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Naila Kabeer – the gender agenda

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Our regular podcasts are written for a broad audience of public policy professionals, and those interested in public policy throughout the region.

Policy Forum connects with the Asia and the Pacific Policy Society – a network of thousands of people involved in every level of policy around the region.

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Prof Bessell: Professor Sharon Bessell, Director of the Children's Policy Centre, Crawford School, ANU
Prof Kabeer: Professor Naila Kabeer, Professor of Gender and Development at the London School of Economics

[intro music 0:00:00-0:00:12]

Host: Hello, and welcome to Policy Forum Pod – the podcast for those who want to dig a little deeper into the policy challenges facing Australia and its region. I am Martyn Pearce. Policy Forum Pod is produced at Crawford School, the region's leading graduate policy school, and you can find out more about us at crawford.anu.edu.au.

Now, I am all on my lonesome here, in the studio. Today it is just me, but I am here to bring you a very special episode of Policy Forum Pod, featuring a terrific interview. I think you are really going to enjoy it. We will get to that in a second, but first a quick reminder we would love to have you on board for our Facebook podcast gang. We have created this little creative space for you, our listeners, to chat to one another, to chat to our presenters, to share your ideas with the team. You will find us on Facebook — just type 'Policy Forum Pod' into the search bar.

Also, some pod news. This week, you may have noticed that we launched a brand-new podcast, looking at all of the issues, policies, politics, and personalities of the Australian election. It is called Democracy Sausage, because who does not love a democracy sausage, and it is hosted by Mark Kenny at the Australian Studies Institute at ANU.

This week on the Democracy Sausage podcast — I just love saying that, Mark chats to Shirley Leitch, Andrew Hughes and Bob McMullan about the first week of campaigning. He covers everything from health policy commitments, to how the parties are using social media, to target voters. It is a great listen and it will be out early every week. We will leave a link to it in the show notes.

Today on the podcast, we are bringing you a very special interview that was recorded last week with Professor Sharon Bessell, talking to Professor Naila Kabeer about gender and poverty. Sharon, as you will know, is a Professor here, at Crawford School. She is the ANU lead on the Individual Deprivation Measure Project and she is also Editor of Policy Forum's *Poverty: In Focus* section.

Naila Kabeer is a Professor of Gender and Development at the London School of Economics. She has done advisory work for the governments of India, Bangladesh and Gambia, and a huge range of international and bilateral organisations, including World Bank, UNDP and Oxfam.

Sharon and Naila talk about a broad range of issues, from how poverty affects women in particular, the impact of poverty on domestic violence, to the link between inequality and discrimination, and why the UN Sustainable Development Goals are such an important step towards gender equality. Naila was here, at Crawford School, to give a talk on women's livelihoods that was sponsored by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research.

We are going to get to that in a second, but first a quick reminder to our listeners, please do get in contact with us. Let us know your thoughts about the podcast today. You can hit us up on Twitter where we are @APPSPolicyForum, send us an email: podcast@policyforum.net or, as I said, join the Facebook podcast gang — we are PolicyForumPod on that platform.

Stick around after the main interview, because I will be back then, but for now let's hear what Naila had to say to Sharon.

[interlude music 0:03:22-0:03:30]

Prof Bessell: Today, we would like to look at the gendered nature of poverty. Why poverty affects women in different ways than men and what the role of this UN Sustainable Development Goals can play in achieving gender equality. To talk through some of these issues, I am absolutely delighted to welcome Naila Kabeer to the podcast. Naila, welcome.

Prof Kabeer: Thank you.

Prof Bessell: Naila, I must say that I do not think I have taught a course over the past 20 years where you have not appeared on my reading list, so I know all of my students are going to be listening to this discussion that we are about to have, with great interest.

I wanted to go back, to begin our conversation, to a comment that you made in one of your early works, in "*Reversed Realities*", which was published way back in 1994. You wrote in the preface to that book "the denial of voice and agency to the unofficial actors of development takes a particularly intense form when it comes to women", and you went on to say that development has been about men, by men and for men — 25 years on, how much has that situation changed?

Prof Kabeer: I think it has changed quite a lot. I think the talk has definitely changed. We certainly see much more attention. It is almost--; The larger development agencies now make it almost compulsory for any of the projects that they get involved with to take some kind of account of gender differentials, and so on, take account of women.

I mean, it has a downside, obviously, because very often they seemed to be playing on some of the responsibilities that women have as a vehicle for achieving their own goals [?? 0:05:16] understood that there is a lot of instrumental value in targeting women to…achieve some of their goals.

You could no longer say that they were invisible. You have to acknowledge that, at the level of policy, at the level of projects, there was far more attention [given? 0:05:35] to women, and I could never write that sentence now.

Prof Bessell: Which, I think, does indicate some significant progress.

Prof Kabeer: Yes.

Prof Bessell: Much of your work is focused on the gendered nature of poverty and also gender-based inequality, and you have described poverty as being both a state and the process. How does seeing poverty in this way help us to understand, and then respond, to poverty — the poverty of both women and men?

Prof Kabeer: Poverty as state draws our attention to some of the differentials in the key dimensions that we see as indicative of deprivation, so poverty as state is like a snapshot and we ask questions about things that are very crucial to human wellbeing: food, water, education, health, nutrition — all of those things. Poverty as state is like freezing these inequalities at a particular moment of time and appreciating the fact that there are major inequalities and those persist.

Poverty as process is trying to understand how we got there. What are the larger forces and the immediate factors that lead to these inequalities between men and women? What are the mechanisms through which gender differentials and inequalities are reproduced over time? It is a much more dynamic approach and it helps us to understand causalities.

Prof Bessell: One of the things that you have written quite a lot about in your work is the violence that is faced by the poor and you have made the point that, while violence against the poor is often class-based, it is mediated by gender. How do poverty, violence and patriarchy intersect?

Prof Kabeer: Yes, that point that both men and women from subordinate groups, from the lowest sections of the lowest ranks in the hierarchy of society are very often at the mercy of people who are more powerful than them, so men may face forms of dispossession, forms of physical violence because they have far less protection, but women face that as well, from external actors, powerful actors. It often has a sexual dimension to it, so poorer women are often at the receiving end of various kinds of sexual violence — rape and harassment.

Of course, in addition for poorer men, for men from low-income households who are unable to live up to the hegemonic models of masculinity, of a main bread-winner, often they take their frustrations out on the people who are somewhat less powerful than them. I think I, when I started to look at this in the context of Bangladesh and India, you find that levels of violence often increase in situations of extreme crisis, of extreme seasonal hunger, so I think--;

I have heard women say that he comes home, and he has not had any work all day, and [entering? 0:08:46] when the children are crying, and so he turns around and beats us. I think that is not a fault of his character as such, it is just the frustrations of being unable to live up to this model and taking it out on whoever is weaker than you.

Prof Bessell: When we think about those interconnections between the pressures that the poor people, both men and women, face every day and the violence that they are subjected to, where do we begin in terms of addressing, particularly violence against women in their homes? I think this is rightly often seen as such an acute issue that if you are not safe in your home then you are incredibly vulnerable. Where do we begin addressing domestic violence, family-based violence into a partner violence when we understand the broader context?

Prof Kabeer: I think one has to have a multi-stranded approach. I do not think there is any one single thing one can do to bring violence down. I believe that giving women options that would increase their negotiating power within the household, so that they are not entirely dependent, is on important way forward.

A lot of women put up with abusive relationships because they have nowhere else to go, so things like secure housing, land rights, decent work — all of those things give you a fallback option, but I think, also, you need to change the laws. I think the state has, even in perfect states and failings — well, not failings, but states that are not particularly admirable in many ways still carry a lot of wait in society.

I think if states make a very clear, take a stand on the issue of the unacceptability of domestic violence, pass laws to that effect, and then take the trouble of enforcing those laws, train the police, train the judges — so it is a kind of holistic approach, I think, because its roots — the roots of domestic violence — are not in the character of individual men. They are a reflection of both power and class--; gender and class dynamics.

I think one has to address it from a number of different ways, but I think, above all, questioning the — what is the word? — the 'taking-for-grantedness' of it. "My husband beats me, and that is fine" or "I beat my wife, and that is fine." I think that has been, in many societies, as simply taken for granted. It is not questioned. I think bringing that to the surface and starting to find ways of questioning it is very important.

Actually, at this conference that I have just been at, we had a panel on masculinity, and someone told me that one of the men on that panel is very active — I cannot remember where he comes from, but he may come from East Africa, very active on this issue and, when he goes to public officials and talks about domestic violence, husbands beating their wives, and they say, "Well, that's acceptable," he then turns the question around and says, "Is it acceptable to beat your mother?"

It is an interesting way of--; There is something about the conjugal relationship, marital relationship, because masculinity is much at stake in those relationships, that they are somewhat different from other forms of gender relationships within a family. I think, again, questioning the naturalness and the givenness of this is a very important step.

Prof Bessell: Naila, you mentioned the conference that you have been here, in Australia, to be part of. Of course, that was a conference looking at issues around women in agriculture. It was sponsored by ACIAR, held at the University of Canberra, and it had participants from around the world.

Prof Kabeer: 45 countries.

Prof Bessell: Which is very impressive.

Prof Kabeer: Yes.

Prof Bessell: That comment that man made from East Africa about challenging the 'taking-for-grantedness' of violence, how widespread is that attitude amongst men in South Asia, where you have done so much of your work, in parts of Africa or, indeed, anywhere in the world where we see high rates of violence against women?

Prof Kabeer: The attitudes that it is acceptable to be violent?

Prof Bessell: The attitude that it is acceptable, but also the attitude of some men that we need to challenge this, that actually men need to stand up — how widespread, do you think, [crosstalk 0:13:26] men?

Prof Kabeer: Not widespread enough. I think there are these individuals, cases, organisations, but you can almost count them on the fingers of your hand — the number of men standing up to the issue of violence, because it does bring them to confrontation with other men in ways that might put their own masculinity under question: why are you questioning this male privilege?

I am very glad to see it is there and we have some excellent men on the panel, but I would like to see many more men because we are not going to get rid of this problem, obviously, without it becoming a widespread change in norms and attitudes.

Prof Bessell: Naila, one of the challenges in addressing poverty, for both women and men, for boys and girls, is the absence of sex-desegregated data — data that are broken down so that we can actually see the difference between women and men, and so often poverty data are collected at the level of the household and so we really do not know what is going on within that household, but of course assumptions abound about sharing, about distribution.

I have been working on a new and gender-sensitive approach to measuring poverty for the past decade and, with colleagues, have developed the Individual Deprivation Measure, which assesses poverty across 15 dimensions at the individual level. What astounds me is that this is one of the first attempts to do this, but recently we have seen a good deal of debate and recognition that we do need to make the measuring poverty at the level of the individual.

What has consistently puzzled me is why, until very recently, there has been so limited attention in the mainstream to the need of individual level data, so why is it, do you think, in 2019 that we still have so little sex-desegregated data about poverty?

Prof Kabeer: You know, I think it is like the weight of history that these massive, official household surveys were designed many years ago and they just continue to reproduce themselves, and measuring of a household is an easy way out — you just have to talk to one person, and they report on everybody on what their views are.

To take on gender-desegregated or sex-desegregated data requires you to go the additional mile. It requires you to take much more effort and design your surveys in such a way that you are now asking questions about individuals. I think people just feel like 'what is the returns on that?' and 'do we really need to?'.

We do have data on health and nutrition — the certain well-known wellbeing indicators. They do not tell us enough about the depth of the differentials within a household, so I think we are really dealing within this institutional inertia. I think your index and your efforts to develop quite a complicated but participatory approach, I think one of the problems for me is that statisticians or certain kinds of policy officials always want something they call representative data. That means huge, large-scale surveys.

You can get quite a lot of very valuable information by doing smaller-scale efforts in different parts of a society. Shorter interviews, they add up and they will tell you about the variation, and they will tell you enough about the variation across the context of a country for it to be reasonably representative and a far more accurate depiction of how poverty is playing out.

Prof Bessell: Alongside your work on poverty, you have also worked a great deal on inequality and, of course, those two issues are very closely related. Today, we see a great deal of attention paid to inequality — not surprising perhaps given the massive concentration of wealth amongst a tiny proportion of the global population.

When you have written about inequality, you have written about both vertical and horizontal inequalities. What does that mean and why does it matter, for women in particular?

Prof Kabeer: Well, vertical inequality is the classic way in which inequality has been measured, which is to look at the distribution of indicators of wealth, assets, income, to look at the distribution across a population. That tells you who is poor and who is rich, but it does not tell you that, within these different income strata — different sections of the population, are people evenly divided by identity, are they evenly divided amongst the rich and the poor, or do we find certain kinds of identities overrepresented among the wealthy — let us say white men, and

certain kinds of identities overrepresented in the lower income deciles — let us say indigenous, low-caste men and women.

Gender, of course, is critical in here, because one of the things I think about gender is it cuts across the inequalities, cuts across the income distribution. You will find people are sympathetic, but you will find inequalities in the higher-end of the income distribution, so we have Hollywood actresses complaining about being paid far less, even if they are paid in millions, then their male co-stars. You may not be sympathetic, but it is a part of the same system.

Equally, you will find at the lower end gender inequality exists there, as well, and it will often be intensified by the fact that you are in a situation of deprivation, the fact that you are likely to be from a racial minority or an ethnic minority, so there is a concentration of disadvantage at the bottom, which reflects the intersection of income deprivation and discriminated identities.

Prof Bessell: How do those patterns of inequality reproduce themselves? How does it keep on happening [crosstalk 0:19:58] the same people are concentrated at the bottom and, indeed, the same people are concentrated at the top?

Prof Kabeer: Yes. I think we do not look enough at the people at the top. We are much more accustomed to acknowledging that there are certain groups of people overrepresented at the bottom, but the flip side of that is, of course, there are certain groups of people overrepresented at the top. I think it keeps on happening.

Again, it is the way I talked earlier about institutional inertia. It is the way the systems have been set up to reproduce inequality and they do it without any effort on anyone's part. It is set up in a way that is loaded. Your ability to get yourself out of a situation — it is very hard for you. You never earn enough. You face discrimination in any attempt to get a job.

It is setup against you, but I also think that it is set up again you because you have no voice. The people at the bottom have no say in making the rules of the game, and so the rules of the game are now loaded against them and until and unless they have voice, or someone at the top speaks on their behalf, why would it change. It is in the interest of powerful people to keep the system intact — maybe throw a few crumbs now and again to make sure you do not have a revolution of any kind, but enough to just hold on to what they have.

I think I have [caught? 0:21:28] recently that the only way that the dispossessed in history have been able to claim their rights as citizens is not through individual efforts — it was through collective action but, getting that collective action to happen is extraordinarily difficult, particularly these days, with precarious work dispersion of people, isolation of people. Then, inequalities actually are taking the form of divisions amongst those at the bottom rather than people uniting against people at the top.

Prof Bessell: Naila, I wanted to turn our conversation towards the Sustainable Development Goals, which have variously been hailed as a global consensus for good to address exactly the kinds of challenges we have been talking about. They have been criticised as little more than a wish-list and, perhaps, a not a very coherent wish-list at that.

You were deeply involved in debates around the Millennium Development Goals that came before the SDGs and, in 2005 you wrote about Millennium Development Goal 3, which aimed to achieve gender equality. You argued at the time that the targets and the indicators that were associated with that goal targets, that focused on education, getting girls into school, on employment, getting women into the workforce, were not really fit for achieving the purpose of gender equality and empowering women.

Does the SDG on gender equality and women's empowerment fare any better in terms of how it is framed and how it tries to measure progress?

Prof Kabeer: No, I think there are vast improvements. One of the reasons I think they are a vast improvement is that, as you recall, the MDGs were agreed by a group of UN bureaucrats sitting in a basement somewhere, and I believe the environmental goal only got onto the MDGs because someone came out and bumped the into the person who [?? 0:23:30] environment in the UN and they were like, "Oh, we must [?? 0:23:32] environment," so it was very incoherent. The use of the percentage of women in national parliaments as an indicator of tackling absolute poverty seems completely misjudged.

When I look at the SDGs, I recall that civil society mobilised, and the UN opened up channels for conversation and dialogue, so they had these massive surveys and allowed people online and in country to talk about what their priorities were. There was a much greater deal of participation and engagement with the SDGs and I think the feminist voice was more organised. They were missing for the MDGs.

If you look at SDG 5, I think it touches on many of the things that feminists have been fighting for: the issue of domestic violence, unpaid work, and so on. I think it is a much more coherent framework. Of course, it is a wish-list. We have a trade-off between going for short, sharp focused goals and indicators and then managing to leave out a lot of things or we have the option of taking something much longer, which then, I guess, leaves it up to countries to decide what they are going to prioritise.

Nevertheless, I think the SDG 5 is much more in keeping with feminist thinking around what our key issue is — getting unpaid work onto the agenda was a huge victory, and then we do see attention to gender issues on many of the other goals, as well.

I think I was particularly pleased about, I think it is Goal 10 — the SDG 10 about inequalities, and about not just income inequality but also adding that it should address socioeconomic inequalities, as well, of various kinds. This whole slogan of 'leave no one behind' opens up the possibility for different advocacy groups, activist groups to push for those who are most likely to get left behind.

I think in many ways one can be very cynical — and quite rightly so. On the other hand, if you think of the politics of accountability, one state sign up to these kinds of goals then it is up to civil society where it can mobilise to hold them accountable, and say, "You have signed up to…taking questions of decent work seriously and environment seriously, and now we need--;" So, it is trying to interpret the SDGs as a force for progress.

If you interpret it in that way rather than pour cold water on it, you have killed it from the start, but if you try and interpret it in a way that we are going to take you seriously — this is what you have said and you have said it in a public place; you have signed the document, I think it is a more positive way to go forward.

Prof Bessell: That language of 'leave no one behind' and the language of gender equality appears in a number of goals, though it is there importantly in Goal 10 — on inequalities, it is also there in Goal 1 — the first goal, which focuses on reducing poverty.

Do you think that Goal 1 — on poverty — provides a new pathway for addressing poverty and does that language of reducing poverty in all its forms, for me, women and children, the language that is used in that goal, does that help us in moving forward in our efforts to really do something significant about the gendered nature of poverty?

Prof Kabeer: You know, in as much as words matter, spelling these things out is a huge improvement on the past, and spelling out that it is about men, women and children, and then specifying under the other goals what is needed to address the poverty of men, women and children is important, and I quite like the fact that this is bringing together a concern with absolute poverty with a concern with inequality.

We have always been concerned with absolute poverty and that continues to exist. It is supposed to have gone down, but I think the markers — or the base — is so low for judging poverty that one can only be very complacent about the fact that absolute poverty seems to have gone down. We also know that a lot of that decline was because of China, and India, and the big, populous countries.

I think having a focus on poverty is still important, because it focuses our attention not just to people at the bottom of the inequality distribution but to people who have benefited least from growth, development and all these other efforts to make a difference.

Prof Bessell: I think you made that important point that language can matter, and it sometimes matters. I find it very intriguing that, while the SDGs talk about women and men, and so we are starting to get that recognition of gender differences, children are often still spoken about in an un-gendered way. What are your thoughts on that?

Prof Kabeer: Well, it would not have hurt to talk about men and women, boys and girls, and I often see that framing. I will just suggest that the tolerance lobby were not influential enough — or rather they were influential, but in a gender-blind way, that perhaps feminists are not active enough around the issue of children sufficiently.

It is like 'youth'. I hear 'youth' and you would just see young men, and actually 'youth' are young men and young women. Somehow, we have got to men and women but the age, the life course dimensions — and if you look at the elderly, as well, we need gender desegregated attention to poverty amongst the elderly, so I do not know how they could have framed it, yet they could have framed it better.

These words matter. I think they matter in the UN more than anywhere else. I remember being at a meeting where I was trying to put forward some ideas around food security and every agency that was represented in the room wanted their word to be in there: refugees, rehabilitation, humanitarian, because if you do not have those words there those constituencies do not have a say. I think, in the UN, having attention to girls and boys, and young men and young women it sounds pedantic or it sounds overkill but, actually, I think it is a forum in which these things are very important.

Prof Bessell: Nails, several of the SDGs refer to social protection and, of course, conditional cash transfers have become the darling of social protection strategies — the idea that the poor are given a cash benefit, but that there are conditions attached, and those conditions are often around sending children to school, ensuring that children have health checks, so very much attached to the development of children [?? 0:31:02] the development of future human capital.

Those conditional cash transfers are also often framed as promoting women's empowerment or promoting gender equality, as well as addressing poverty. Do conditional cash transfers fulfil their promise to women, not only in terms of poverty but in terms of in [parliament and equality? 0:31:24]?

Prof Kabeer: I think the consensus of the studies that I have seen and that I have done the [?? 0:31:32] investigation of what the impact of these condition cash transfers are, in general see the reinforce women's traditional roles as mothers. They are very materialistic agenda. They very often add to the demands made on women and they are based on lack of trust that — you can rely on mothers, anyways, but parents to do the best they can for their children.

We also note that unconditional cash transfers have had similar effects, so the conditionality, I will say, is partly political in the sense that it helps to sell the cash transfer. I know in Brazil they tried to drop the conditionality and the population said, "Oh this is going to be a handout," so conditionality is a way of speaking the language of core responsibility. The state will give you this transfer and you, in turn, must abide by these conditions.

Of course, the state does not deliver on its promise, so you may want the children to go to school but the teachers may not be there, doctors may not be in the clinic, you may not have an expansion of services in education and health that meets the increased demand, that having these cash transfers will lead to. There is, again, a mismatch.

On the whole, I tend to also see some positive sides, in the sense that there is evidence, say, from Mexico, which has one of the oldest of these CC conditional cash transfers, that women were able to use some of the transfers to invest in livestock which was under their own control. In other parts of the world, we have seen that, because this is handed to women, they have been able to use it in ways that do not necessarily conform to the conditionalities, but which gives them some degree of control of assets under their [?? 0:33:34].

But, on the whole, I think the discourse of maternal responsibility is probably not a helpful one. I think we could build father into that a bit more. It would have been a more balanced approach.

Prof Bessell: In some of the global discussions around social protection and the most appropriate course to take, we have conditional cash transfers as one option and, also, debates and discussions around the potential of Universal Basic Income. This is an issue that we have discussed on several occasions here, on the podcast.

What are your views on Universal Basic Income as a form of social protection?

Prof Kabeer: I have very mixed views about it. On the one hand, obviously I like the idea that every single person in entitled to some amount of money which is at their disposal, and is unconditional, and is an acknowledgment of their membership of a society, their citizenship.

On the other hand — and I know the supporters of it deny it, or think it is not a problem, I would not like it to be seen as a replacement for Universal Basic Services. For me, the most important thing is having universal access to basic services in health, education, and so on. If you somehow think that this income is going to lead generic demand and, therefore, bring for the supply, the amounts are too small.

My own preference — though I do not know how many people are arguing for it, is Universal Basic Services that everyone — I love the National Health Service, as it was; I love people having--; all children having access to, initially, primary and then secondary schools — I would like them to get free education right to the university level, and I think that is more important for me.

Prof Bessell: The gendered nature of service is something that is often discussed. What is often less discussed is the importance of infrastructure, and this is something that the SDGs do address but very rarely do we see a gendered-lens supply to debates around infrastructure. Very recently, last month, the UN Commission on the Status of Women focused on social protection and infrastructure, and in the final communiqué referred to the importance of infrastructure to gender equality.

How significant, do you think, this perhaps very slow but noticeable shift towards thinking about infrastructure is?

Prof Kabeer: You know, some of us have been arguing about infrastructure for a very long time and we have been arguing for infrastructure such as roads, transportation, electricity, piped water — clean water or easier access to water. All of these things have been--; And I think one reason--;

In my view, there is one reason that it has been somehow sidelined is that, within the West, a lot of focus, a lot of the language has been about the care economy. Within the West, the care economy is seen as cooking, cleaning and looking after children, or elderly, or disabled people. Whereas in the global self, we have to extend what the issue of unpaid work is about. It is about growing vegetables for the family. It is about collecting fuel and water. It is about raising livestock, perhaps not for markets but for subsistence.

There is a huge component of unpaid work that tends to get made invisible in the language of care, and so the language of care draws our attention to maternity leave, paternity leave, childcare, affordable crèches, and so on. Whereas, I think, infrastructure, utilities, having wood lots near your home, all of those things address this other aspect of women's unpaid work, which is this productive rather than reproductive aspect.

I, for one, am very clear that it is a huge step forward and it is a huge step forward in acknowledging the differences of what unpaid work means in industrialised countries compared to poorer, less monetised economies.

Prof Bessell: While the Sustainable Development Goals frame women's empowerment quite broadly in terms of the range of issues we have been discussing, you have noted that in the current global discourse women's empowerment has really become women's economic empowerment. How concerned should we be about this slippage of language from women's empowerment to women's economic empowerment?

Prof Kabeer: I have a little bee in my bonnet about it, and the reason is I think it narrows both the meaning of 'empowerment', obviously, but also the processed that lie behind empowerment. I have always been a great believer in material dimensions of subordination and I have always wanted to see access to land, assets, property, work — all these opportunities, which come under

an economic rubric, but the reason that I feel it is too narrow is, first, I am a little suspicious of the motivations for that slippage, for that conflation — and I think it is about allowing major policy-makers to focus on growth and markets, and that is what they have understood that women's labour force participation leads to growth, and so on.

I am a little concerned that we lose sight of the issues of power and subordination, and the focus in on 'let's get women into labour market, let's get women into micro enterprise, and so on'. That is one concern I have, that it allows them to shift their gears from the broader agenda to one that suits the agenda they have.

I think the second one is a conceptual one. I often see economic empowerment defined in ways that it is all about the economic and it is about economic decision-making, it is about economic assets. Whereas, my own research says that different progress and different dimensions of subordination are not contained within that dimension.

Empowering women in the market domain can have spill-over effects in other aspects of their lives. Money is not just about getting out of poverty. It is a pathway to being able to help yourself, being able to help your parents, being able to have some sort of voice — all of those other things, so I worry that narrowing it to economic empowerment will narrow our gaze to only changes that have an economic dimension.

I think one of the things I have been saying is I prefer — and, of course, it is three more words, but I prefer talking about 'economic pathways to empowerment', in the way that I will talk about political pathways to empowerment. People who work in the political domain will focus on that, but they will know that empowering women politically does not stop at politics. It will have spill-over effects on economics, voices and their standing in society.

Similarly, I think, empowering women in the economic domain will have spill-over effects on voice, agency and other areas of their lives and in their communities.

Prof Bessell: Finally, Naila, if you had a magic wand — with only one wish, what do you think is the single most important issue for the global development agenda if we are to achieve women's equality and to see women empowered by 2030, the period of the Sustainable Development Goals?

Prof Kabeer: I think, to have to focus on one issue is fundamentally against our way of looking at things, but I guess the issue of bodily integrity, the issue of respect for women to control over their own bodies, and for others to respect women's bodies and their control, so I would want to see the whole area of reproductive sexual rights taken seriously, violence against women, sexual harassment. That is a very important way in which women continue to be silenced through violence, through denial of reproductive choices.

I suppose it is still quite broad, but I think accepting the boundaries that women have — all of us have around our own bodies, is something [?? 0:42:57] control that we need to exercise [?? 0:42:59]. I think it is perhaps a very important, perhaps one of the most important.

Prof Bessell: Professor Naila Kabeer, it has been an absolute pleasure to have the opportunity to talk with you. Thank you so much for coming on the podcast and for sharing your insights and your wisdom. Thank you.

Prof Kabeer: My pleasure, thank you.

[interlude music 0:43:17-0:43:21]

Host: Welcome back, and thanks once again to Sharon Bessell and Professor Naila Kabeer. I thought it was a fascinating interview. It covered a really broad range of crucial and important topics — a very good listen. What did you think, listeners? Get in contact with us. Let us know your thoughts, your comments, what questions it raised for you.

You can reach us on Twitter, where we are @APPSPolicyForum. You can drop us a line: podcast@policyforum.net, if you want to use the email, or join the Facebook podcast gang, where we are PolicyForumPod.

Now, if you want to find out more about how gender impacts on poverty, you might want to check our Master of Public Policy in Global Development Policy degree here, at Crawford School. You can find it at crawford.anu.edu.au/study.

Now, normally at the end of each week's podcast we have a discussion about some of the comments and questions that we received both on previous podcasts and on posts that we have put up on our website, policyforum.net, but there is just me in the studio, here, and the discussion with just me does not sound like a great idea.

Instead, what I am going to do is focus on a couple of your suggestions that you have made for future podcasts that we might want to do, and we are really keen to get your thoughts on the topics that you would like to see us cover on Policy Forum Pod here.

We love hearing your ideas, and so many great ones, too. If you want to let us know of a podcast you think we should do, jump onto the Facebook podcast group. That is the best way to let us know. In fact, the is exactly what Aditia Aditia and Eleanor Ashton have done. I just want to read out their suggestions for future podcasts.

Aditia — hello, Aditia — wrote they would be interested in how the advancement of technology might affect or disrupt the policy sphere, and Eleanor — hello, Eleanor — said the role of communications in public policy successes and failures. I love both of those ideas I have got to

say. I think the advancement of technology is a fascinating area for the podcast to focus on and, as a comms person, the idea of doing something which is around the role of communications in public policy and how it can both contribute to the effective communications of public policy or how it can go terribly, terribly wrong and make things worse sounds like a great topic for a pod. Many thanks to both of you for those ideas there.

What do you think of those ideas, listeners? Have you got other ideas of your own for a podcast that we might want to do? We are really keen to get your thoughts.

Now, while we are on the topic of the Facebook podcast gang, I want to say hello to a few of our new members. Hello to Dean Hewson, to Chevelle McKeough, Alexander Mengel, Kathryn Allan, and Jennifer Davis — and apologies to any of you whose name I might have mingled there, but welcome to the pod gang. It is great to have you involved.

That brings us to the end of this week's podcast. If you enjoyed today's episode, then perhaps you may want to leave us a quick review on iTunes. It will only take you 30 seconds or so, just find that fifth star — it will be a huge help to us in getting word out about this podcast.

We will be back next week with another Policy Forum Pod, and hopefully there will be someone in the studio with me this time, but until then from me, Martyn Pearce, cheerio.

[closing music 0:46:45-0:47:03]

[audio ends 0:47:03]