

CELEBRATING THE LIFE AND WORK OF JACKIE KIRK ~ 5 YEARS LATER ~

By Fatima S. Khan



Jackie Kirk (1968-2008)

August 2013 marks the fifth anniversary of the death of the well-respected and loved academic, Dr. Jackie Kirk. One of the co-founders of *Girlhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Jackie was a passionate advocate for education in conflict-affected countries. She worked tirelessly for organizations such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) in the hope of bettering the lives of the less fortunate.

In this tribute we commemorate and highlight Jackie's extensive work in the field of gender, education, policy, and development. In doing so, we hope to keep the legacy of Jackie's work alive and inspire many others to follow in her example of committing to the best possible education of children in communities around the world.



"Attention is required to the nature and quality of education service delivery in the challenging environments of different types of fragile states."
Kirk, 2007

Education in Emergencies

Jackie was instrumental in focusing international attention on the need to provide access to quality education for children in fragile states. Her research in Pakistan and Somalia, for example, stressed the importance of education as a stabilizing force after the destruction wrought by natural disasters and conflict.

"The agency of women in schools to contribute to a more gender-just peace should be recognized and promoted."

Kirk, 2004



Women Teachers

Jackie delved deeply into the lives, practices, experiences, and personal development of women teachers in various educational settings. She examined, in particular, their active participation in the peace-building and reconstruction process: she identified and helped to implement strategies to support women teachers as agents of change in their communities.



Policy Development

Jackie made a significant contribution in this field in her advocating for the right of children, particularly girls, to participate in the decision-making processes that affected their lives. She encouraged student representation and supported the work of such representatives in the formal education sector.

"We hope that space and support may be created for girls to authentically take up agency in ways that have meaning for themselves."

Kirk & Garrow (2003)

"Transformation within the education sector can be a critical force for broader societal change."

Kirk, 2004

Peace Building

Given the necessity of educational reconstruction in post-conflict zones, Jackie argued that men and women (perhaps even more so) have to work together to transform classroom process and practice into safe spaces in which children can play an active role. For Jackie, all stakeholders in the field of education could contribute towards peace, restoration, and democracy.



Gender and Conflict

In areas of conflict, girls and women are often victims of violence and their rights (such as access to education) are egregiously violated. Jackie was influential in raising awareness that seeing issues from the perspective of gender is essential to advocacy and action initiatives.

"Safety and freedom from all forms of sexual violence is important for girls whilst they are in school."

Kirk, 2007



"The onset of menses will inevitably have an impact on girls' access to education."

Kirk & Sommer, 2006

Girls' Lives

Much of Jackie's work was crucial to deepening an understanding of girls' lives. For example, her work on menstruation focused on the impact of poor or non-existent sanitary facilities and supplies, social stigma, and educational practices on post-pubescent girls in relation to their access to, and experience in, schools.



Home-Based Schools

In Afghanistan, girls and women have severely limited access to education so they often learn from home. As an IRC member, Jackie examined home-based school conditions and the experiences of local teachers, with a view to integrating pedagogy, gender roles, and policy.

"Home-based education must be officially recognized to give girls access to further studies."

Kirk & Winthrop (2006)



"...Images are powerful tools used in construction of gender relations, ethnic/racial difference and power relations..."

Magno & Kirk (2008)

Visual Methodologies

Jackie was aware of the need for appropriate visual methodologies that could be instrumental in examining how images of girls in education were being used by development agencies. She argued against their objectification, which she saw as limiting their empowerment.

