not. Any rescued sex worker who does not consent to enrolling in AFESIP's training program is turned over to the Cambodian government.

Several years ago, AFESIP Cambodia established a drop-in center in Phnom Penh to accommodate the women rescued by the police, but it closed in 2005 due to AFESIP's need to cooperate more closely with the government's Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation. Now, when rescue operations are made, AFESIP Cambodia receives any victims who wish to stay and train at our centers. Those who do not consent to live and train with AFESIP can be in the charge of the ministry's department itself ("Vocational Skills Training", 2009, para. 2).

This is precisely what worried Kempadoo when she wrote about anti-trafficking programs' focus on criminalization versus human rights (2005, p. *xvi*). "Rescued" sex workers and "victims of trafficking" are required to live at the AFESIP facility and learn one of a few job skills offered by the organization or be turned over to another mandatory government-run program, the details of which are not known.

AFESIP's training programs offers courses in sewing, housekeeping, hairdressing, small business management, weaving and handicrafts, with its three "principal vocational skills training programs" in sewing, hairdressing, and weaving.

Those who choose the sewing course can finish in 3-6 months to then enter into a position as a garment factory worker. They may continue for a 12-18 month course if they wish to become an independent seamstress. The AFESIP website does not give details about job opportunities in the other fields. It merely states what specific skills the women learn in each course (“Vocational Skills Training”, 2009). As mentioned above, the representatives from the Womyn’s Agenda for Change critique these types of training programs for developing skills in areas where women are not actually able to later find jobs. It would seem that the only viable job option following training would be in a garment factory, which is arguably less preferable to sex work. If sex workers are not rounded up at the time of a raid, they usually continue sex work elsewhere. AFESIP itself, on its website, refers to sex workers who were displaced by raids and who moved to the street to continue working.

After the closure of some of the brothels around the country, AFESIP Cambodia has noticed that many of the sex workers hang around even in the daytime at the public parks across the city such as at Wat Phnom, Independence Public Park, Phsar Chas Park and near Buddhist Stupa Park in order to wait for their clients. Our social workers have approached them for related information (“HIV/AIDS Outreach Program, 2009, para. 4).

AFESIP’s own observations would suggest the opposite of the organization’s assumptions: that not all sex workers feel liberated in the event of a brothel raid, that not all sex workers want to be rescued from the industry by organizations like AFESIP, and that sex work is a selected form of employment by some of these women.

The ultimate goal of the training programs shed light on AFESIP’s neoliberal theoretical underpinnings. In talking about the process of reintegration of former sex workers into their former communities, AFESIP’s website focuses solely on small business creation. “In order to facilitate reintegration, AFESIP provides each woman with

a ‘business starting kit’ either in kind (stock for a micro-business) or in cash (through micro-credit)” (AFESIP Cambodia Reintegration, 2009, para. 6). The wording on the site suggests that these women were somehow predestined to run their own microenterprises, thus reaffirming the notion of “rational economic woman” discussed above (Rankin, 2001). “New lives are shaped after a few months’ stay in one of AFESIP’s centers for vocational skills training. Such residents can *finally* become small-scale business women and run their own shops” (AFESIP Cambodia Reintegration, 2009, para. 4, emphasis added).

3.5 Gender and Development for Cambodia (GAD/C)

Gender and Development for Cambodia works to ensure that a ‘gendered’ perspective of development is applied to various development projects, training partner organizations in gender awareness. The views of the GAD/C, when it comes to issues of gender, hold a lot of weight in that others are trained to view gender in the same manner. The website states: “The GAD Programme for Cambodia coordinates efforts to enhance gender capability in development organizations, programmes/projects and policies. Its main goal is to ensure that gender perspective is incorporated in all aspects of development processes in Cambodia” (“Gender and Development for Cambodia”, n.d, para. 5).

The most interesting aspect of GAD’s work, as it relates to this paper, is not in the ways the organization works with sex workers, but in how it *does not*. A significant aspect of the work done by GAD concentrates on changing perceptions in society about gender. In many aspects of their work, GAD works to introduce ideas about gender equality to Cambodian men. Many would argue though, that the organization itself proscribes to imbedded masculinist ideals in terms of their views on sex work. In GAD’s

“Gender Scoreboard,” prostitution is conflated with domestic violence and rape as a signifier of women’s subordinate position in Cambodia.

This type of construction of the sex worker in literatures on sex work ends up reaffirming common societal perceptions about the sex worker, which perpetuate the environments of violence and stigma to which she is subjected. Allison Murray (1999, p. 61) writes that “Sexual exploitation has taken on a life of its own, and everything is conveniently muddled by putting prostitution and pornography in the same sentence as rape and incest so that people’s obvious anathema to non-consensual sex is extended by implication to all forms of commercial transactions involving sex.” Following this train of thought, the perpetuation of this view is, therefore, particularly harmful to sex workers in this particular circumstance in that GAD identifies itself, and is identified by other groups, as *the* authority on ‘gendering’ perspectives on the course of development in Cambodia.

GAD/C works on projects that could be of enormous potential benefit to improving the lives of sex workers were they to be included in the thought process of developing the programs. For example, the GAD/C’s Women’s Empowerment through Legal Awareness (WELA) project works to “improve legal awareness amongst women” because they see this awareness as a “fundamental preventative measure in trying to combat violence against women as well as providing the means with which women can respond when their rights are violated” (“Women’s Empowerment through Legal Awareness”, n.d.). Many organizations do this type of work with the intent to lessen the amount of domestic violence that occurs in Cambodia. Sex workers are one of the most vulnerable populations to experience violence. More often than not, the violence goes

unreported and unpunished. There are many cases of police officers overlooking violent acts perpetrated against sex workers.

Because of its extensive outreach and training, the GAD/C is in a position to help change perceptions about sex workers among government agencies and average citizens alike.

3.6 The Cambodian Women's Crisis Center (CWCC)

The Cambodian Women's Crisis Center offers a multitude of services to women and children who have been victims of violence, with the "guiding philosophy... that women's disempowerment is the root of many of the issues confronting them" (Introducing the CWCC, 2006, para. 2). The services provided by the CWCC fall into the areas of assisting women in crisis, helping girls access education, advocating for policy changes, providing men with anger management classes, and assisting child labor victims at border crossing areas. The CWCC is similar to Pact in that they focus on preventing women in rural areas from coming to the city, with the intent of stopping these women from entering the commercial sex industry. In regards to issues of sex work, the CWCC works under the assumption that all women, when given other options, will chose something else. The organization's literature features many stories similar to the following one taken from their website:

Nieng has a small clothing production business in Poipet. When she started her business, she had 2 machines and she was very poor. Now she employs more than 20 sewers, 5 of whom are or were CWCC clients. They work hard, live and eat together, earning enough to send money to their families. Despite the proximity to the border, and to brothel work, these young women prefer to work hard making clothes for export to Thailand for about the same money they would earn from sex work. 'We can see from the lives of our clients that given a choice, women do not choose sex work' says Chantol, Executive Director of the CWCC ("Introducing the CWCC's Services", 2006).

The assumptions, on which the CWCC's work with sex workers is based, are not true for all women and all situations, as explained by sex workers themselves from the Women's Network for Unity. Asserting that women who have an option will choose anything other than sex work, no matter what the option, does not reflect reality. Many women have weighed the limited options available to them and made choices for themselves in such a context.

While the CWCC focuses on women's empowerment, their statements regarding sex workers are disempowering, showcasing a victim-centered mentality regarding women in this industry. A representative from the CWCC, however, critically acknowledged that women feel ashamed about prostitution because of Cambodian culture, not because of an inherent shame associated with sex work (Ms. Thun, personal communication, May 16, 2007). She also stated that the organization, though they prefer women to exit the commercial sex industry, does advocate legally on behalf of prostitutes, viewing them the same as other women who are victims of violence. They do not have an official system for convincing women to seek other forms of employment (Ms. Thun, personal communication, May 16, 2007). Additional evidence demonstrating the CWCC's neutral stance on sex work is their connection to other organizations on either "side" of the sex work debate. The CWCC uses on their website information from Pact Cambodia's report "Preventing Trafficking of Women," but they have partnered with the pro sex worker Womyn's Agenda for Change.

The organization is not funded by any US government agencies. Support for the CWCC does come from major UN funds and the official aid agencies of Germany,

Australia, Canada, the EU, the official organization of the Catholic Church in Ireland, and various additional private Christian organizations (Partners and Funding, n.d.).

Their limited development objectives are founded in neoliberalism, in that they encourage women to start small businesses and provide them with training and loans to do so. Perhaps in response to complaints, similar to those expressed above, that vocational training programs do little to help women successfully gain employment upon completion, the CWCC shifted gears in its programming: “CWCC realized that pottery and ceramics course was not really appropriate for the local market. Thus, the pig and chicken courses were put into effect in 2008 for women and girls at-risk of violence...” (Literacy and vocational skills training, n.d., Para. 5). After learning specifics related to raising livestock, the trainees are provided with information to assist them in creating their small business: “The trainees were able to obtain knowledge regarding to marketing, fundamental factor of business, creative ideas, market demand, value-added initiatives, profit calculation, and business expansion, preparation of business plan” (Literacy and vocational skills training, n.d., Para. 8). Again, we see the pervasive idea of the “rational economic woman” (Rankin, 2001) and the ground-level normalization of neoliberal ideals through this programming.

3.7 American Assistance for Cambodia’s (AAfC) Girls Be Ambitious Program

American Assistance for Cambodia/ Japan Relief for Cambodia (AAfC/ JRfC) is a nonprofit organization whose focus is on improving conditions and creating opportunities for the poor in rural Cambodia. AAfC’s largest initiative is the Cambodian School Project. Working in conjunction with the Cambodian Ministry of Education, the AAfC accepts funding from private donors, which is matched by funds from the World

Bank and the Asian Development Bank, to build schools in rural areas of Cambodia (“Rural School Project”, n.d.). The Girls Be Ambitious program is a part of the larger Cambodian School Project, which aims to promote the education of Cambodian girls in rural areas by providing financial incentives to poor families to keep their daughters in school. Interviews amongst families in rural Cambodia showed that “the main reason girls do not attend school is poverty and pressures upon them to help the family with work in the field, or to take care of younger siblings and stay home while the parents are farming in the field” (“Girls Be Ambitious”, n.d., para. 4).

Families of girls enrolled in the program receive \$10/month when their daughter has perfect attendance, as recorded by the girl’s teacher. If the girl has been absent, the family will not receive a stipend for that month. In cases of proven illness, families receive a reduced stipend, but absences for other reasons result in a full loss. Families sign a contract that if their daughter withdraws from school within the first six months of beginning the program, they will refund the money. This is reportedly done as an added incentive to keep girls in school, though the program does not always expect to recoup the money (“Girls Be Ambitious”, n.d., para. 4).

Bernard (Bernie) Krishner, the founder of JRfC/AAfC and the Cambodia Daily, the first English language newspaper in Cambodia started in 1993, is quite the controversial subject. People’s opinions in Cambodia vary greatly about the work he does and the man himself. An article in the *Christian Science Monitor* begins, “You start off a meeting with Bernard Krisher looking for his halo” (Krausz, 2006). However, on the critical watchdog blog *Cambodia: Details are Sketchy*, a link is provided to the same *Christian Science Monitor* article, noting “One day Tibor Krausz [author of the *CSM*

article] will look back on this story and wonder what evil spirit possessed him to get on his knees for Bernie Krisher” (“Bernie Krisher’s Halo”, 2006). The same site had featured other postings about Krisher’s controlling nature and the effect it has had on the way he runs the Cambodia Daily (“Bernie Krisher vs. Khmer Intelligence”, 2007).

A separate media watchdog blog, watchingthemediacom.com, speaks of Krisher’s spite-filled reaction to the emergence of the *Phnom Penh Post* in 2008, an English-language paper that would be in direct competition with his *Cambodia Daily*. A commentator to the post, a man who later self-identifies as an ex-UN employee, remarks that he feels Krisher is indeed a spiteful individual. In addition to speaking about Krisher’s reaction to the news of the new Phnom Penh Post, the commentator also notes an incident where Krisher pulled all of his funding out of a school in Preah Vihear province because the school administrators accepted funding for a small vegetable garden from Prime Minister Hun Sen, thus making the entire school project not uniquely Krisher’s (“Indochina Newspaper War”, 2008). Whether all of the accusations posted on these sites are entirely true or not, they demonstrate that Krisher’s ways and his work are high profile, controversial subjects in Cambodia.

All articles about Krisher’s Cambodia projects almost inevitably include the story of how this reporter became involved with the small Southeast Asian nation. Krisher arrived as a reporter for *Newsweek* in Tokyo in 1962. In 1963, he managed to corner Indonesian President Sukarno in an antique shop and score a journalist’s visa to the country, which was very rare at the time. Sukarno introduced Krisher to Prince Sihanouk, and thus began his relationship with the Prince and his country.

Moreover, article after article praises Krisher's American-ness, and its stark contrast to Asian-ness. One of Asia's Heroes in *Time Asia* in 2005, the article about Krisher begins, "When 31-year-old American reporter Bernard Krisher arrived in Tokyo ... many people said he was too brash, too much of a New Yorker, too darned pushy to get along in decorous Asia" (Spaeth, 2005, para. 1). The previously mentioned Christian Science Monitor article describes an episode where Krisher, after running into some red tape declares, "I'll call Sihanouk and Hun Sen if I must." The article then continues, "Such chutzpah is vintage Krisher" (Krausz, 2006). *Time Asia's* story, whose title, "A Can-Do Yank in Cambodia," alone speaks volumes, credits Krisher's connectedness for his ability to get things done. "Virtually all the funds, equipment and technology for [his] projects have been wheedled or cajoled by Krisher from his network of friends and contacts" (Spaeth, 2005). Such representations are disempowering to the average Cambodian, implying firstly that there is something inherent in Krisher's foreignness that allows for him to be a change-maker in Cambodia, and secondly that it is only those with contacts in the top tier of the government who can make decisions about what should be done in Cambodia.

AAfC's Girls Be Ambitious program plays on getting donations through trafficking/sex slave sensationalism, a spin that seems unnecessary when most would agree that education for education's sake is a worthy cause. The title of the Girls Be Ambitious website does not mention its educational objectives. It merely says, "An Ounce of Prevention: Eradicating Trafficking of Girls in Cambodia" ("Girls Be Ambitious", n.d.). The next two paragraphs of the program description go on to address trafficking, coercion and sexual slavery more than education. Furthermore, the main

objective of the program is specifically stated as putting an end to trafficking, the means of which is providing education:

The objective of the Japan Relief for Cambodia/American Assistance for Cambodia's (JRfC/AAfC) Girls Be Ambitious program is to prevent the trafficking of Cambodian girls and women for sexual and labor exploitation through an incentive program for girls from poverty-stricken homes to stay in school... ("Girls Be Ambitious", n.d. para. 1).

Because Krisher is such an influential figure who has the means to reach a great deal of people with the messages he chooses to spread throughout Cambodia, the effects of continually reinforcing commonly held stereotypes about women in the sex industry aids in cementing their place in Cambodian society.

While few would disagree that the program does provide a benefit to the girls enrolled, who would not otherwise have the opportunity to attend schools, the language in the materials distributed causes harm to the many more women who have not been taken under the wing of one of Krisher's schools. Furthermore, the means in which Krisher continues to conduct his work serves the purpose of reifying colonialist power structures that have caused harm to Cambodia for the last century.

The next chapter offers further insights into the impact of NGOs' views on sex work and development, further addressing the research questions posed in Chapter 1. Additionally, in the following chapter, I propose areas for future research on topics touched here, and I finish with recommendations for ways to move forward in thinking about development in relation to the commercial sex industry in Cambodia.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS, REFLECTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MOVING FORWARD IN THINKING ABOUT DEVELOPMENT AND THE COMMERCIAL SEX INDUSTRY

In this chapter, I link the findings based on my analyses of the NGOs in the previous chapter with my discussions of Cambodian history, the politics of NGOs, theories of development, and feminist analyses of sex work discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. This chapter continues to provide answers to the research questions posed in Chapter 1, with a primary focus on the final question: “What effects does the work of these organizations have on the lived realities of sex workers in Cambodia?”. I then offer my thoughts on this project’s limitations and make recommendations for areas of future research. I end this final chapter with some ideas about ways to move forward in thinking about development and the commercial sex industry.

4.1 Cambodian geopolitical history and its effect on NGOs

Cambodia’s unique and troubled past has added to the creation of a present-day social and political environment different from other countries in the region. It is viewed as normal and sometimes preferable for foreign entities, be they governments, NGOs, multinational corporations, or people, to dictate matters of Cambodian governance. Cambodia’s colonial era was followed by a time when governmental policy fluctuated strategically to cater to opposing sides of the Cold War. The country’s strategic location during the Vietnam War resulted in the continuation of foreign interventions. The Khmer Rouge’s response to what they viewed as menacing foreign influences and foreign dependence was to enforce crippling isolationism, most notably known for the draconian implementation of policies guided by ideology and not human consequence. The Vietnamese invasion ended the genocide, but Cambodians remain divided in their

remembrance of the period of Vietnamese-controlled rule. Were they liberators or were they occupiers? Even if they were occupiers, was occupation better than Khmer Rouge-brand nationalism?

Evidence lends support to the fact that Cambodian people suffered dramatically under each new government that came into power. It can, however, hardly be disputed that the Khmer Rouge's time in power caused the most overall damage to the nation, physically and psychologically. This period, during which Khmers were both the perpetrators and victims of unimaginable violence, is still fresh in the collective memory of Cambodia. As stated in Chapter 1, due the damage brought about by the past, the personnel of international organizations assume the inability of Cambodians to recreate their own country without outside help (Hughes, 2003). Evidence of this assumption can be seen in the work of AAfC and in news articles written about its founder, Bernie Krisher.

With the installment of the UN Transitional Authority, Curtis (1998, p. 72-73) argues that deliberate decisions were made to make private sector entities the primary providers of myriad social services. While NGOs in other countries have their work cut out for them just to catch the people falling through the cracks of government-sponsored social welfare programming, Cambodian NGOs may be providing services unavailable anywhere else. There are moves across the globe toward the privatization of social services, but Cambodia was transitioning to independence at the time this thinking was coming into vogue. Following this preference, all previous state-run institutions were wiped out with UNTAC. While other countries may be feeling pressure to shift in this direction, Cambodia was recreated from scratch in this manner.

The phenomenon of NGOs providing services akin to basic human rights is demonstrated through looking at the work of the NGOs discussed above. These NGOs provide basic education, health care, shelter, and legal representation. The Women's Network for Unity and Womyn's Agenda for Change work together to provide childcare and educational opportunities for children of sex workers. The Cambodian Women's Crisis Center, AFESIP, and Pact Cambodia all provide vocational training programs. The CWCC offers literacy programs for women and children, living in their shelter, who have been victims of gender-based violence. AAfC plays a major role in being the only source of education for children in many rural areas. AAfC builds schools, funds students' entire educations, and pays families stipends to send their girls to school. The CWCC operates shelters that provide emergency medical care to women who have suffered gender-based violence, and they then provide legal advice and representation to women wishing to press charges.

What exists now is a patchwork of organizations that provide basic services to people in some places of Cambodia. As I discuss in more detail below, these are organizations that are forced to follow funding trends, in order to assure their own survival. Oftentimes, these trends are dictated by foreign entities and applied across the globe, without regard to local needs. Failure to abide by funders' rules could lead to the potential, immediate withdrawal of services. It is, of course, not impossible for the same to happen in cases where governments are providing services, but it can happen more abruptly with a small entity that works on a small-scale.

Each NGO discussed is dependent on foreign funding sources. The CWCC, for example, has thirteen organizations listed under its "Partners and Funding" page. These

include a mix of private and public entities from Canada, Germany, the European Union, Hong Kong, Ireland, the Netherlands, the United Nations and the United States (“Partners and Funding”, n.d. para. 1). The ramifications of foreign funding to private sector entities providing such a vast amount of support services, as well as other issues surrounding the politics of NGOs, with particular examples drawn from the group of NGOs studied, is discussed in further detail in the next section.

4.2 The politics of NGOs in relation to particular NGOs studied

Many services rendered by the NGOs analyzed positively impact the sex workers with whom they work. The services, listed in detail above, have undoubtedly bettered and probably saved the lives of many, many clients, but they also work to assist in the spread of global capitalist ideals by providing the “safety net” (Pearce, 2000, p.21) discussed in Chapter 1.

Some of the organizations have stepped in to provide services while they, at the same time, fight for governmental reform to bring about sustained, state-based social support systems. The CWCC has a government liaison that promotes legislation and reforms that will promote gender equality and lessen the occurrence of gender-based violence in the country. They explicitly acknowledge, in the description of their mission, that direct service to victims of gender-based violence must be combined with advocacy efforts to make lasting change (“Mission and Goals”, n.d., para. 2). The WAC and WNU are acutely aware of the failings of neoliberal economic policy on the world’s poor. They advocate for change at local, national and international levels. Other organizations’ solutions for improving the lives of Cambodia’s poor rely solely on looking to market-based methods.

Even when present, the recognition of the need for systemic change is different from acting in a way that brings about such change. Large, long-term goals can fall by the wayside when, on a daily basis, NGO personnel are functioning within a system where foreign funding agencies supply them with money to provide services to help some Cambodian people out of extreme poverty or desperately vulnerable situations. The immediate goal becomes to help the seemingly endless supply of those needing support services, while assuring the continuation of the organization's ability to do so.

An unfortunate reality facing NGOs is the need to divert the efforts of staff, and thus funds, towards the ongoing project of keeping the organization running. The pursuit of continued funding, and the need to report on where and how those funds were used, is no small task. In the smaller organizations, marketing and self-promotion becomes the responsibility of people whose specialty may be in counseling, advocacy, or education. Keeping NGO workers continually concerned with how they are going to continue doing their work as they face financial difficulties drives attention away from larger issues of why they are doing what they do.

It falls outside the boundaries of my research to evaluate how each NGOs' funds are used or how much time goes into preserving the existence of an NGO itself. However, I am able to share some observations that shed light on the fact that pursuit of further funding is a concern for the NGOs studied.

As describes in Chapter 1, organizations become viewed as worthy and capable of receiving funds by undergoing a process of professionalization, during which they learn to conduct themselves in a manner preferred by professionalized institutions of the Global North. Cambodian NGOs, therefore, seek personnel who can communicate, in

terms of language and thought process, with funding institutions. It has been the case since UNTAC in Cambodia that the NGO sector provides the largest opportunity for university-educated Cambodians looking for a job. All of the people with whom I spoke, with the exception of the representatives the WNU and the CWCC, spoke English. In the case of the CWCC, another CWCC staff member translated our interview. A WAC staff member translated for the WNU representatives. The need for this language skill makes perfect sense when grant proposals and reports must be written in English and English-language websites and materials must be readily accessible to potential funders. Mentioned above is the fact that the CWCC lists thirteen partners and funders, one can imagine that a lot of time went initially into securing funding from each of these entities and that many likely require reporting on how funds were used after the fact.

Time and effort undoubtedly also goes into shifting the focus of programs to fit the mold of specific grants. During the course of my research on this project, some of the NGOs' websites have changed dramatically four or five times. At the outset, I did not intend to track how the programming in each organizations changed over the course of years, but such a study would probably bring further insight into the effects of changing international funding trends on work being carried out on the ground.

Through their requirements, funders have dramatic influence over how NGOs carry out what they do. Going back to the example of the CWCC, several of the thirteen funders are Christian organizations. The CWCC itself is not religious. The focus of its mission is to empower Cambodian women and work for women's empowerment in Cambodia. Though empowerment is also the goal of the Women's Network for Unity, this is carried out through the organization and unionization of sex workers. The CWCC

is bound by its funding to carry out programs that fall in line with religious-based views of sex work, thus working under the assumption that prostitution should be abolished. The effects of assumptions made on the part of the NGOs discussed are addressed in the following section.

4.3 The effects of assumptions about sex work and development on the lives of Cambodian sex workers

Assumptions that sex workers, along with many women in Cambodia, are in need of support services and advocacy efforts aimed at increasing women's position in society are generally helpful to all women. However, assumptions that all sex workers would do anything so as to not have to sell sex are inaccurate, harmful and produce paternalistic policies. Forced vocational training programs, like that of AFESIP, that do nothing to help sex workers secure a financially viable job is one such example of this paternalism on the part of NGOs. In an interview with the *New York Times*, WAC founder Rosanna Barbero, passes on the sentiment she has heard expressed from many sex workers regarding vocational training. "Barbero says, sex workers 'are all pretty damn sick of [hearing] 'We'll put you in front of a sewing machine 14 hours a day and make you a better woman'" (Steinglass, 2005). Not only is this an unattractive and unrealistic alternative, but it is also a constant reminder to sex workers that they are not respected as human beings by nature of what they do. Educated NGO workers have the privilege of assuming the moral high ground of an anti-prostitution stance without having to make the sacrifice of taking a pay cut and working longer hours in a garment factory. Encouraging already poor women to take jobs that pay less money for longer hours is the opposite of empowerment.

Misguided help in the form of brothel raids is another example of NGO paternalism that has caused unintended harm to brothel-based sex workers. As noted earlier in the section referring to the work of AFESIP, during brothel raids conducted by the NGO in conjunction with local authorities, any sex workers who did not agree to attend one of AFESIP's sites for vocational training was turned over to the Cambodian government. Cambodian law does not prohibit prostitution per se, but rather it is places of prostitution that are illegal. Upon first encounter, the structure of the law, which prohibits others from making money off of sex workers but does not criminalize the sex workers themselves, seems to be quite positive. The information explained by AFESIP would suggest, however, that the law is not being enforced as intended. If a women engaging in prostitution has not done anything illegal, why would she be turned over to the government upon refusal of services from the NGO?

Because places where prostitution takes place are illegal establishments, brothels, karaoke bars, massage parlors, etc. are targets of occasional police crackdowns, oftentimes initiated and organized by anti-prostitution NGOs. In practice, it is the prostitutes who suffered the most from this type of intervention. The BBC covered one of these crackdowns and reported that "the 'Mama-sans' said the girls are now being kept at houses and hotels near the main strip, a push further underground dreaded by groups focusing on rescues" (Unmacht, 2003). This raises a curious question: Why, under laws and interventions that are ideologically aimed at liberating sex workers, have these women ended up as the sole victims?

The AFESIP brothel raids constitute an extreme example of how an NGO's views on sex work can affect the lives of sex workers. However, I argue that NGOs whose

work reinforces social stigmas about sex workers are also complicit in causing harm and hardship in their lives. The destigmatization of the commercial sex industry is crucial for sex workers' psychological and physical wellbeing. In everyday conversations, in training sessions with citizens and other organizations, on their websites, in their reports, and in print materials distributed around Cambodia, the workers of many NGOs are perpetuating stereotypes that harm sex workers. Less obvious than the negative effects of brothel raids, but arguably more damaging due to its omnipresence, is the effect of stigma.

Ignoring the psychological damage of constant stigmatization, stigma leads directly to physical vulnerability. Sex workers who suffer abuse at the hands of customers have nowhere to turn due to unwillingness on the part of law enforcement to view them as people with rights. In fact, many sex workers are abused directly by police. Incidences of police brutality demonstrate that laws in place to protect prostitutes and criminalize prostitution are not enough to keep sex workers safe. Attitudes toward the women in the industry must also change. The following quote, like many others from the same report, demonstrates both the stigmas associated with sex work and the contempt for women who have moved into the city to engage in sex work:

When I see a policeman I see a tiger. I am scared; the police are just waiting to jump on us. I asked them why they needed to arrest me, but they grabbed my wrists, twisted them... then took me to the police station. After he beat me, the policeman handcuffed my wrists to the table leg. I had to sit on the floor all night. There was nowhere for me to go to the toilet.... I was told I couldn't have anything until I gave them \$30. The policeman screamed at me, using the term of address used for an animal, and said 'Why don't you go back to the village? Why do you still go and work as a prostitute?' (*Women's Voices*, 2004, p. 79).

In addressing this woman as an animal, the police officer makes clear his association of prostitutes with sub-humans. He expresses his belief that she would not be in this

position had she not come to the city in the first place. Such treatment of sex workers on the part of those entrusted with protecting the public demonstrates the dire need for organizations concerned with these women's human rights to advocate for their rights as sex workers.

As noted above, most of the NGOs discussed use language that perpetuates harmful stigmas associated with sex workers. These NGOs must realize their culpability in maintaining an environment where sex workers are treated poorly. Equally responsible are the NGOs who deliberately leave this marginalized group outside advocacy efforts, perhaps due to a fear of being associated with such a stigmatized population or possibly due to pressure from funders. This invites us to evaluate the effect of funding policies on shaping the views of these NGOs.

Though each NGO discussed is unique in its mission and its work, common threads can be traced that shed insight into the effects of donor agencies, especially US government-run agencies, on organizational language and goals, relating to both views on sex work and views on development. What is called "conservative", or "the right", in the US combines two theoretically divergent concepts: liberal economics, advocating for little government interference with flows of goods and capital, and moral conservatism, advocating for government restrictions on individuals and their bodies. Though these ideas are not philosophically consistent, they have demonstrated themselves as clearly linked in the views of these NGOs. Those whose work supports the rights of women to freely sell sex, the WAC and the WNU, are also fierce protesters of economic liberalizing institutions like the World Bank and the IMF. Conversely, the organizations that are the most vehemently opposed to the idea of prostitution as a viable industry (AFESIP, Pact

Cambodia, and AAfC) are those who advance neoliberal ideals through their initiatives. AFESIP and Pact are the two organizations receiving funds from USDOS and/or USAID. AAfC's stance, which falls in line with that of the US conservatism and neocolonialism, can most likely be attributed to the fact that the organization has, undoubtedly, taken on the personality of its larger-than-life creator.

From a purely philosophical perspective, those viewing government involvement in everyday affairs as inefficient and intrusive would favor both neoliberal economic policies and an unrestricted, market-run commercial sex industry. Similarly, it would make sense for those who favor government regulation on behalf of its people to oppose neoliberal economic policies and to restrict prostitution. Louise Brown, in her book *Sex Slaves: the trafficking of women in Asia*, sees the commercial sex industry as another unfortunate outcome of a neoliberalized world in which everything is for sale. "The sex industry has arranged a happy and profitable marriage with the neo-liberal economic theories that have enamoured the world for the past couple of decades" (2001, p. 26). She grounds this analysis in the history and current day situation of Cambodia:

A similar trend [to Vietnam] can be seen in Cambodia, where the institution of a free market economy in the early 1990s led not only to the enjoyment of pleasant economic freedoms but also to the freedom to trade girls on the open market. Today there is *nothing* in Cambodia that you cannot buy (Brown, 2001, p. 45).

This statement, though demonstrating the assumption that is prevalent through a lot of Brown's argument- that someone else is selling women for sex instead of the women selling sex themselves- is still important in that it offers a critical view of the industry as it relates to the advancement of neoliberal ideals. She continues by questioning the lack of options available to women in the region. "[O]ur first question should be the morality of a power structure that makes the provision of sexual services the only realistic path a

young woman can follow if she wants economic security and the chance to lift herself and her family out of poverty” (Brown, 2001, p. 27). This is a valid point and a strong anti-prostitution argument that would resonate with those who do not have an outright moral issue with prostitution. It is also an argument that is never even alluded to on the part of the anti-prostitution NGOs discussed above. Is this due to these NGOs’ embeddedness in the network of institutions that upholds the current economic system, which renders them unable to critically assess the development apparatus?

The only organizations that do express a concern for lack of options for poor women within the current economic conditions of Cambodia are the pro-sex worker WAC and WNU. They were outspoken in their criticism of large neoliberalizing entities such as the World Bank and the IMF to name a few. In their work, however, they usually manage to maintain a difficult balance between empowering women workers and lambasting government and intergovernmental agencies for the effects their policies have on the poor. They base their choice to support sex workers- as sex workers- in real conditions, while they advocate for changes to the ways in which all poor people fare in an increasingly globalized world run by powerful countries and corporations. The work of the WAC and the WNU seems informed by a ground level assessment of what is needed. These organizations question neoliberalism, and they question Cambodian women’s lack of options. However, they do so without assuming control of women’s bodies and without making moral judgments about women’s choices.

Many of the organizations described above hold uncritical views regarding development policies in Cambodia. While the work many of these NGOs do could be described as treating symptoms of poverty, few question neoliberal economic policies

and their effects on the world's poor, thus facilitating the continuation of economic injustice.

By analyzing the work of a set of NGOs with some divergent and some overlapping goals related to women in the Cambodian commercial sex industry, I compared the organizations' views on development with their views on sex work, identified links between funding sources' agendas and programming of the NGOs, evaluated assumptions and the effects of assumptions about development on the part of the NGOs, and evaluated assumptions and the effects of assumptions about the commercial sex industry and sex workers on the part of the NGOs. The conclusions presented here and in the previous chapter offer insight into the set of questions initially posed for this research project. However, this set of questions was never intended to be all encompassing. Many questions on the subject of sex work and development remain unanswered for various reasons, methodological and otherwise. The following section offers a reflection on the limitations of this project and follows with an incomplete discussion of areas for future research.

4.4 Scope of the project, limitations, and projected future research

Though I now know considerably more about Cambodian history, culture, and people than I did at the outset of my research, I am not an expert on the country. Even if I were to consider myself an expert, I could never assume to completely understand the minute specifics of a culture in which I was not raised. As with any research project, the assumptions that I, as the researcher, make and the lens through which I view the world are necessarily embedded in the findings. The reflections and recommendations that

follow offer more specific limitations particular to methodological choices I made in conducting this research.

The primary manner in which I identified the organizations that I chose to study was through online resources. Therefore, NGOs without a large online presence- and ones that were never mentioned to me by someone with whom I spoke while in Cambodia- are absent from my research. This method favors more professionalized organizations. Furthermore, there are many more organizations in Cambodia whose work touches on issues important in the lives of sex workers, but it is impossible to provide a thorough and comprehensive analysis of them all using my methodological framework. Future research into this area could include organizations not mentioned here.

A more in-depth analysis of a single NGO through an organizational ethnography would also bring additional insights. I am particularly curious about how organizations' official policies, as portrayed to funders, differ from daily operations. If an organization were currently receiving funds from the United States, it would be financial suicide to declare itself a supporter of sex workers. It may be the case that some organizations officially declare themselves as 'anti-prostitution' yet they do work that resembles that of sex worker supporting organizations.

I saw some indications that NGOs with vastly differing public views on sex work collaborated frequently. I would be interested in an analysis of whether feminist academics that study and write about sex work are more bitterly divided than those working at the grassroots level.

My inability to speak Khmer forced me to speak either through a translator or with people who speak English. Recognizing this limitation, I designed my study so that

I would be talking to representatives of NGOs, the majority of whom speak English, though not as their native language. Had I been able to hold conversations with a large number of sex workers, I would have been able to add another layer to my research. I would have been able to gather much first-hand information about how governmental and non-governmental policies are affecting their everyday lives. Ethnographic research amongst different groups of sex workers would provide valuable insight into how policies of development agencies, NGOs and the Cambodian government affect their lives. Khmer language skills and ethnographic methods would also allow for an evaluation of how in touch organizations are with the local majority, and how this relates to an organization's level of professionalism.

Lastly, I would encourage additional, geographically diverse, qualitative analyses of NGOs working with sex workers.

4.5 Recommendations for moving forward

As specified in the introduction of Chapter 1, this research project has sought to add a grounded, geographical analysis to the bodies of literature concerning development and the commercial sex industry. Such an analysis aims to avoid the common mistake of homogenizing places and people. Drawing on the findings from my research and from the ever-increasing bodies of work with a similar focus, I propose the following recommendations in moving forward in the ways we think about development and sex work. I advocate for experience-oriented, human-centered analyses of the commercial sex industry, rather than analyses that are informed by predetermined, judgmental underpinnings. I encourage the undertaking of more contextualized, place-specific

research to add to understandings of the heterogeneous sets of experiences of those in the commercial sex industry.

I argue for organizations and researchers alike to stop assuming absolute rights and wrongs as their starting point in evaluating the commercial sex industry worldwide. International, national, and local organizations that continually use language that aids in the perpetuation of discourses of powerlessness and victimization of sex workers must take responsibility for the consequences of using such language and must actively change their message. NGOs concerned with women's rights should strive to create an atmosphere where sex workers are able to work free from stigma and abuse. Cambodian NGOs should include in their work efforts to create an environment where police abuse of sex workers is met with public outrage, just as many are working to do with domestic abuse. US funding mechanisms must put an end to the ostracizing of sex worker support projects in their practices and discourses.

Furthermore, while functioning within the current geopolitical context, NGOs should not lose track of global power structures and poverty-creating systems of development. Many organizations currently treat the symptoms of poverty while upholding the ideals of the powerful institutions whose work perpetuates it. I advocate for a move towards analyzing and addressing problems faced by poor workers, without the need to single out sex workers, and for a shift in focus on striving to create an environment in which people have options to choose their own futures.

APPENDIX A: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Much of what informed my views came from encounters or observations that occurred when I was not “doing research,” which in this case would be visiting an NGO site or conducting an interview. Also, I discuss issues I encountered while officially “doing research” and how certain roadblocks informed my understandings.

A.1 Personal Reflections and Observations from Field Work in Cambodia

As described above, I began the research process in June 2006, the first time I set foot in Cambodia. Merely spending time in Phnom Penh allowed me to gain some insight into the visibility of NGOs in the city. Through conversations with longtime expat residents, I learned about some common perceptions of the bigger, international NGOs. I was told about employees who ride around in SUVs, living in expensive houses with 24-hour security guards and razor wire. These were foreigners who were seen to have done everything in their power to isolate themselves from the general population whom they had ostensibly come to “aid.”

The poverty is more visible than anywhere I have ever been. Perhaps because Phnom Penh has not been established as a major tourist destination, the beggars have not been chased away from the safer, prettier parts of town. NGOs stepping in to offer services led elsewhere by governments can be found, literally, around every corner, and their inability to address the immense need for social services is also visible on the city streets. There are NGOs who take in orphans and teach them trades. There are NGOs who house and educate children who were previously living next to and off of the

enormous open-air dump on the outskirts of Phnom Penh. Videos about the dump and unofficial tours to the dump are used to solicit donations to support this work.

The lack of government services was demonstrated further through the stories of expat residents. An Irish expat who owned a pub/guesthouse just off the main drag told me a story about someone who died on the street outside of the pub because he and his family had no money to afford an ambulance for transport to a hospital, let alone money to pay for emergency services were he to get there. A friend of the pub owner told me about a house that burned down directly next to the National Museum. The home's owner was unable to pay for services, but the firefighters stood on the street with their hoses hooked to the water supply. They were instructed to begin to put the fire out if it started to threaten to museum.

A lot of expats seemed drawn to Cambodia for a couple of different reasons related to its problems. A thirty-something woman had recently arrived from California with the intention of setting up an NGO that had something to do with film. She was not entirely sure what she would do, but she unquestionably wanted to start an NGO. Another American man, following a recent divorce, had made the decision to go do something worthwhile. He had been in Cambodia for seven months when I met him, and he was volunteering with the aforementioned NGO that educated children from the dump. More than once I heard stories told by older retirees or young expat business owners that seemed to be recounted for the purpose of demonstrating just how adventurous they were to live somewhere so rugged. More than once I heard Cambodia compared to the Wild West.

My first visit to Cambodia also made me acutely aware of how the horrendous events of the country's recent past play a large role in its present. The majority of visitors to Phnom Penh are stopping by briefly on their way to Siem Reap, the hopping off point to Angkor. Those who do spend a day or two in the capital usually include a trip to one of a few different sites that played a role in the genocide. Walking down a busy street in the few blocks radius where most tourists spend their time, tuk-tuk drivers casually ask, "killing fields?" to each non-Cambodian passerby. A stroll around even the most tourist-friendly quarters of Phnom Penh allows one to see the effects of the capital's Khmer Rouge-led evacuation. Grand French colonial-style buildings crumble next to those that have been recently restored. There are children born with birth defects related to Agent Orange who beg on the streets.

During the trip to the northwestern province of Preah Vihear, it was explained to me through gestures that no one was to step off of the poorly maintained dirt road when we were taking a break to stretch. The occasional sign depicting a skull and crossbones was an additional reminder that any piece of land off of the road could potentially still hide live mines, most of them laid during the period of Vietnamese occupation. The warnings continued farther north, nearly the entire distance from Robib to the Thai border at Anlong Veng. There are quite a number NGOs who run programs specifically geared toward assisting amputees who risked the mines to farm a field and were unlucky.

I returned to Southeast Asia in February 2007 with what I considered to be a solid plan to carry out my research. I had imagined my goals to be extremely realistic. I would be living in Thailand most of the time, and I planned a return visit to Phnom Penh in May 2007. I intended to conduct seven sites visits, meeting with approximately ten

people, over a two and a half week time period. I had wanted to set up all of my interviews over email so that I could begin the day I arrived, leaving enough time to process the information and follow-up if necessary. However, I began experiencing unintended deviations from this plan immediately. Aside from Pact Cambodia, no one that I had contacted agreed over email on a time and date to meet. They either asked me to call once I got into the country to schedule a meeting or asked me to stop by once arriving to set up an appointment.

Stopping by, once in the country, proved to be harder than it sounded. Having visited Cambodia the previous year, I knew that street addresses did not run in any order, rather the house numbers are purchased, lucky numbers being more expensive and unlucky numbers not existing at all. For example, house #2 could be at one end of a street, next to house #456, and house #3 could be at the entire other end, miles away. I, therefore, could not give tuk-tuk drivers a good idea of where I would like to be taken and set out to locate the offices mostly on foot. Walking along the length of an entire street that may be a mile or longer in the heat of late May/ early June in Phnom Penh was much more difficult and time-consuming than I had imagined. I ended up hiring a tuk-tuk driver and a motorbike driver to slowly drive up and down the streets, helping me look for the location of each office.



Figure A.1: The motorbike driver I hired, standing outside the office of the Cambodian Women's Crisis Center

To further complicate matters, the streets were assigned numbers under French colonial rule. This is how they appear on all official maps of the city. Many local residents, however, do not use these numbers. Directions are given based on a relational understanding of what businesses or landmarks are nearby or on a certain block. Though most of the street corners are numbered according to what is on the map, one can see this once they have already managed to make it to the street. Asking for directions based on a street's number is generally useless. Below is a picture of the address outside of the office for GAD/C, number 89 on street 288.



Figure A.2: The address on the office of the GAD/C uses the French word for “street”

The Womyn’s Agenda for Change/ Women’s Network for Unity office, according to the website, was located on Sisowath Quay, the main street along the river, not far from my guesthouse. The website even showed a map of the exact location. Feeling overly confident, I did not locate the office prior to my first meeting with the WAC. Map in hand, I walked back and forth past the spot where the office was supposedly located. Finally, late for the meeting, I found a pay phone and called the staff member with whom I had been in contact. I described to her where I was standing, and she came out onto the street to meet me. She then led me back to the office, which was over the bank and on a stationary boat floating on the river.



Figure A.3: The floating office shared by the Womyn's Agenda for Change and the Women's Network for Unity

A few times, I showed up for a scheduled meeting only to have it rescheduled for another time. Just because I felt pressed for time and wanted to plan all of my meetings to the last detail did not mean that all of Phnom Penh was going to change its ways for me.

Despite the obstacles, the interviews did eventually happen. Perhaps the biggest surprise to me during the interview process came during my first sitting with the representatives from the Womyn's Agenda for Change (WAC). After having read all of their online materials, I found myself thinking that my overall views on development and sex work fell in line with much of this organization's views. I had already met with a few people who represented organizations whose views I questioned, and I had not run into any mistrust on the part of these people in terms of what I was going to write. I arrived at the WAC office, a little flustered after walking back and forth for quite some time, but very excited to finally sit down with them. To my surprise, we spent the first

twenty minutes of the interview with me answering all of their questions about my reasons for coming and my intentions.

Representatives from the WNU did not allow me to use a voice recorder during the interview, but they were more relaxed from the beginning of interview than their WAC counterparts. They had no qualms sharing their negative views on the US, though they knew me to be American. They joked and laughed a lot, and they spoke candidly about not wanting to be represented by the WAC, though they clearly had good relationships with their officemates. They were clearly proud of their victory over the more powerful pharmaceutical company. They bore absolutely no resemblance to the agency-lacking victims portrayed in the literatures of anti-prostitution NGOs. They drew power and confidence from their solidarity with other workers, as is the purpose of any labor union.

Thinking back, it makes perfect sense that the WAC and WNU were the most cautious of all of the organizations. While all of the NGOs have faced different kinds of opposition, the WAC and WNU are unique in Cambodia in their support of sex workers as workers and the fact that they do not focus on sex work as something that need be eliminated.

Though I did not face any difficulty in getting the representatives from other NGOs to talk about their work, I did have a tough time asking the specific questions to which I wanted to find the answers. The majority of times I was initially given a speech that nearly duplicated the information available online. It was only after demonstrating that I had done my homework and was familiar with the general work of the organization did we move on to deeper conversations.

APPENDIX B: LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAfC - American Assistance for Cambodia
AFESIP - Agir Pour la Femme en Situation Precaire/ Acting for Women in Distressing Situations
CATW - Coalition Against Trafficking in Women
CDC - Council for the Development of Cambodia
COYOTE - Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics
CWCC - Cambodian Women's Crisis Center
DK - Democratic Kampuchea
GAD/C - Gender and Development for Cambodia
IMF - International Monetary Fund
INGO - International Nongovernmental Organization
NGO - Nongovernmental Organization
PRK - People's Republic of Kampuchea
SWAN - Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network
SWP - Sex Workers Project
UN - United Nations
UNTAC - United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
US - United States of America
USAID - United States Agency for International Development
USDOS - United States Department of State
WAC - Womyn's Agenda for Change
WNU - Women's Network for Unity

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