



THE FULLER PROJECT

IMPACT REPORT
JANUARY - JUNE 2021

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INDIA'S COVID-19 DISASTER

FRONTLINE CHILD CARE

BORN UNDER THE BORDER BAN

THE LONG WAY HOME FOR
DOMESTIC WORKERS

TIKTOK TESTIMONIALS

Photo by Lindokuhle Sobekwa/
Magnum Photos for TIME



MEET OUR TEAM



A Note From Our CEO

With over 2 billion vaccine doses now administered around the world, for many people the worst of COVID-19 has passed. For many more without access to vaccines or viable economic recovery, relief remains unbearably far away.

The global pandemic and economic crisis laid bare the gender, race and class biases that permeate our society and institutions. As part of the world envisions moving on, our journalism maintains a dogged focus on inequity, injustice and the harsh realities facing women.

Below, you will read more about the impact our reporting spurred in the first half of 2021: our investigation into abuses at the Lesotho factory that supplies Kate Hudson's Fabletics prompted immediate action; our reporting by Indian journalists centered on the voices of India's most marginalized during this spring's deadly wave; and our coverage of at-home child care providers left to fend for themselves pinpointed a gap in recovery efforts.

Our newsroom geared up at the start of the pandemic, knowing this period would be the worst in recent history for women. In '21 we grew our team, including Holly Ojalvo, US Deputy Editor, Trip Eggert, Communications Manager, Mariyah Espinoza, Communications

Assistant, and contributing editors and reporters around the world. We have open searches underway for additional investigative reporters and a Chief Development Officer.

Going forward, we are doubling down on our newsroom-newsroom partnership model. We work closely with editors to foster deeply sourced, locally-rooted intersectional reporting centered on women's lives for publication both on our webpage and by our partners.

Please keep reading and sharing our investigations, sign up for our newsletter, and visit www.fullerproject.org to donate and support public service journalism about women.

Xanthe Scharff, PhD





Photo by Lindokuhle Sobekwa/
Magnum Photos for TIME

Garment Workers Allege Sexual And Physical Abuse At Factory Supplying Kate Hudson's Fabletics Brand

OUR EXCLUSIVE INVESTIGATION SPURRED IMMEDIATE ACTION

Reporters Louise Donovan and Refiloe Makhaba Nkune spent eight months investigating sexual, verbal and physical harassment at Hippo Knitting, a Lesotho-based factory that supplies Kate Hudson's Fabletics activewear brand. Interviews with more than 40 employees revealed a network of abuse stretching back years.

Producing garments for prominent U.S. brands has become the backbone of Lesotho's economy in recent years. But sexual violence at the factories – and the government's tepid response to the abuse – threatens the livelihoods of thousands of garment workers, ninety percent of whom are women. Thirteen of the workers we spoke to said their underwear and vulvas were often exposed during routine daily searches by supervisors. Another said a male supervisor tried to pressure her into a sexual relationship, and three allege sexual assault by male supervisors. Workers said they were forced to crawl on the floor as punishment and often humiliated and verbally abused by management. In one instance, a woman said she urinated on herself because she was prevented from accessing the bathroom.

The resulting story had impact before it was even published: after Donovan and Nkune reached out to Fabletics for comment, the brand vowed to do "everything in [their] power" to remedy the situation. Fabletics immediately suspended all operations with the factory, flew a "senior leader" to Lesotho within days to conduct an investigation and promised to keep providing workers' full pay during this period.

The owners of Hippo Knitting launched an independent audit and internal investigation, placing the factory's HR manager on administrative leave – she has since been let go. They have started speaking with workers unions to form a "plan of action with clear timelines and deliverables" to address the abuses revealed by our reporting.

The investigation was published in print and online in partnership with TIME, shared widely on social media by workers' rights groups and covered by global media outlets including The Daily Mail, InStyle, MSN, People, Yahoo and Fox. A

version of the story also ran in print in the Lesotho Times, the country's most widely read newspaper.

Since publication, police say they're investigating at least three cases of sexual offense and public indecency at Hippo Knitting. "There are more allegations," a police spokesperson told The Fuller Project, "though the victims are skeptical about reporting in fear of losing their jobs." At least 12 more employees have stepped forward about abuses, according to unions on the ground in Lesotho – one union, IDUL, says it was our reporting that made these workers feel safe enough to speak up.

The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs arranged a meeting with IDUL and a shop steward at Hippo Knitting to enquire further about how to improve working conditions inside the factory.

Gasping For Breath:

LOCAL REPORTING SHEDS LIGHT ON WOMEN DURING INDIA'S COVID DISASTER

The Fuller Project was among the first international newsrooms to capture scenes from the ground as India suffered the world's most severe outbreak of COVID-19 this March. For weeks, our editors tracked the unfolding crisis in India as western journalists flew in to report for a few days – then left. Our newsroom saw the urgent need for timely reporting by Indian journalists living through the surge themselves. Setting aside the long form reporting that typically defines The Fuller Project's work, we aimed instead to cover as much of one of the world's largest and most densely populated countries as quickly as possible. We issued a callout on Twitter to reporters on the ground who could capture

the sensory experience of the outbreak, receiving dozens of pitches from parts of the country beyond New Delhi and Mumbai, allowing us to cover areas most Western journalists could not gain access to in their brief reporting trips.

The resulting series exclusively features the work of journalists from India and India-administered Kashmir – most of them women. Their reporting centers the voices of India's most marginalized: women and transgender people, particularly those also oppressed on the basis of religion, caste and class. In Kashmir, fisherwoman Fazi Begum navigated a new economic reality as

her clients dwindled; in Manipur, where the Indian army has special powers and an outsized presence, a transgender woman named Lulu experienced heightened anxiety; in Tamil Nadu, construction worker Devi made frantic calls for jobs; in the Rajasthani desert, Taramani relayed her trials as a three-time survivor of COVID-19; in New Delhi, a nurse named Rakhi navigated professional trauma and personal loss.

The Fuller Project newsroom and its contributors worked around the clock to thread women's narratives into a living archive, highlighting their humanity in their own words.

**Our Journalism:
January - June 2021**

57
STORIES

3.1 M
READERS

Website visitors from

175
COUNTRIES

"Gasping for Breath" revealed that content exclusive to our own site can draw a wide native audience – in April and May, the stories were the top read on the site– showing that these voices were clearly missing from the wider media landscape and that audiences all over the world were hungry for them. NBC Asian America took notice of our work, asking to partner as we gathered more stories from the ground. Together, we put out a call to the South Asian diaspora in the United States for tributes to the women they knew in their home countries battling COVID-19 on the front lines – or fighting to survive themselves.



COVID-19 Devastated Child Care

OUR STORIES REVEAL HOW WOMEN BORE THE BRUNT

Pandemic lockdowns and economic headwinds thrust the country into a new focus on essential workers. But child care providers – overwhelmingly women, women of color, and income-insecure – would have remained largely obscured in the conversation were it not for The Fuller Project’s ongoing coverage.

This year, staff reporter Jessica Washington has continued to reveal the particular devastation of child care under COVID-19: student mothers shouldering the double burden of child care costs and education loans; home-based child care providers, nearly all women, who had already subsisted on low wages for essential work; and the informal child care providers who stepped

up to care for the families of essential workers but are being left out of federal relief efforts. Her reporting has been shared by Melinda Gates, Craig Newmark and other key stakeholders.

Washington’s reporting builds on The Fuller Project’s robust 2020 coverage of the child care crisis. Our story about farmworkers forced to take their children along to the berry fields as they worked to keep their industry afloat was cited and circulated by members of Congress, farmworker advocacy groups and other key stakeholders. We also published data-driven examinations of rapidly expanding child care deserts in California and Ohio.

Days After Giving Birth, Mothers Of US Citizen Newborns Deported

AFTER OUR STORY, 11 PAROLED BACK TO U.S. TO PURSUE ASYLUM

The Fuller Project partnered with The Guardian to tell the story of migrant women who were sent back to Mexico within days of giving birth – and without an opportunity to collect birth certificates for their U.S. citizen newborns. They were part of the roughly 400,000 people “expelled” under Title 42, a policy put in place by Trump officials during the pandemic that prevented migrants from appearing in front of a judge or being screened for asylum claims. These expulsions were largely carried out away from the public eye, compounding the suffering caused by the United States’s pre-existing web of exclusionary border policies.

Reporter Tanvi Misra searched hospital records and spoke with lawyers and two mothers, finding that at least 11 women and their newborn babies – legally U.S. citizens – were sent back to Mexico without their children’s birth certificates. One such mother was ‘Helene’, a 23-year-old woman from Haiti who gave birth in Chula Vista, California, only to be dropped off on the side of the road along the San Diego-Tijuana border three days later – just 25 minutes after she was discharged from the hospital, she told Misra through a translator. Misra later described the conversation: “Whenever I’m able to speak to folks who’ve made this kind of journey, there’s a lot of moments of the conversations that stick with me. I am not always able to put them all in the story. In this case, it was how the woman

described her journey to the U.S. She said it was beautiful & terrible (translated). Beautiful because she met a lot of people – other migrants – who encouraged her and gave her strength. Terrible because of all the awful things that can happen – (she listed rape, kidnapping) – the violence of it.”

Our story was published on February 4 during a vital period for immigration policymaking. On February 24, President Biden repealed various Trump-era border policies. The Biden administration also started exempting unaccompanied minor children and certain vulnerable families from the Title 42 order issued under Trump through which the mothers in this story were “expelled.” After our reporting, our sources told us that all of the mothers whose cases we reviewed were paroled into the U.S., where they can pursue their claims for asylum.



Photo illustration by Michelle Gibson/Getty Images



Illustration by Susie Ang
for The Guardian

Pandemic Exposes Exploitative Conditions Filipina Domestic Workers Face

UK GOVERNMENT FORCED TO RESPOND TO VISA RIGHTS PETITION

Nearly three million Filipina women work abroad as migrant domestic workers, where they are paid low wages to clean homes, cook meals and care for comparatively wealthy families – under often exploitative conditions. The global pandemic left thousands of them stranded with even fewer ways to flee exploitation.

Fuller Project reporter Corinne Redfern spent nine months interviewing more than a dozen of these women across Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Most had lost jobs during the pandemic or had their salaries cut by their employers. Others found themselves subjected to physical abuse. One woman, a 54-year-old

domestic worker in Bahrain named Rowena, became the focus of a high-impact story we published in partnership with the Guardian.

In April, Rowena's boss said that he could no longer pay her monthly salary of \$333 because of the pandemic. Instead, he said, he would provide her and the three other women he employed with \$27 for food every two weeks, to be split between them. Rowena was due to return to the Philippines that month – but when the spread of COVID-19 meant her flight out of the country was canceled, she found herself trapped. By September, her employer stopped giving any food allowance at all, leaving the women who worked for him with nothing

15
PARTNERS

The Lily TIME

FP The New York Times

WIRED The Economist 1843

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Diversity & Representation Beyond the Page

Our full-time team identifies as

55% BIPOC **9%** LGBTQIA+

Reporters and contributors based in who speak

14 COUNTRIES **12+** LANGUAGES

and forcing Rowena to seek odd jobs around the neighborhood to be able to afford food.

In May, she applied for a one-off sum of \$208 in financial support from the Philippines Department of Labor and Employment. She received 75BHD (\$204) in early December – seven months after she first applied for aid. She repeatedly told our reporter that she only wanted to go home, but the cheapest ticket from Manama to Manila cost more than twice as much as her aid check.

After our story was featured in the Guardian's "Today in Focus" podcast, dozens of readers and

listeners asked how they could support Rowena, many offering to pay for her flight home. The Philippine Embassy in Bahrain intervened, and helped Rowena leave her employer. Embassy staff moved Rowena and the other two women to the embassy, where they were given food and shelter until flights home could be arranged. The Philippine Ambassador to Bahrain confirmed that they recovered unpaid wages from Rowena's employer, and that our reporting "brought to light" Rowena's circumstances and "paved the way" for the Embassy to intervene. Rowena was repatriated to the Philippines on March 5. Following the story, a petition to change visa rights for domestic workers in the UK doubled its number of signatures—legally requiring the UK government to respond.



Photo Illustration by Abbie Steckler
for The Fuller Project

Domestic Workers In Gulf Countries Use Tiktok To Vent Their Woes Despite Risks

WE USED IT TO REPORT THEIR STORIES

In partnership with The New York Times, The Fuller Project published the first in-depth examination of how domestic workers in the Middle East have turned to TikTok to share intimate details of their lives – and the consequences they could face for speaking out. Last August, a young Kenyan housekeeper, Brenda Dama, posted one such video from Saudi Arabia. As words like “freedom” and “respect” pop up on the screen, Dama, 26, swats them away one by one. A single day off? “Don’t got it.” A peaceful life without quarrels or insults? “Don’t got it.” One in a series posted by Ms. Dama, the video has amassed more than 900,000 views – her account gained nearly 5,000 followers in just two days after posting it.

Far from home and in unfamiliar settings, domestic workers in the Gulf – the vast majority of them women – have long used social media to keep in touch with friends and family. Our story documents how they have increasingly turned to TikTok after the platform’s popularity exploded last year, opening up about their lives and working conditions. Many of them say they are overworked, sexually harassed, discriminated against – and the pandemic has further diminished the minimal freedoms they once had.

To give our readers the context they needed to understand stories like Ms. Dama’s, The Fuller Project created an explainer video for social media, styled after TikTok’s platform. It allowed us to reach, inform and engage broad audiences beyond our normal remit – like the youth who are likely to be on TikTok themselves. The final product is The Fuller Project’s most watched IGTV video to date.

Published in The New York Times online and in print, our story was widely shared among migrants rights and human rights groups, including The National Domestic Workers Alliance. It was covered by KTN, one of the largest news channels in Kenya, and reporter Louise Donovan discussed the implications of her reporting on NBC News Now and BBC’s Woman’s Hour – the second most popular daily podcast across BBC Radio, with 3.7 million weekly listeners. Several New York Times readers reached out to Brenda on TikTok after publication, engaging with her content and asking her to share more about her life as a foreign domestic worker.

Our Journalism: January - June 2021

How Trans Men And Women Fight For Equality In Order To Live Fearless Lives In the Philippines – <i>Tatler Philippines</i> , By Corinne Redfern	Anti-human trafficking apps were meant to save lives. They're failing – <i>WIRED</i> , By Corinne Redfern and Emily Ding	The pandemic devastated home-based child care: 'I don't know how we bounce back' – <i>The Lily</i> , By Jessica Washington	New Delhi: 'That 22-Year-Old Priya on Instagram' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Riddhi Dastidar	Uttar Pradesh: 'Our First Duty Is To Save Lives' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Sarita Santoshini	Anantnag, Indian-Administered Kashmir: 'I Have Children And I Fear To Go Near Them' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Raihana Maqbool
Why the Pentagon Remains a Battlefield for Women – <i>Foreign Policy</i> , By Courtney Mabeus	This woman is fighting to save Bangladesh's oldest brothel – The Economist's 1843 Magazine, By Corinne Redfern and Ali Ahsan	The Right to Work – <i>The Virginia Quarterly Review</i> , By Jenna Krajeski	Garbhe, Madhya Pradesh: 'My Wife Was So Brave. She Looked At Me And Said There's No Need To Worry Now.' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Varsha Bansal	New Delhi: 'We Keep Our Pain Buried In Our Hearts To Serve People' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Fahad Shah	Exclusive: Workers in Factory That Makes Kate Hudson's Fabletics Activewear Allege Rampant Sexual and Physical Abuse – <i>TIME</i> , By Louise Donovan and Refiloe Makhaba Nkune
Could reparations from the UK address gender inequality in Barbados? The prime minister thinks so. – <i>gal-dem</i> , By Escher Walcott	France Is in Denial About Domestic Violence – <i>Foreign Policy</i> , By Meaghan Beatley	'Water warriors': the US women banding together to fight for water justice – <i>The Guardian</i> , By Jessica Washington	New Delhi: ' In A Situation Of Life Or Death, This Was My Only Option.' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Anika Nayak	'It Is Like I Am Being Strangled' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Sara Bardhan	In Nigeria, gas giants get rich as women sink into poverty – <i>VICE</i> , By Shola Lawal
Poland's Abortion Rights Protests Lead to a Louder Call for Gender Equity – <i>Les Glorieuses</i> , By Paulina Reiter	The ICC's Major Anti-Kony Verdict Is No Relief for His Victims – <i>Foreign Policy</i> , By Sally Hayden	The Legacy of Wartime Atrocities Still Looms Over Asian Alliances – <i>Foreign Policy</i> , By Seulki Lee, Sophia Jones, and Robbie Gramer	'I Once Fell Unconscious Due To The Stress. I Had To Do It All On My Own.' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Nayanika Guha	Indigenous Doctor Struggles to Keep Community Safe as COVID Rages in Brazil – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Jill Langlois	As attention turns to child care, the system's unsung heroes ask for recognition – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Jessica Washington
Threat of Deportation Looms for Migrant Women Detained in Italy, Despite Rights to Legal Protection – <i>ilpost</i> , By Corinne Redfern	Lessons from Texas: Advocates Warn of Extreme Weather's Link to Domestic Violence – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Jessica Washington	Domestic Workers in Gulf Countries Vent Woes on TikTok – <i>The New York Times</i> , By Louise Donovan	Srinagar, Indian-administered Kashmir: 'I Cannot Afford To Sit At Home Even For A Day' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Raihana Maqbool	Online, in Courtrooms and at Protests, Palestinian Women Lead Calls for Change – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Dalia Hatuqa	Abused Factory Workers Told Me Their Stories. It Changed Their Lives, and Mine: Reporter's Notebook – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Refiloe Makhaba Nkune
'I Want To Go Home': Pandemic Exposes Exploitive Conditions Filipina Domestic Workers Face – <i>The Guardian</i> , By Corinne Redfern	10 Years After the Arab Spring, Tunisian Feminists Fight a Similar Battle – <i>Les Glorieuses</i> , By Erin Clare Brown and Christina Nordvang Jensen	How Will the COVID Shot Affect Your Period? Scientists Say There's Not Enough Data—But There Should Be – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Jessica Washington	Goa: 'Even If We Register, I Don't Think There Are Enough Vaccines to Go Around' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Chryselle D'Silva Dias	Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh: 'Our Supervisors Tell Us Not to Take the Vaccine. They Tell us That the Injection Will Kill Us.' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Swati Sanyal Tarafdar	Could Women's Rights be Key to Unifying Israel's Government? – <i>Foreign Policy</i> , By Yardena Schwartz
Sex Criminals Use Bitcoin. So Do the Police. – <i>Foreign Policy</i> , By Corinne Redfern and Seulki Lee	'It Felt So Freeing': Why Young Women Are Dropping the Pill – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Louise Donovan	Chennai, Tamil Nadu: 'What Has to Happen Will Happen' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Mahima Jain	Gangyasar, Rajasthan: 'I Have Been Battling Renal Failure So I Thought This Was Easy' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Sonal Kellogg	Pune, Maharashtra: A Haze of Delirium and Rumors of a Medical Hoax – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Priya Mirchandani	NYC immigrant communities have long been represented by white men. Will this election change that? – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Maher Sattar
Revealed: US citizen newborns sent to Mexico under Trump-era border ban – <i>The Guardian</i> , By Tanvi Misra	Uyghur Women Aren't Safe No Matter Where They Go – <i>The Atlantic</i> , By Melissa Chan	Nagpur, Maharashtra: 'We Are Carrying A Massive Guilt' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Sarita Santoshini	Exclusive: Workers in Factory That Makes Kate Hudson's Fabletics Activewear Allege Rampant Sexual and Physical Abuse – <i>TIME</i> , By Louise Donovan and Refiloe Makhaba Nkune	'We Need To Study Women': Traumatic Brain Injury in Survivors of Intimate Partner Violence – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Jessica Klein	France's Femicide Rate Plunged Last Year. But Without Funding, More Women Will Die, Experts Say – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Sophie Stuber
'I Want to Move Forward': Student Moms Bear Costly Double Burden of Child Care Costs, Student Debt – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Jessica Washington	India's Suffering Female Farmers Have the Most to Lose – <i>Foreign Policy</i> , By Riddhi Dastidar	Panaji, Goa: 'They Haven't Called Me Back' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Chryselle D'Silva Dias	Namakkal, Tamil Nadu: 'When Will This End?' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Dharani Thangavel	Are chemicals poisoning the world's female workers? – <i>Foreign Policy</i> , By Lucy Sheriff	The World Hasn't Figured Out How to Stop 'Revenge Porn' – <i>Foreign Policy</i> , By Hanna Kozłowska
	Around the World, Conflicting COVID-19 Vaccination Advice Puts Pregnant People's Lives At Risk – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Jessica Abrahams	Rishikesh, Uttarakhand: 'You Keep Questioning Yourself' – <i>The Fuller Project</i> , By Romita Saluja		Taxi medallion crisis drives council candidates on road toward a rescue – <i>THE CITY</i> , By Christine Chung and Maher Sattar	

THE FULLER PROJECT

The Fuller Project is the nonprofit newsroom dedicated to groundbreaking journalism about women to raise awareness, expose injustice and spur accountability.

HOW TO DONATE:

The Fuller Project is an independent nonprofit journalism organization (501c3). We are funded through the philanthropic support of foundations and individuals. Your support brings us closer to a world where women's voices are fully represented in the news.

Donate now to support our mission: securely through our website www.fullerproject.org or send a check made out to Fuller Project for International Reporting to 655 15th St. NW Suite 800 Washington, DC 20005.

For questions about ways to support please email ltan@fullerproject.org