Defining Marginalization: An Assessment Tool

A product of the partnership between four development professionals at the Elliott School of International Affairs & the World Fair Trade Organization-Asia

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I. Executive Summary

This paper relays the process and products of the partnership of WFTO-Asia and a team of four development professionals from the Elliott School of International Affairs at the George Washington University. The partnership was formed in order to create a both a definition of and an assessment tool to monitor marginalization. After extensive research of international development groups, case studies, and marginalization indexes and definitions, the team was able to reach a working definition of marginalization: *"Marginalization is both a condition and a process that prevents individuals and groups from full participation in social, economic, and political life enjoyed by the wider society."* With that definition and the research in mind, the team hashed out a framework. The assessment tool was built to include the categories of food security, social security, education, economic opportunity, language, protection from violence, health & sanitation, infrastructure, and private property. The research, definition, and framework presented to producer groups and trade organizations in Dhaka, Bangladesh. They were also evaluated through a non-profit working with ex-cons in Washington, DC. Feedback from the presentations and subsequent interviews served to edit and condense the indicators into the five, broader, categories. The final assessment is conducted based on advocacy, availability of resources, health, economic opportunity, and education. Following a brief pilot, both the definition and assessment tool have were handed over to the WFTO-Asia for immediate implementation. They will be introduced to the whole of the WFTO at their biennial conference in May 2015.

II. Acknowledgements

This research project was conducted by a four-person team of graduate students of George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs, in conjunction with WFTO Asia. The GWU Team completed this project as part of the International Development Studies' capstone program, in which student groups undertake a short-term consultancy with an organization to complete a jointly designed project.

Our team is extremely grateful for the support of the many individuals at WFTO – Asia who made this research possible. We would like to first thank Christine Gent, director of WFTO – Asia, for her willingness to collaborate with us, and her guidance throughout the project. Her feedback and coordination with NGOs in Dhaka, Bangladesh was essential to the successful completion of this assignment.

In addition, the "field" component of this research would not have been possible without the support of CORR – The Jute Works. While conducting research in Bangladesh, Bertha Gity Baroi and Milton Sunrajit Ratna invested a great deal of time and energy in helping us accomplish our research objectives, for which we are very thankful. We also greatly appreciate their hospitality while staying in Dhaka as they provided us with food and shelter.

Finally, we wish to thank the wide range actors, including the groups who agreed to be interviewed as part of our field research. Our team cannot overemphasize the value of these interviewees' insights, observations, opinions, and candor. The knowledge they shared with us is an integral part of the data our team used to develop the findings and recommendations outlined in this paper.

III. Acronym List

DCCK	DC Central Kitchen
DFID	The Department for International Development
GWU	George Washington University
IRB	Institutional review board
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
WFTO	World Fair Trade Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

VI. Introduction

"WFTO's mission is to enable producers to improve their livelihoods and communities through Fair Trade. WFTO is the global network and advocate for Fair Trade, ensuring producer voices are heard. The interest of producers, especially small farmers and artisans, is the main focus in all the policies, governance, structures and decision making within the WFTO."[1]

In December of 2014, WFTO-Asia Director Christine Gent reached out to four development professionals at the Elliott School of International Affairs. She hoped to produce a working definition of marginalization for the WFTO. As a part of the WFTO Guarantee System, she wanted an assessment tool that would assist member organizations in better monitoring and evaluating the conditions of the producer groups they work with. Gent had realized earlier in 2014 that, while the WFTO claimed to know, work with, and support marginalized people; they did not have a definition in order to base that off of. She also saw the incongruous and immeasurable methods that were being used for member organizations to report on each of their producer groups' status of marginalization. This is why she decided to enlist help from development

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[1] http://wfto.com/about-us/vision-and-mission

professionals in training. The tool would be first tested and implemented by WFTO-Asia, but Gent's plan was to introduce the tool to the whole of WFTO at their Biennial Meeting in May 2015. This meant not only that the team needed to produce a broad and inclusive definition of marginalization, but also a tool that could identify and measure universal indicators of marginalization.

This paper will discuss the research and development process and products delivered by the team to WFTO-Asia. It will discuss background information about where their definition and assessment tool will fit, the research undergone and the fieldwork and feedback, lessons learned, and the conclusion.

V. Background

The World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) is committed to achieving trade structures that work to help the poor. The Guarantee System of internal quality management tools is designed to facilitate the improvement of people's livelihoods and communities, in accordance with the Organization's mission. This system is built on a Fair Trade Standard that sets the criteria applicable to certify Organizations as engaging in Fair Trade management and operation practices. Many of the Standard's criteria have been established as mandatory requirements to join WFTO. They are based primarily on the Ten Fair Trade Principles, the first of which states that opportunities must be created for Economically Disadvantaged Producers. As this project is concerned with defining those who will benefit the most from these fair trade practices, Principle One is the most relevant to our work.

The main purpose of the research was to compose a definition of those WFTO seeks to help. As a first step in evaluating their compliance with the Fair Trade Standard, members must conduct a Self Assessment. They must make sure that poverty reduction and support to marginalized small producers through trade are in their aims and primary activities. Since they must demonstrate positive impact on marginalized groups, it is especially relevant to provide them with an interpretation of what this means

and how it could look. This, coupled with an identification tool, will facilitate the determination of whether or not they are fulfilling this requirement.

The WFTO Guarantee System rests on 3 pillars: a self-assessment report, administered every 2 years; a monitoring audit, every 4 years; and a peer visit, every 4 years. The Marginalization Assessment tool is designed to be used during the 1st phase, as part of the self-assessment report. Though WFTO has a set of guidelines aimed at completing this preliminary component of its internal review, member organizations have no way to accurately quantify and monitor the positive impact they make on their groups. Our tool will not only allow member organizations to monitor the indicators of marginalization experienced, but also enable them to measure their "gains" over time. It is meant to help the trade organizations report whether or not their groups are marginalized in a more standardized way. But, most importantly, it will allow trade organizations to monitor the change experienced by their producer groups over time.

VI. Research Design & Methodology

When our team was first given the task to define marginalization and create an assessment tool for WFTO-Asia, we created a timeline with specific deliverables in order to keep WFTO-Asia Director Gent in the loop. The deliverables agreed upon were a literature review of our research, definition of marginalization, framework for the assessment tool, a powerpoint presentation introducing the tool, a user guide for the tool, and the tool itself. Below is the timeline we set out for ourselves to follow:

Timeline:

Dec.- Jan. 18th Research WFTO's current identification strategies/lessons learned

Look into what defined marginalized groups for other organizations

Reach out to NGOs and groups that work with the marginalized

Jan. 25th Deliver a 4-page summary of the research

Jan. 30th Submit a rough framework of identification parameters for feedback

Feb 1st-15th Tool design

Feb. 15th	Review feedback and draft the tool with parameter integration
	Check to see if we need to have a survey checked by the IRB
February 1st	Finalize the tool and send it to WFTO for their feedback
March 1st	Coordinate final research travel plans with WFTO
March 6-14th	Field research and tool feedback, collection
March 20th	Assess strengths and weaknesses of tool; make adjustments *April 1st*
	Present findings to the WFTO and prepare Capstone Presentation
April 30th	Deliver finalized tool, guide, and powerpoint to WFTO-Asia.

Our preliminary research was conducted early on in the project and focused on pre-existing instances, definitions, and measurements of marginalization. However, we understood that it was vital to our tool to get feedback from not only our client, Gent, but also various professors, trade organizations, and producer groups themselves. For that reason, our team traveled to Bangladesh and conducted focus groups with producers from local organizations. For the majority of the ten groups' interviews, the team followed a three-step process of asking group members to (1) define marginalization, (2) rank the nine categories agreed upon within our original framework and explain said rankings (to be introduced, shortly), and (3) to comment on what they think is missing from the framework of the assessment tool. For the final two producer groups in Bangladesh and the director of monitoring and evaluation at the DC Central Kitchen in Washington, DC, we were able to go through the actual assessment tool questions, getting feedback and making sure that the tool was user-friendly. The team also presented the firs phase of the work to a number of trade organization leaders at a board meeting, which provided understanding of what it would take in order to make the tool easy and effective to use.

Overall, the team was constantly evaluating and tweaking the products. We agreed that the process of creating the tool needed to be just as inclusive as the tool itself. With that in mind, the goal of the work was not to let preconceived notions interfere with creating the most effective tool possible. For this reason, each phase of shaping the definition and tool involved internal and external feedback loops. Every detail was scrutinized,

down to the final tool, yes, but even back from the very beginning, during the background research and writing of the literature review.

VII. Literature review

As a preliminary step to producing an assessment tool that could be used alongside the WFTO Guarantee System, the team conducted a literature review to situate the current perception of marginalization within the field of international development. To distill the most important aspects of this research, the definitions, measurement instruments, and indexes of several prominent international organizations were examined. Moreover, the impact of this particular form of oppression was analyzed and assessed through various case studies. Through this process, our team developed a framework to formulate a new, precise and inclusive definition of marginalization.

A. Definitions and Indexes

The first stage of this review consisted of a landscape analysis of well-established definitions and measurements of marginalization. The team examined definitions from **USAID, OHCHR,** the **World Bank Group** and **DFID.** The team also reviewed measurement instruments such as the **Human Development Index (HDI),** the **Gender Inequality Index (GII),** the **Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI),** the **Global Competitive Index,** and the **Canadian Marginalization Index.**

Upon synthesizing the findings of this research, the team noted that marginalization is often understood as both a current condition, and a dynamic process. As a condition, it excludes individuals or groups from participating fully in society. As a multidimensional and dynamic process, it channels the social relations and organizational barriers that block the attainment of livelihoods, human development and equal citizenship. Essentially, Marginalization describes both a process and a condition that prevents individuals or groups from full participation in social, economic and political life. It derives from exclusionary relationships based on power.

B. Case Studies

The second stage of our review consisted of surveying a series of case studies of marginalized groups in the areas of the world in which the WFTO is most active. The main purpose of this research was to decipher similarities and patterns among these various manifestations of oppression.

In sub Saharan Africa, we noted several cases of violations of WFTO Principle #1. By issuing large subsidies to their farmers, both U.S. and EU governments have created critical imbalances in international trade. Their policies have had a disastrous impact on two of Africa's chief exports: cotton and sugar. In Mali, where more than 3 million people (a third of its population) depend on income from cotton, an ever-increasing number of economically marginalized farmers are pushed into abject poverty and cut off from medicine.

A different type of marginalization that highlights the unintended consequences of poor local macroeconomic decisions exists in India. While India implemented a series of structural changes in the 1990s focused on tax reforms and foreign trade and investment, the government failed to include any specific package for its agricultural sector. As a result of this exclusion, the overwhelming majority of Indian farmers have since been suffering from poverty and barriers to health and educational resources. This has contributed to a high suicide rates.

Guatemala provided an example of marginalization fueled by the "push and pull" factors of an increasingly globalized economy-particularly the demand for sugar. Guatemala is the second largest exporter of sugar in Latin America with 70% of its local production geared towards export. The government of Guatemala has consequently allowed sugarcane export companies to aggressively rent or buy massive amounts of land, making the cultivation of other crops increasingly difficult. The government goes so far as to allocate land to large-scale enterprises, while smaller farmers without clear titles are often pushed off their properties.

C. Defining Marginalization

This literature review represents a very important step towards assessing the parameters that delineate the meaning of marginalization within the context of Fair Trade. After reviewing both definitions/indexes provided by some of the major players in the development field, and analyzing the experience of various groups living in a marginalized state across the world, the team composed the following definition of this concept:

"Marginalization is both a condition and a process that prevents individuals and groups from full participation in social, economic, and political life enjoyed by the wider society."

VIII. Assessment Tool Framework

Having done preliminary research, the team identified nine areas in which a person or group may be excluded in order to later evaluate their validity in the field. These were education, private property, economic opportunity, social safety nets, infrastructure, language, protection from violence, food security, health and sanitation. In all areas we were looking to gage whether an individual/a group has access to services/benefits and agency/ownership to mitigate the risks. Most of the well-being indexes reviewed were similar in basic categories of marginalization, such as lack of access to basic necessities, limited economic opportunities, illiteracy, and lack of social safety net protection. This considerably helped in identifying major categories and statements within them to assess the level of marginalization, as well as to further integrate them in the tool. While we had identified these areas based on preliminary research, we entered fieldwork with open minds, in an effort to understand how people perceive marginalization, if they identify themselves as marginalized, and how they are affected by their own marginalization.

IX. Fieldwork

A. Bangladesh

The team spent the second week of March 2015 in Bangladesh. Members of CORR-The Jute Works, a trade organization that is a member of WFTO-Asia and works with in over 23 areas of production, provided all the resources for the research.[2] Milton, a high-ranking officer of the Jute Works was kind enough to be translator and arrange meetings between the team and members of ten producer groups, as a sample of those the trade organization works with. These groups were very diverse, from rural groups —trying to provide for their families— and middle class housewives — looking to be able to have a say in their family and buy cosmetics— to refugee groups.

As mentioned in the research and methodology section, step one of conducting focus groups involved asking the group what came to their minds when they thought of the word marginalized. We heard many responses. There was a general consensus among all of the groups that marginalization involved the lack of opportunities. There were a few other things that came up that surprised us, from the issue of cultural traditions such as dowries to the notion that some people suffered from idleness. These answers gave us a lot to think about. We realized the limitations our tool would have, as it would be difficult to monitor things such as seasonal labor options, idleness, and cultural practices specific to certain countries, regions, etc. We took heart, though, that their general view of marginalization aligned with the definition of marginalization that we had come up with.

The second step in our focus groups involved laying down nine pieces of paper with the nine categories of indicators of marginalization: education, language, economic opportunities, private property, infrastructure, protection from violence, food security, social security, and health & sanitation. After introducing each category, we walked away and gave the producer group members some time to discuss and rank each category from least to most importance. The team was excited to find that every group

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[2] http://www.cjwbd.com/#

ranked education and economic opportunities as the top two most important things. Their reasoning was that people needed education and economic opportunities in order to have food security, health and sanitation, etc. We were able to bring this information to our tool by adjusting the weights of how much each category of questions would contribute to the overall marginalization score.

The third step involved asking what was missing in the assessment tool framework. Most groups said that we captured the main causes, but suggested we add a component on mobile phones and suggest that we try to incorporate gender-based discrimination. We were able to go into many of our questions and add an element in order to control for discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and/or gender, as well as add a question on mobile phones.

To the final two groups interviewed as well as a group of trade organization leaders at a board meeting, we were able to go through each question in the framework. This process was tedious, but extremely helpful in terms of feedback. We were able to identify gaps and errors in our questions, learn that we needed to simplify our language in order to reach a greater audience, and even gained the opportunity to pilot our modified tool within a month of our trip.

B. USA

In addition to Bangladesh, we did research in DC area and interviewed a DC-based organization called DC Central Kitchen that works with marginalized groups and uses food as a tool to help transform lives. They work with 3 types of groups: those with history of incarceration and felony, who due to their criminal past and stigma attached have no relevant work experience, which makes it hard for them to get a job. Second group are those individuals who have been on public assistance over several generations. Their learned values are those of use of public assistance. It is difficult for them to get out of this dependency trap when they saw their parents relying on public assistance. Thus, there is a challenge for them to jump into the job market. Third group of marginalized DCCK works with are those with mental health issues and substance abuse/drug addiction. The organization has referral agencies, through which they can

provide access for mentally ill, and although there is access to resources, health workers and psychiatrist do not have time to monitor each person individually and over longer time. Those individuals from the abovementioned groups that get selected to participate in the program undergo a 14 week training program, which includes kitchen skills, job readiness, and self empowerment components.

C. Feedback & Edits

There were similarities between marginalized groups in Bangladesh and DC. Both groups faced barriers for promotion, and access to jobs, participation in decision-making processes; in the case of DC groups it was the right to vote. Also, domestic violence was a factor that affects marginalized populations across the world. Despite having health referral agencies providing special services, health care systems are difficult to navigate.

After going through our feedback from the field, we edited questions and condensed the categories and grouped them into equal weighting components. The refined assessment framework thus included advocacy, availability of resources, health, economic opportunity, and education. Advocacy section addresses the systems in place to protect someone's identity, property, safety, and their ability to communicate with their government about their basic needs. Availability of resources component looks into what permits group members to lead safe lives with freedom of movement and information, such as access to markets, basic resources and utilities. Health component seeks to find out what facilities are in place, and whether all group members have equal access. In economic opportunity section we focus on the ability for a group to interact with market. It also includes a question on mobile phones, which are widely used to grow businesses both in thriving and developing economies. Finally, education addresses the availability of educational facilities to all group members who wish to participate, and questions the level of literacy of group members.

X. Lessons Learned

Throughout the whole process we encountered many challenges. They range from our own limitations to those of our final users, including our interaction with the client. However, the lessons we learned contributed to building a more effective, easy to use, and well-rounded tool.

Among the many discoveries of our research was the reach of our biases. Despite our best attempts at shedding our personal perspectives in favor of a framework that best resembled a bottom-up approach, some things were unavoidable. We had assumed things to be more valued than others based on pure need. The findings showed that, no matter how poor or marginalized, there people still value opportunity over everything else. This was a fantastic reminder of the need for bottom-up approaches, as it provided further evidence that the disadvantaged are in the best position to know their own needs. We found that there are aspects of context that are only perceived and understood by those living in it.

For the reason above, our worries over standardization resurfaced. After a brief period of questioning and doubt, we recovered the motivation. There was greater need for us to design something that could encompass multiple situations and contexts without sacrificing its assessment capabilities. Because of this the team had to discriminate and reject some of the feedback provided, conserving its value only for our professional growth. It was interesting to find out that voluntary idleness is considered by all groups to be a cause for marginalization, and that dowries played an important role in family situation and means. However, these seemed to be specific to the context of Bangladesh, and of little use in the global context. The team endeavored to include situations that could be similar across the world, and approximated these specifics. Two of the biggest oversights, that were included in the revision, were access to communications and access to birth control. Still, we are left to accept the limitations of our tool and provide a big disclaimer as to its capabilities.

Similar to the context of those being assessed, we discovered that the situation of those meant to use the tool was different than expected. First and most important, we found

that we had assumed a far higher command of English than they had. Because of this, we adjusted the wording of the questions to make them easier for non-native speakers. An example of this, along with other parts of the tool is enclosed in the Appendix. We also discovered that organizations have less detailed definitions of their groups than expected. The suggestion was made that, in order for the assessment to work, groups would have to be classified more specifically.

In order to make the results in easier to comprehend, we needed them to be reflected as a score. This posed its own challenge. Even though we readjusted the importance of the indicators, there was still the matter of devising a score that reflected them accurately. Achieving a good balance while also providing categories that made sense proved one of our greatest challenges. Fortunately, our client's tendency to make impromptu research suggestions at any given time proved very useful in this. In the end we achieved an appropriate number of categories that were properly weighted.

XI. Conclusion

The tool is to be first tested and implemented by WFTO-Asia, and its original build was made with this in mind. However, Gent's plan to introduce the tool to the whole of WFTO at their Biennial Meeting in May 2015 introduced a more global challenge. This meant not only that the team needed to produce a broad and inclusive definition of marginalization, but also a tool that could identify and measure universal indicators of marginalization.

In this paper we have discussed the process of and products developed by the team. It will presents background information, a definition produced with great effort, and the effort put into building an adequate assessment tool. After many hours of hard work, and multiple revisions, we achieved it. We delivered a tool that cannot only provide a simple assessment of a group's status. It can also track to what extent the groups are marginalized and which category of marginalization is highest.

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Appendix. Screens from the tool and Sample Report
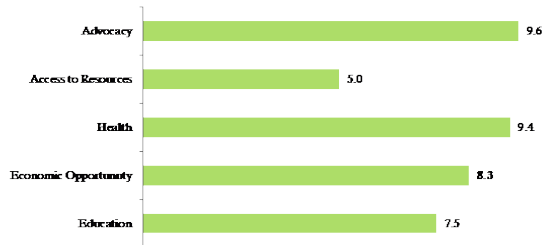

Marginalization Assessment Report

Member Organization
ELLIOTT SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Group
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Region
PRESENTATION

Country
TEST REPORT

Marginalization Score
7.96

Sources of Marginalization

- Advocacy — 9.6
- Access to Resources — 5.0
- Health — 9.4
- Economic Opportunity — 8.3
- Education — 7.5

Year 2015

Marginalization Assessment Tool

In order to assess marginalization, this tool will lead you through 5 sections with a total of 21 multiple-choice questions. There are 5 possible answers per question. Please select the one that fits the group best.

This tool should take 10 to 30 minutes to complete per group, but there is no time limit. It should be noted that closing this window before completion will not save the work that has been done. If ready, click "START" below.

Start

Advocacy

Article 6 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "every person has the right to recognition everywhere before the law."

This section addresses the systems in place to protect someone's identity, property, safety, and even their ability to communicate with their government about their basic needs.

Next

Advocacy

Degree of discrimination
- All members of the group are discriminated against because of their religious, cultural, or sexual identity.
- All members of the group are treated differently because of their religious, cultural, or sexual identity.
- Some members of the group are discriminated against because of their religious, cultural, or sexual identity.
- Some members of the group are treated differently because of their religious, cultural, or sexual identity.
- The group is able to practice its religion, culture, and sexuality freely without fear of oppression.

Resources to combat risk of violence
- There are no organizations or state actors that are prepared to help a group member if they experience violence.
- There is only a weak organization that is prepared to assist people who experience violence.
- There is a strong system in place to support members of the group who experience violence.
- There is a strong system in place to support all group members who experience violence, but there is little public awareness about these issues.
- There is a strong system in place to support all group members who experience violence, and there public awareness about preventing these issues.

Corruption
- There are barriers in society preventing the group from meeting their basic needs.
- There are barriers in society preventing some members of the group from meeting their basic needs.
- The group has no relationship, positive or negative, with society.
- Some members of the group are involved in the decision-making process of society that enables the group to meet their basic needs.
- All members of the group are involved in the decision-making process of society that enables the group to meet their basic needs.

Next