

International
Women's
NEWS



NOUVELLES
Feministes
Internationales

IAW website: www.womenalliance.org

sexual and reproductive
media
economy
decision making
Women
environment
abortion
violence
health and
rights



Editorial

One year ago the IAW Board decided that time had come to modernise our Journal which, for over a century, has been covering the rich history of our organization. Priscilla Todd, the editor of our Journal, has been very much in agreement with that idea and has helped a lot.

The Board in Sion in October 2014 adopted a resolution that authorised me to find a consultant to work out a new structure and layout for the Journal that would make it more attractive to different kinds of audiences, in particular young girls and women. I asked Cécile Gréboval, who used to be Secretary General of the European Women's Lobby, to help us with the structure of the Journal. For the layout, I asked Sonia Mitralia in Greece who has designed a new logo for us. The resolution authorised me to publish a new issue for the Board to decide whether we will continue with this approach.

Another aspect on which we need to bring change has to do with the themes we deal with in our Journal. We have to start debating issues that are actually discussed by the international women's rights movement like care work, feminist economics, the impact of multi-stakeholder partnerships and multinational corporations on women's human rights etc.

We have also to find themes that are of interest to young people and find new contributors to our Journal. We could, for instance, ask students who are doing research on women's issues to publish their work in our Journal. We should also ask feminist activists, journalists, academics, researchers who are experts on different issues to contribute to our Journal. This is what we did for this issue.

I am of the view that the Journal could be more attractive if each time it focused on a specific theme and looked into the different aspects of that theme. This time it focuses on the different regions of the world and selects an issue that is of particular relevance to each region and is covered by one of the 12 areas of concern of the Beijing Platform of Action. Thus, for Europe it is women and the economy, for Africa it is women and decision-making, for Latin America it is sexual and reproductive health and rights/abortion, for the USA it is women and the media, for Asia it is violence against women, for Australia it is women and the environment.

Most articles have been written by new contributors to our journal, well known in their field of work. This section is called IWNNews in Focus.

Other new sections in our journal are News from Institutions which will cover developments in the context of the UN, Council of Europe and other International and regional intergovernmental organizations. This edition has an article about the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe. IAW News in Brief has news from individuals and organizations that are members of IAW. And International Women's News Favourite presents portraits of activists, feminists, journalists, researchers, academics, whose activities, research and ideas are of particular interest to us. This time we present a portrait of Violet Shivutse who founded Kenya's branch of the Home-Based Care Alliance, an organization that brings together 30,000 caregivers across eleven African countries with the goal to raise their voice to lobby for recognition of caregivers as key players in health care.

I hope this approach will make a difference and make IAW more visible to the public in general.

Joanna Manganara
IAW President



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International Women's News in Brief

Panel Discussion on Birth Registration - Human Rights Council 30th Session

Advancing universal birth registration: how are legislation, conflict and natural disasters hindering global efforts?

The Panel will include ImmaGuerras-Delgado, OHCHR; Laura Cunial, Norwegian Refugee Council and Mohinder Watson, Action on Child, Early and Forced Marriage. The Moderator is Lyda Verstegen LIM and the event has been organised by International Alliance of Women (IAW) and Action on Child, Early and Forced Marriage (ACE&FM).

Objectives

The main objectives of the panel are to:

1. Highlight the value of birth registration as a fundamental human right and how this protects children's rights.
2. Discuss the current international legal framework in the context of the significant advances made in birth registration over the past few years as well as limitations of the law.
3. Discuss using concrete examples how birth registration schemes have been successfully implemented around the world and the benefits this has brought to local communities and nationally.
4. Highlight birth registration challenges for children born to mothers displaced due to conflict or natural disasters or mothers living in refugee camps and the implications of the resulting lack of nationality or 'statelessness' on those affected and initiatives being taken to address this, such as the current UNHCR campaign/petition.
5. Advancing the changing of discriminatory laws of states that prevent women from passing on their nationality to their children.

IAW Input to the Post 2015

Development Agenda

In order for the Post Development Agenda to be transformative it must be based on human rights and ensure that goals and targets are underpinned by the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

However, the Post-2015 Agenda fails to establish the structural conditions to respect, protect and realize women's human rights. It fails to do so because economic and financial rules, the neoliberal economic system and concentration of wealth as well as unequal power relations are not adequately addressed in the Post-2015 Agenda.

Read the full statement by IAW President Joanna Manganara on the IAW website www.womenalliance.org

Discrimination of women in law and practice (A/HRC/29/L7/Rev.1)

Every year the Human Rights Council spends a day discussing the elimination of discrimination against women, informed by the latest report of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and practice. This Working Group is a sequel to Beijing's Platform for Action.

See www.womenalliance.org for full statement by Lyda Verstegen, Convener of the IAW Human Rights Commission

League of Women Voters Victoria (LWV) celebrates its 70th Anniversary

The League is the longest standing Australian member organisation with IAW. A major focus throughout its history has been to encourage young women to learn about and become involved with political issues, to meet politicians and to understand parliamentary processes. A session on *Human Rights and Seniors' Rights* was enthusiastically presented by students from two high schools during the IAW 2012 International Meeting in Melbourne.



The scene is the Legislative Council Chamber of the Victorian Parliament in August 2015. The theme: *My Vote My Voice 2015*. Following the opening address by Safa Al Marhoun, Youth Commissioner, Victorian Multicultural Commission, the tone for the debate was set by two articulate and passionate senior students. Five high schools were ably represented by young women speaking on a variety of issues with a strong overriding theme of gender equality. Panel responses followed.

The day was also tied to Beijing+20 and special guests who attended Beijing 1995 spoke briefly - Anne Walker former Executive Director of the International Women's Tribune Centre in New York, spoke about opposition to the Beijing Platform for Action; Dr Helen Hill, Education Adviser, East Timor, saw sustainable agriculture as a basic human right, and Yueying Wangre called her awakening to women's rights.

IAW News in brief compiled by Priscilla Todd, Editor IWNNews, IAW Communications Unit



The Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe

by **Cécile Gréboval**, Gender Equality Expert

A global tool to prevent and combat violence against women and girls

The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) came into force in August 2014. As of May 2015, it had been ratified by 18 countries. The Istanbul Convention is a comprehensive legal instrument based on the understanding that there can be no real equality between women and men if women experience gender-based violence on a large-scale and if State agencies and institutions turn a blind eye. The Istanbul Convention is the most far-reaching international treaty criminalising different forms of violence against women. It aims at zero tolerance for such violence and its implementation will be a major step forward in making Europe and beyond safer for women and girls.

The world's biggest-ever survey on violence against women (VAW) published in 2014 by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights¹, concluded that one out of three women in the European Union (EU) had experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15. Global figures show the same picture although adequate statistics are lacking for most countries. Women's organisations have mobilised for decades to protect victims and change attitudes about VAW, helping to trigger growing awareness of the phenomenon and the adoption of norms, policies and programmes all around the world, but violence against women and girls remains pervasive and widely unpunished. The Istanbul Convention sets comprehensive new standards for measures to prevent and combat VAW, which could make a significant difference in the eradication of this gross violation of women's human rights and serve as an inspiration for all countries in the world.



A later recognition within the international legal framework

The concept of violence against women is not included in the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and only in 1992 did the CEDAW Committee adopt a General Recommendation establishing that gender-based violence is a form of discrimination against women and linking the achievement of gender equality to the eradication of VAW. In 2015, there is still no comprehensive legally-binding common definition of violence against women in European Union legislation².

The first regional treaty on violence against women, the 1994 Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women recognised violence against women as a human rights violation. The 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa linked the eradication of violence against women to the advancement of women in all aspects of life by introducing a prohibition of violence against women.

The Istanbul Convention builds on these developments and moves the international legal framework a step further by establishing a legally-binding definition of violence against women as "a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women".

¹ "Violence Against Women: An EU Wide Survey," European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014 conducted with 42,000 women across the 28 EU member states.

² The European Union a political and economic Union comprising 28 Member States has adopted far reaching legislation on gender equality in the labour market and some legislation addressing some aspects of VAW (trafficking, introduction of a European protection order, legislation on victims' protection), but no specific legislation addressing all forms of VAW. The Istanbul Convention is an instrument adopted by the Council of Europe (international organisation promoting cooperation among its 47 Member States).



A global blueprint: the holistic approach of the Istanbul Convention to ending violence against women and girls

The Istanbul Convention stems from the in-depth analysis of problems and solutions tested in the Council of Europe Member States and beyond: they are good practices brought up to the level of a legally binding instrument. The Convention therefore requires countries to adopt a holistic response to violence against women, through the *4 Ps approach*:

- **Prevention** of violence through sustained measures that address its root causes and aim at changing attitudes, gender roles and stereotypes that make violence against women acceptable.
- **Protecting women and girls** who are known to be at risk and setting up specialist support services for victims and their children (shelters, round-the-clock telephone helplines, rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres).
- **Prosecuting the perpetrators**, including by enabling criminal investigations and proceedings to continue, even if the victim withdraws the complaint.
- Adopting and implementing state-wide “**integrated policies**” that are effective, co-ordinated and comprehensive, in that they encompass all relevant measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women.

When designing and implementing legislation and policies as foreseen by the Convention, states are expected to involve the various national actors concerned: the judiciary, the police, service providers, NGOs, national, regional and local parliaments and authorities. The Istanbul Convention also sets up a mechanism to monitor the implementation of its provisions, including a group

of independent experts (the GREVIO - Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence).

How can the Istanbul Convention be used in countries that are not members of the Council of Europe?

Violence against women and girls is a worldwide phenomenon. The Istanbul Convention was drafted with the understanding that measures to address this global problem should not be limited to a particular geographic area and the Convention is now open to accession by any country in the world. More generally, the Convention offers guidance and inspiration for any government wishing to address any form of violence against women covered by it, whether they formally become states parties or not. To non-governmental organisations, it provides a sound basis for advocacy for an improved government response to violence against women.

A call to action that needs to become reality

Beyond symbolic acceptance, countries which have ratified the Convention will now have to act to properly implement it. The Convention is also a call to action for all actors to change their attitudes, review legislation and policies and allocate significant resources in order to put an end to the culture of intolerance and denial that silently encourages the perpetuation of violence against women and girls.



International Women's News in Focus: Beijing + 20



Women in Parliaments in Africa: Moving beyond Numbers?

by *Cécile Gréboval*, Gender Equality Expert

Women are a cornerstone of African development but despite some progress, African women's access to resources and to power is still challenging in most countries and the objective of eradicating violence against women and girls remains elusive. However, despite serious remaining gaps on many fronts, the African continent has made remarkable improvement in the percentage of seats held by women in national parliaments since the 90's compared to other world regions. This in turn brought some changes to policy-making with the adoption of gender equality-related legislation in some countries, albeit more has to be done to induce a radical revolution in most women's lives.

Women and women's organisations have been campaigning to achieve equality between women and men in all parts of Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa has seen the largest increase in women's representation in parliaments between 1960 and 2003, going from 1% to 14%. Many still have in mind the fact that Rwanda achieved the highest rate of women's representation in the world in 2003, with 48.8% women elected in parliament (63.8% in 2015). The situation has continued to improve on the continent since 2003, with women's representation reaching 22.5% for sub-Saharan Africa¹ and 21.7% for the whole continent today².

Parity/quota legislation was adopted in many countries, thanks to both the active campaigning of the national and regional women's movement and to the influence of international developments, notably the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995. Almost all countries have also ratified the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; more than half have ratified the African Union's Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) and the African Union has declared 2010-2020 as the African Women's Decade. Other milestones include the adoption of the gender equality principle in the African Union's Constitutive Act of 2002 and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa of 2004. Legislation and policies have also been adopted at the national level, but even if the situation regarding women's representation in parliament has improved, a lot remains to be done with

regards to other areas. Feminist activists, as in many parts of the world, deplore the lack of implementation of existing standards and the lack of commitment to achieve real equality.

Women in Africa: providing for the family but limited autonomy

Africa includes both low- and middle-income countries, and as in other parts of the globe, women's status varies by country and region. According to OECD estimates, women provide approximately 70 per cent of agricultural labour and produce about 90 per cent of all food in Africa. However, the majority of women on the continent work in insecure, poorly paid jobs, with few opportunities for advancement and only 8.5% women are employed in paid jobs in the non-agricultural sector. The weak status of women in the formal economy in Africa has many reasons. Insufficient access to key resources such as education and health are two important contributing factors. For example, the primary education rate of women stands on average at a low 67%³. Also, with just 11% of the world's population, Africa accounts for more than 50% of maternal deaths. The probability that a woman will die from a maternal cause is 1 in 31 in sub-Saharan Africa compared with 1 in 4,300 in developed regions⁴. Other factors that constitute barriers to women's autonomy are norms and traditions and discriminatory laws. Unequal rights and opportunities in relation to inheritance, land ownership or access to credit are issues valid to most African countries. Women's organisations also point to the co-existence of dual, sometimes triple legal systems, which in practice do not give primacy to the constitution and impedes the full protection of women's human rights, even when they are constitutionally guaranteed⁵. Finally the prevalence of different forms of violence against women constitute a fundamental obstacle to women's

¹ Interparliamentary Union (IPU) Women in National Parliament Data Base, figures of 01.05.2015

² Average calculated by the author on the basis of IPU figures for 50 countries accessed on 02.06.2015, adding figure for Egypt from the 2014 UN Human Development Report.

³ Gender, Institutions and Development Data Base of the OECD.

⁴ World Health Organisation, 2010

⁵ Africa Civil Society Beijing +20 Shadow Report, 2014





empowerment, including to their presence in decision-making. Widespread forms of violence against women and girls in African countries include child or early marriage, female genital mutilation, a high prevalence of intimate partner violence (45.6% lifetime prevalence for women above 15 years old in Sub-Saharan Africa⁶) or extreme forms of conflict-related violence. In this context, one of the objectives of the promotion of women in decision-making is for the elected women to impulse substantive policy changes in order to progress towards equality.



Women in parliaments: the result of the “fast-track approach”

The 90's saw a wave of first multi-party elections in many sub-Saharan African countries, since then, democratic elections are increasing, and a record number of women have successfully contested for seats. Africa is making steadier progress in increasing the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament than other regions⁷. The figures for 51 African countries show that women hold on average 21.7% of seats in parliaments⁸ (world average: 22%, Nordic countries: 41%, Americas: 26.8%, Europe -excluding Nordic countries: 23.7%⁹).

Ten African countries still have more than 90% men in their parliament: Benin, Botswana, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, The Gambia, Mali, Nigeria, Republic of Congo and Swaziland. But thirteen countries have reached the so-called “critical mass” of 30% women in their national parliament: Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Namibia, Mozambique, Angola, Tanzania; Uganda, Algeria, Zimbabwe, Tunisia, Cameroon and Burundi.

This positive evolution is partly due to the adoption of different types of parity/quota systems on the continent, using the so-called “fast-track approach”¹⁰ to equality. For example South Africa jumped from three to 30% women in Parliament in two elections in the 90's¹¹. In 2003, 19 countries had adopted a quota system, with countries of East and South Africa at the forefront: in 2003 four southern African countries were in the first 12 countries in the world regarding women's representation in Parliament (Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles and South Africa). In 2015, more countries have joined the movement: 13 countries have adopted legislated candidate quotas, 14 countries have introduced reserved seats for women and in 10 countries have political parties adopted voluntary party quotas¹². All thirteen African countries with more than 30% women in parliament have introduced a type of parity/quota system, which shows the efficiency of these mechanisms in terms of quantitative progress. Five of these countries¹³ have introduced reserved seats for women, four¹⁴ have

⁶ World Health Organisation, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine & South African Medical Research Council. 2013. *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*. Geneva.

⁷ MDG Report 2014: *Assessing Progress in Africa toward the Millennium Development Goals*, Economic Commission for Africa, 2014.

⁸ Ibid note 2.

⁹ Interparliamentary Union Women in National Parliament Data Base, figures of 01.05.2015.

¹⁰ Term coined by Professor Drude Dahlerup in contrast to the “slow track” characterised by incremental changes in women's representation, coinciding with progress in relation to women's educational attainment and labour market participation, for example in the Nordic countries.

¹¹ *The Implementation of Quotas: African Experiences Quota Report Series*, Edited by Julie Ballington, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2004.

¹² Source: The Quota Project, Global Data Base of Quotas for Women, accessed 02.06.2015, <http://www.quotaproject.org/en/index.cfm>.

¹³ Algeria, Uganda, Burundi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe (source: Quota Project Database, accessed 02.06.2015)

¹⁴ Tunisia, Senegal, Rwanda, Angola (source: Quota Project Database, accessed 02.06.2015)





national-level legislated gender quotas, and four have voluntary political parties' quotas¹⁵.

In addition, quotas for local governance positions have also been put place in Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Gabon, the Gambia, Kenya, Mauritius, and Uganda. Political party regulations have been reviewed in Algeria, Cape Verde and Sudan, while financing for political parties according to the number of elected women is underway in the DRC and Morocco¹⁶.

Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Namibia and Mozambique are now among the first 12 countries in the world regarding women in parliament.

Northern African countries adopted parity/quota systems more recently, partly as a result of the "Arab Spring". Morocco has a system of reserved seats for women (15%) since 2011; in Algeria, a law adopted in 2012 introduced quotas of women of between 20% and 50% and the Tunisian constitution of 2014 provides for parity, thus going further than the 25% quota established before the revolution.

The need for substantive changes: barriers and hopes for the future

The progress in relation to the representation of women in parliament in Africa has been the result of multi-layered strategies: numerous 50/50 campaigns lead by women's organisations, parity/quota legislation, measures by regional bodies, international commitments for review of legal frameworks governing elections and political parties etc. All these need to be promoted and continued.

Many gaps still exist however, which relate in great part to structural factors that sustain gender inequality. Conservative gender norms continue to prevent women's access to productive assets such as land, they also hinder the presence of women in public and private decision-making positions beyond parliament. As in all parts of the world, the unequal share of unpaid care work, limits women's capacities to engage in other sectors, including paid work and public office and also contributes to high illiteracy rates for girls who are forced in early marriages or drop out of school to take on domestic responsibilities. In addition, the role of political parties as gate-keepers, patriarchal notions of about women's capability as leaders; violence against women during the electoral cycle; difficulties in accessing resources by women for electoral campaigns and the need to better support newly elected women are issues that need to be addressed

The election of three females heads of state, two of



whom are currently in power in Africa namely: H. E. Ellen Sirleaf Johnson (Liberia), H. E. Catherine Samba-Panza (the Central African Republic) and Joyce Banda (President of Malawi 2012-2014), has brought hope. However, some women's organisations deplore "representation without meaningful participation", whereby women have been increasingly present in national assemblies without having been able to make enough substantive change in policy making.

Still, observers stress that the growing number of women members of parliament has contributed to legislative gains for African women in relation to inheritance law (Rwanda), violence against women (Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania), land reform (Tanzania)¹⁷. As in other regions, some of the factors that influence women members of parliament's positive impact on policy-making have been identified, namely the creation of parliamentary committees dedicated to women's rights issues and the collaboration with women's organisations (including in relation to capacity building for elected women members). The growing presence of women in parliaments has also had a positive impact on women's symbolic representation as power bearers¹⁸.

At a moment when women's organisations in Africa face growing challenges in relation to shrinking resources, unstable political contexts and growing influence of extremist (religious) groups, it is more than ever necessary for decision-makers to adopt an holistic approach to gender equality, addressing structural gender inequalities beyond numbers, leading to a better life for all African women and girls on the ground.

¹⁵ South Africa and Namibia have both voluntary political parties' quotas and a sub-national quota system. Cameroon and Mozambique have voluntary political parties' quotas (source: Quota Project Database, accessed 02.06.02015).

¹⁶ UN Economic Commission for Africa, Beijing+20 report 2014

¹⁷ 'Let there be a balance': Women in African Parliaments, Gretchen Bauer, Political Studies Review, 2012, Vol. 10.

¹⁸ Ibid.





Short biographies of the contributors to the IWN (*Volume 110 • No 1 • 2015*)



Cécile Gréboval

Cécile Gréboval is International Gender Equality Expert and the former Secretary General of the European Women's Lobby (EWL) and worked for 18 years in the Secretariat of the EWL. Cécile initiated and supported many EWL campaigns including the work on the Amsterdam Treaty contributing to the inclusion of an article on equality between women and men in the European Union Treaty; the work of the EWL with young women, bringing fresh spirit to the organisation; the very successful EWL 50/50 Campaign on parity democracy; the GEAR Campaign, contributing to the creation of UN Women and more recently, the Brussels mobilization for the One Billion Rising event against violence against women. Cécile is now working as an international consultant on gender equality issues. cecilegreb@gmail.com



Priscilla Todd

Editor of International Women's News and member of Communications Team. Member of Organising Committee for 1989 IAW Triennial Congress in Melbourne, Australia, hosted by local member organisations -Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) and League of Women Voters (LWV). Appointed Secretary-General in 1992 and served 3 terms, firstly with President Alice Marangopoulos (Greece) and then with Patricia Giles (Australia). Appointed co- Editor of International Women's News in 2002.

Awarded Order of Australia Medal in 1994 for services to women, especially through WEL.

Self-employed as Todd Secretariat since the 1960s providing a range of secretarial services to clients and temporary and permanent positions to women.



Joanna Manganara
IAW President and Chief Representative to the United Nations

Joanna Manganara is a former Minister-Counselor of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Greece. She has also worked as lecturer in Sociology at Panteion University and as researcher on migration and women's rights issues. She has been very active in the women's and civil rights movement in Greece. She is member of the League of women's rights and President of the movement of citizens of Kolonaki in Athens. She has also been Board member of the European Women's Lobby, the YWCA (Greece), the Hellenic Committee of UNICEF, the Greek Council for refugees. She is the editor of two books: a) On gender equality and trade unionism in Greece .b) On discrimination against women at work in Greece and European policies to combat them.



Anna Elomäki

Doctor of Philosophy, Gender Studies, University of Helsinki, 2012

Master of Social Sciences, Women's Studies, University of Jyväskylä, 2005

Bachelor of Social Sciences, Sociology, University of Jyväskylä, 2003

Editor-in-Chief of Sukupuolentutkimus-Genusforskning (Finnish Journal of Gender Studies) 2014-2015

Editor of Redescriptions Political Thought, Conceptual History and Feminist Theory 2013

Research interests: Feminist political theory (the concept of citizenship, collective aspects of politics, feminist political organizing) and European Union gender equality policies.



Soraya L. Chemaly

A feminist critic whose writing focuses on the role of gender in politics, religion, and the media. Her work is regularly published in *The Huffington Post*, *Fem2.0*, *Alternet*, *The Feminist Wire*, and other online media. She has appeared as a featured guest on PRN, Sirius Radio, and National Public Radio's "Talk of the Nation".



Alejandra Burgos

Coordinator of the Salvadoran Network of Women Human Rights Defenders, which aims to articulate efforts for the protection of women defenders and the promotion of

women's rights.

In March 2015 Alejandra was in Vienna to carryout advocacy ahead of El Salvador's Universal Periodic Review and participate in a high profile side event on the protection of women defenders alongside the 28th session of to the UN Human Rights Council.



Sonia Mitrailias

Sonia is a political cartoonist, a painter, an illustrator of children's books and writer. Sonia studied Fine Arts and, as an activist for women's rights in the 1960s, produced posters and designs for the feminist movement. In 1975 she participated in the creation of the *Women's Liberation Movement* in Greece which launched the eventually successful campaign to legalise abortion.

For ten years Sonia was coordinator of the World March of Women. She is a founding member of Women against Debt and Austerity Measures and member of CADTM (Committee for the Abolition of Debt of the Third World).



Snapshot of American Media

by Soraya L. Chemaly

During the past several decades, women have made strong inroads in journalism and media in the United States, representing an increasingly larger percentage of media makers in all sectors. However, the status of women, particularly women of color, in the production and representation of our media remains, in fundamental ways, marginal. Despite gaining solid ground during the 1980s and 1990s, growth and diversity in the industry have remained static since the mid 90s, with representation of women and minorities in senior leadership positions seemingly systemically suppressed. This is true of all forms of media, where there are four main areas of consideration: ownership, management, content production and distribution - all of which reveal both quantitative and qualitative imbalances.

Media today continue to be almost entirely owned and primarily defined by men, who currently make up 73% of the management of the world's information and news services. Media consolidation during the past several decades now means that six corporations own 90% of media properties in the US. In addition, American-based companies make up 90% of the world's ten largest media conglomerates. A specific demographic in the United States, white and maleⁱ, makes up the majority of owners, publisher, editors and senior media management of these companies.

Today, there are fewer women heading up major U.S. newspapers and media properties in the United States than there were 10 years ago. The firing of The New York Times's Jill Abramson in May of 2014 brought to light the serious dearth of women in the industry. With Abramson's firing, only three women remained as senior

editors at the top 25 highest circulation properties in the US. "They run just three of the nation's 25 largest titles," reported a Neiman Reports study, simply called Where are The Women? "Eight of the 25 biggest papers with circulations under 100,000, and three of the 25 biggest with circulations under 50,000. Only one of the top 25 international titles is run by a woman."

A 2015 surveyⁱⁱ of 27,000 pieces of news content from the top 20 news and media companies in the United States, an analysis compiled annually by the Women's Media Center, revealed that only thirty percent of bylines and only thirty-two percent of media related television appearances are women's. According to the 2014 American Society of News Editors (ASNE) newsroom census, women make up more than half of college students studying journalism, and yet remain a minority in terms of influence and leadership.

The institutionalized cap on women extends beyond traditional newspapers to other forms of media. A similar assessment of television, radio and digital media, conducted last year by the Radio Television Digital News Association (RTDNA), found that men make up 80 percent of general managers in those fields, and 69% percent of TV news directors. In radio, televisionⁱⁱⁱ news and non-news^{iv}, and book publishing^v numbers are similarly gender imbalanced^{vi}.

In addition to institutionalized barriers to parity in leadership and media management and production, women journalists appear to be leaving the industry in higher numbers than men. A 2015 University of Kansas

ⁱ Men write most newspaper op-eds, well over 80%, and write 64% of bylines in the US's top 20 media outlets (all types). Male front-page bylines at top newspapers and their online versions outnumbered female bylines in coverage of the 2012 presidential election by nearly a 3-to-1 margin. Both online and off, women remain in a pink-collar ghetto where they write mainly about food, family, furniture and fashion. Topics considered "not serious" and inexpert. On Sunday TV talk shows, where experts do flock, 25% of guests in 2013 were female and women were only 14% of those interviewed and 29% of roundtable guests, including when the topics were women's health and reproductive rights. On program, the Melissa Harris-Perry Show, has more diversity than all other Sunday shows combined. Women comprise the majority of journalism students and nearly 33% of journalists, but rarely make it past middle management at the major media organizations that dominate global information production. How can we separate any of these numbers and their impact on our imaginations facts from ownership? We can't.

ⁱⁱ http://wmc.3cdn.net/2e85f9517dc2bf164e_htm62xgan.pdf

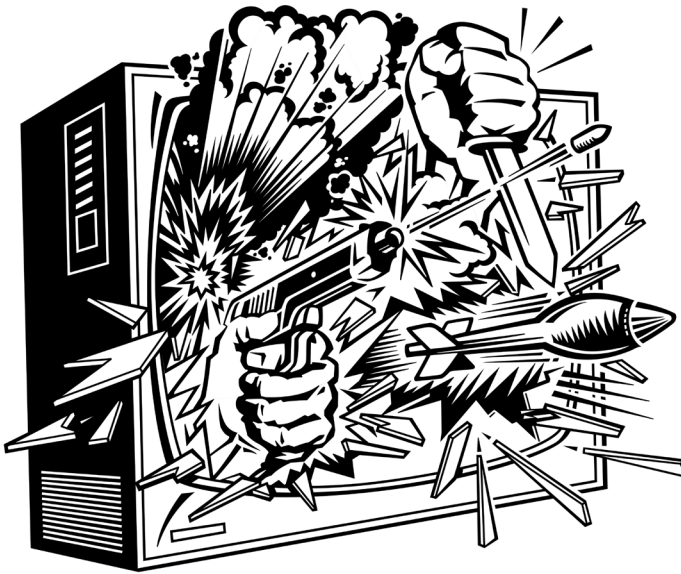
ⁱⁱⁱ <http://watercoolerjournal.com/the-decline-of-female-writers-in-television/>

^{iv} http://www.wga.org/uploadedFiles/who_we_are/hwr14execsum.pdf

^v In 2012 women's representation in national literary publications like Harpers, The New Republic, The Times Literary Supplement, The Paris Review actually decreased. The year 2013 did, mercifully, see two notable and substantive changes: The Paris Review and The New York Times Review of Books - both strove for gender parity as a result of criticism the year before and largely achieved it.

For example, in non-news television production, male directors outnumbered female directors 4-to-1 across broadcast, basic cable and premium cable. The same is true in non-news television programming. On television the number of women writers is going down. Women television writers are outnumbered two to one, and minorities three to one. Only 15% of TV writers in the 2012 season were women. This is a big decline from 2006-2007, when the number was 35%. Radio is no less unbalanced. These numbers are the same or worse in literary magazines and book publishing, where women's bylines make up less than a quarter of the total. As far as books are concerned, while men and women are equally productive, and women make up almost 60% of book readers, their work is not equally reviewed or published.





survey of 1,600 journalists, 500 of whom were women, asked respondents about their levels of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, as well as what they perceived to be organizational support in their jobs. Women consistently described higher levels of burnout and the desire to leave their chosen profession. Sixty-seven percent of the women surveyed, compared to 62 percent in 2009 and 55% of their male peers in 2015, reported that they intended to leave the industry or felt unsure that they would stay. Female journalists, reported internal cultural and organizational obstacles to success, difficult work/life structures, inadequate child and family care options, the demands of new media and gendered online hostility, are more likely to leave their profession. The trend is disturbing given the relationship between the presence of women in newsrooms and their eventual gains in leadership positions, already fairly limited. If the trend continues, the authors of the study speculated, fewer women in the media ranks will probably substantively erode gains made to date. Only one third of journalists with more than 20 years of experience in the US are women¹.

Lastly, topical sex segregation is still the norm in media, with delirious effects on storytelling. The production of most media remains segregated, by assignment, along gendered lines - sports being among the most extremely unbalanced topics, with women writing or producing only 7% of sports news. A 2014 media analysis conducted by the University of Maryland and the University of North Carolina found that pink collar ghettos still exist for women, who wrote the majority of pieces in just five out of 21 sections of the New York Times: fashion, dining, home, travel, and health. Even in newer, online-only news sites, where the gender ratio is slightly more balanced, male bylines still outnumber female bylines and women remain concentrated in lifestyle, health and culture. Men dominate media focused on the

economy, justice, sports and politics, those with higher status, prestige and long-term seniority promise. The combination of gender imbalance, sex segregation and higher burnout for women is a problematic long-term prognosis for journalism.

Women journalists in the US, reflecting realities measured around the world, report that vertical news channels remain sex-segregated and hierarchical by assignment, from senior editors, where there are relatively few women able to shift the persistent pattern. Women continue to be assigned the majority of "soft news" coverage, with women being more likely to be assigned to "pink" subjects, fashion, furniture, food and family. This is less true, but still substantively true, in online media, where there is more balance, but no parity. A comprehensive study conducted by The Op Ed Project, which trains women, found that in both legacy and online media, women continue to dominate areas traditionally associated with "women's issue," calling them "Pink Topics" and that women continue to be producing markedly fewer general interest and "hard news. Notably, women are still least likely to be assigned to write stories about world politics, justice related news and criminal justice.

The issue of gender representation spills consequentially into media sources. A study conducted by Pew and Media and Journalism last year found that more than three quarters of all stories contain men as sources, but only a third of stories contain even one woman. This is particularly strikingly in the coverage of issues that primarily impact women, for example, publicly and legislatively contested reproductive rights. Male sources, often with no accrued knowledge, expertise or direct experience, are the overwhelmingly preferred credible sources in media. Editors, and news producers, are responsible, for example, for the fact that today, 18% of TV news stories on women's reproductive health in the United States use Catholic Church leaders as sources at six times the rate of obstetricians and gynecologists.

The overall result of cultural preferences that prioritize male experiences and knowledge is imbalances in media leadership, sex segregated production, gender imbalanced sourcing, more male op-eds and bylines, male-focused stories and a preference for male photographic subjects. Consequently, we learn about the world through a grossly epistemologically distorted lens that contributes to gender inequality worldwide.

While the industry acknowledges that diversity in media and in newsrooms is important, fundamental cultural shifts necessary to make the workplace more inclusive have yet to have developed. Diversity is important to the production of accurate, fair and ethical media, and yet these demographics realities and trends have yet to catalyze meaningful changes in what constitute ethical standards in journalism.

¹ <http://niemanreports.org/articles/where-are-the-women/>





The Fight for the Decriminalization of Abortion

Between Legitimacy and Criminalization of Human Rights Defenders"

Human Rights of Women in Latin America

by Sara Garcia / Alejandra Burgos
(translated by Nadine Mondestin)

Throughout Latin America the question of women's human rights continues to be a standing debt from most governments. Femicidal violence has reached pandemic levels, which is not surprising, given the conditions of poverty, impunity, corruption and violence that characterize our societies. Nor can we leave out the fact that we live in highly conservative, fundamentalist and patriarchal societies, a state of affairs that hinders the exercise of human rights.

It was not until the 1993 Vienna Declaration of Human Rights, to quote Alda Facio, that we women we became human. However, there is still a way to go for various Latin American governments to take this seriously and concretely show that we are humans and equal to men.

As long as governments refuse to acknowledge and take responsibility for medical expenses before, during and after pregnancy. As long as there is no clear statement that women are moral subjects as: "legal persons" (or constituted as such). As long as there is no firm commitment to the principle that women own their bodies the same way men can take ownership of their bodies. As long as a woman who is not a mother can not feel free and at peace with her decision. As long as a woman carrying a high-risk pregnancy cannot end it to eliminate the risk it poses to her life... it will remain essential to speak of sexual and reproductive rights in Latin America.

Why is it important to work for sexual and reproductive rights in El Salvador?

El Salvador is one of 6 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that bans abortion under any and all circumstances, denying women the individual right to decide in situations of unwanted pregnancies when they are the result of rape, when the fetus has congenital

anomalies incompatible with life outside the womb, and even when pregnancies present obstetric complications that endanger the woman's life or health. Although El Salvador is not the only country in Latin America that criminalizes abortion, it is the country with the highest level of criminalization and disproportionate punishment against women for obstetric emergencies and / or crimes related to abortion (up to 40 years jail).

The struggle for sexual and reproductive rights has become necessary in El Salvador due to laws that undermine women's right to systematically decide about their own bodies due to the absolute criminalization of abortion, even when pregnancies endanger the lives of women, are the result of rape or when the fetus has congenital anomalies incompatible with life outside the womb. Similarly, the absence of clear public policies on sexual and reproductive education, a result of the conservatism pushed by certain fundamentalist groups increases the vulnerability of women and girls.

It was precisely these above mentioned fundamentalist groups, that influenced changes to legislation surrounding abortion in 1997, establishing one of the world's most restrictive legal frameworks as far as women's reproductive rights are concerned. Thus all forms of abortion previously allowed in Salvadoran law (therapeutic, ethical and eugenic abortion) were criminalized. The following year (1998), these fundamentalist groups that had championed the abolition of this legal framework led the campaign for a constitutional amendment which established state responsibility to the individual "from the moment of conception".

To comply with this law, the government established across all public hospitals a system of judicial persecution for reporting, investigating and prosecuting any activity suspected to be abortion. The law has been applied to women who fit a specific profile: young women who live in poverty and with low educational levels, who generally have obstetric complications and are suspected of having triggered abortions, who are reported from the very same emergency rooms where they're being treated;

¹ Countries that criminalize all cases of abortion in Latin America and the Caribbean: El Salvador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Chile, Haiti, Suriname and the Dominican Republic.





prosecution is launched under charges of abortion and then the category is changed to aggravated murder punishable by 30 to 50 years in prison.

Defending Rights that are not always recognized as Rights

In this context, and as Morena Herrera states:

"... The first challenge that defenders of sexual and reproductive rights face is that these rights are not always recognized as such"².

The strong media power of conservative and fundamentalist groups and some ecclesiastical hierarchies feed into the denial of the existence and legitimacy of sexual and reproductive rights as human rights, which becomes a threat to both the defenders of those rights as well as government bodies responsible for ensuring compliance.

The dismissive discourses of these fundamentalist groups are mostly targeting legalization of abortion legalization and same sex marriage. Hence, it follows that women defenders of sexual and reproductive rights struggle with uncertainty and safety, which in most countries in the region also involves situations of exclusion, stigmatization and lack of recognition³.

"Defending Sexual and Reproductive Rights Where Abortion is Completely Criminalized" ⁴

El Salvador may not be the only country where abortion is illegal but it is the country in the region where women are most harshly judged and condemned for it. The fundamentalist groups' and religious hierarchies' capacity to influence media to misinform and manipulate public opinion on the issue and the enormous impunity with which these groups operate has created a stigmatization of people who defend the right of women to decide about their own bodies.

This stigma creates a threat and a latent risk for women human rights defenders. Coupled with this, the media also contributes to misinformation on sexual diversity, encourages violence and aggression against LGBTI people, and against all those who defend them. Hate crimes against LGBTI people are usually not recognized

as such. In addition to being cases with little or no follow-up from relevant legal authorities, impunity is the norm for the majority.

Who are the Defenders of Sexual and Reproductive Rights in El Salvador?

If we are to describe those who defend sexual and reproductive rights in El Salvador, we should mention that the main defenders of these rights are women's organizations as well as those who bring together organizations and activists who, individually or collectively, have decided to take on this struggle.

What Challenges are Defenders of Sexual and Reproductive Rights Facing Today?

Sexual and reproductive rights advocates in the region have shifted from a discourse centered on health, to gradually developing a rights agenda that challenges traditional social norms around sexuality and morality. Thus they are claiming concepts such as the right to pleasure, freely chosen maternity, anti-conception, protection against the growing spread of sexually transmitted infections such as HIV, to non-discrimination...to self-definition of sexual identities, to protection from the various forms of aggression and sexual violence, etc."⁵



² Herrera, Morena, "Violencias contra defensoras de derechos sexuales y reproductivos en Mesoamérica: apuntes para la reflexión", in: *Diagnóstico 2012: Violencia contra Defensoras en Mesoamérica*, Iniciativa Mesoamérica para Defensoras de Derechos Humanos, p. 110, Mesoamérica, 2013

³ Ibid, p. 110.

⁴ Morena Herrera Ibid, p. 111.

⁵ Ibid p. 105.





"Other claims relating to the autonomy of women's bodies, their right to decide and control their reproductive capacity are not recognized or are often blurred"

Although the advocacy agenda of feminist organizations aims to focus on the defense of those rights related to the exercise of free sexuality without prejudice, the growing reality of violation of women's basic human rights requires defenders of sexual and reproductive rights to focus on health issues.

Defenders of sexual and reproductive rights have to contend, for example, with the reality of the increasing number of teenage pregnancies in El Salvador, where 56.2% of teen pregnancies are unintended and mostly the product of sexual assault, according to a study by the World Bank.

In addition, another growing concern facing defenders of sexual and reproductive rights is their own safety and security as the conservative and misogynist context of Salvadoran society makes them daily targets of stigmatization, discrimination, threats and continuous attacks by the majority of the population which is generally exposed to prejudiced and uninformed moralization and, as a result, becomes intolerant and disrespectful.

In a country where impunity prevails, hate crimes are not prosecuted or investigated as such, even when victims of these practices have evidence of torture very similar to those performed during armed conflict and by military death squads.

As a result, the defense of sexual and reproductive rights in a society where the influence of religious discourse in public policy becomes predominant and with some of the most punitive legislation on abortion, which leads to various defenders facing threatening and

dangerous situations daily and various types of violence (from defamation to threats and physical assault, etc.).

According to Diagnóstico 2012: Violencia contra Defensoras en Mesoamérica (Diagnosis 2012: Violence Against Women Human Rights Defenders in Mesoamerica) published by IM-Defensoras⁶, in El Salvador of the 51 registered cases of attacks against women human defenders, 20 occurred in the context of defense of sexual and reproductive rights.

Women human rights defenders working on sexual and reproductive rights have to face this reality, in a region where hetero-normativity is deeply embedded, represented and imposed in all spheres of social relations.

In this regard, given the traditional silence around female sexuality, taking on the defense of women's rights in this area implies a process that questions both women's identities but also one of the areas that has traditionally been an expression of male supremacy and female subordination.

It is for this reason that the vulnerability and risk faced by women defenders of sexual and reproductive rights increases because their work questions not only the subordination of women within the family, but also calls into question an entire system of structural domination that continues to seek to dominate women's bodies and sexuality as a commodity for consumer use. Their work defends the idea that women appropriate their bodies as the first territory of agency but especially as authors of their own lives, contributing from there to building a more inclusive, just and equitable society that is respectful of diversity.



⁶ The Iniciativa Mesoamericana para Defensoras de Derechos Humanos (IM-Defensoras) is a coalition uniting: Just Associates (JASS), Consorcio para el diálogo parlamentario y la Equidad en Oaxaca (Consortium for Parliamentary Dialogue and Equity in Oaxaca), FCAM, UDEFEGUA and Colectiva Feminista en El Salvador (Feminist Collective in El Salvador).





Women and Girls in South Asia: when will the Violence Stop?

by **Cécile Gréboval**, Gender Equality Expert

The eight South Asian countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) are home to one fifth of the world population and to almost half of the people living in poverty. While comprehensive figures about the extent of violence against women in the region are lacking, existing research point to a critical situation. Women and girls in the region are confronted to various forms of violence throughout their lives that severely impacts not only on their health and integrity, but also on their capacity to realise their basic human rights as equal citizens. Women's organisations have been working for years to denounce and address the phenomena and the normative situation is slowly improving. In addition, in the last years, severe incidents have triggered enhanced media attention and public outrage in several countries, maybe a sign that minds are finally starting to change?

Women and girls in South Asia face forms of violence that occur in other parts of the world (intimate partner abuse, child abuse, sexual harassment, child marriage, trafficking), other forms that are particularly acute in South Asia (excess female child mortality, child marriage, honour crimes) and forms of violence that are unique to the region such as dowry-related violence.

A shocking array of violence spreading through the life-cycle of women and girls

What is striking about violence against women (VAW) in South Asia is its constant presence in women's lives. Beside domestic violence, women and girls are faced with a shocking range of forms of violence perpetrated by different men, other women, the community and the state, from the moment they are born, through adolescence, adulthood and old age. In

relation to childhood, South Asia has the highest levels of excess female child mortality among world regions, with India showing the worst available figures and no sign of progress. South Asia has also the highest rate of child marriage in the world with 46% of girls married by the age of 18². In relation to domestic violence, available surveys show that almost half of married women in Bangladesh, one-third in India and one-quarter in Nepal and Pakistan report physical violence from their spouse³. Research also shows that married adolescents are more likely to be exposed to multiple forms of partner violence and that significant portions of the population still accept domestic violence.

Data is scarce to gain full knowledge of all forms of violence against women but even more so in relation to physical and sexual abuse against girls, sexual harassment, trafficking, honour killings and custodial violence (violence perpetrated in a state institutional setting).

The efficiency with which the violence is perpetrated system-wide is also startling: women are constantly and daily vulnerable, not just to the threat of violence by intimate partners or family members, but also by strangers (in the case of sexual harassment, prostitution or trafficking), whole communities (honour killings) and the state (in cases of custodial violence).

Gaps and barriers to the elimination of violence against women in the region

All eight countries South Asian have adopted different forms of legal protection against several forms of violence and all have signed the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against

¹ This article is an adaptation/summary (except box) by Cécile Gréboval of the original work by The World Bank by Solotaroff, Jennifer L., and Rohini Prabha Pande. 2014. *Violence against Women and Girls: Lessons from South Asia*. South Asia Development Forum. Washington, DC: World Bank. Doi: 10.1596/978-1-4648-0171-6. License: Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 3.0 IGO. Responsibility for the views and opinions expressed in the adaptation rests solely with the author of the adaptation and are not endorsed by The World Bank.

² Source: Demographic and Health Surveys, multiple years.

³ The world's biggest-ever survey on VAW published in 2014 by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, concluded that 22% women in the European Union had experienced physical or sexual partner violence since the age of 15. Source: "Violence Against Women: An EU Wide Survey," European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014 conducted with 42,000 women across the 28 EU member states.





Women, albeit with some reservations. Civil society and women's organisations have also been very active in all countries both in terms of advocacy and service provision. However, existing normative frameworks, programmes and public campaigns to eliminate violence against women and girls have been unable to address adequately the phenomenon, as shown by persistently high prevalence rates, and impunity for many perpetrators.

Discriminatory sociocultural norms embedded in social institutions, political systems and the law contribute to the persistence of VAW. Religious institutions as well as conservative gender norms about masculinity and femininity also reinforce unequal gender relations between women and men and perpetuate the cycle of violence against women and girls. In the same way, inhospitable judicial systems and lack of legal awareness hamper the implementation of legislation when it exists. A major barrier is the continued lack of recognition that women and girls should be treated as equal citizens and have the same rights and opportunities as men and boys. This perception of women and girls as victims and subject rather than individuals in their own right has limited the implementation of provisions ensuring women's safety.

Different other factors at the household and individual level interplay with societal factors to create situations of vulnerability for women and girls. Childhood exposure to violence is seen as a key risk factor for women's vulnerability to violence and for men's risk of becoming perpetrator in later stages of their lives. On the other hand, protective factors have been identified, such as a greater ability on the part of women and girls to negotiate with family members, society and partners, acquiring secondary education or an access to resources (financial or land). Although violence against women occurs in all parts of society, the stress created by poverty can create heightened conditions for excess female child mortality, child marriage, inter-personal violence and trafficking.



Learning from existing interventions to eliminate violence against women and girls in South Asia

Most of the South Asian region has been experiencing very rapid economic and social changes in the last decades. Part of these changes relate to the growing participation of women and girls in different realms, including education, paid employment and decision-making. This leads to new skills and opportunities for women and girls and the progress towards more economic independence is key to women's ability to escape and avoid violent relations and situations. At the same time, the growing presence of women and girls in the public space creates new situations of vulnerability, especially in a moment of tensions between social changes and existing gender norms.

At the same time, a considerable amount of initiatives addressing violence against women and girls in the region can be observed, although in many cases, adequate evaluation of their impact is missing. Still, existing evaluation has highlighted some promising practices to address different forms of VAW, for example:

- Conditional cash transfers, bans on practice and media campaigns have yield positive results to address **excess female child mortality**
- The integration of a gender perspective in existing interventions dealing with child abuse (child clubs, police training) helps to better address **violence against girls** more specifically.
- Skills programmes for girls and increased participation in secondary schools to address **child marriage**.
- The use of community networks, identification of agents of change, use of innovative media with provocative messages have helped to bring **domestic violence** out of the private realm. Early interventions with men and boys addressing gender equality issues have also had positive results in influencing perceptions of gender norms.
- Awareness raising through media, engaging with survivors and life skills programmes/secondary education for girls have brought positive results in relation to **trafficking**.

Remaining challenges and ways forward

Learning about all forms of violence against women is a necessary step to address this phenomenon, including in terms of evaluation of existing interventions, research and data collection. In the same way, there is a need for organisations working on different forms of violence to



cooperate more with each other, in order to allow for mutual learning.

Even more than in other parts of the world, early intervention with both girls and boys addressing gender norms and notions of femininity and masculinity is a factor of success, given the fact that most the population of the region is young. There is also a need to engage more

systematically with men and to actively involve women survivors in designing and implementing programmes addressing different forms of VAW.

The eradication of all forms of violence against women can only be achieved with full implementation of normative frameworks, increased accountability of all actors, full support of donors and funding that reflect the severity of the issue.

Helping the “Last Girl”: Apne Aap Working against Sex Trafficking in India



Photo: Apne Aap website

Apne Aap Women Worldwide, is an anti-sex trafficking organisation active in India, founded by women's rights activist Ruchira Gupta in 2002 after winning an Emmy for her documentary *The Selling of Innocents*, on sex trafficking. Since then, Apne Aap has supported more than 20,000 low-caste girls and women and their family members affected by prostitution.

“Prostitution is not a choice but an absence of choice based on gender, class, caste, ethnic and race inequalities that the sex industry exploits”

The Apne Aap approach is to help the “Last girl” regain control of her destiny. The Last girl is poor, female,

low-caste, and a teenager. Additionally, she may be the daughter or sister of a prostituted woman or a victim of child marriage or domestic servitude. She is preyed on by traffickers because of her lack of choices and forms the supply side of prostitution. Apne Aap's strategy is at the same time to support victims and to address the demand, namely traffickers and clients who buy and sell these girls.

In 2013, members of the Apne Aap network have also succeeded in advocating for the adoption a new law against trafficking in India, which has shifted the blame from the victim to the perpetrator. More information: <http://apneaap.org/>





From women's economic independence to a feminist economy in Europe

by Anna Elomäki

In Europe, decades of work to ensure gender equality and women's economic independence are being compromised by the regime of austerity. Moving forward requires changes in economic policies and the economic thinking that underpins them.

Austerity and women's economic independence

In Europe the financial and economic crisis has turned into the crisis of public budgets. As the location of the crisis has changed, indebted, overspending and irresponsible governments have taken the place of the

risk-taking, profit-seeking and selfish bankers as the villains of the story.

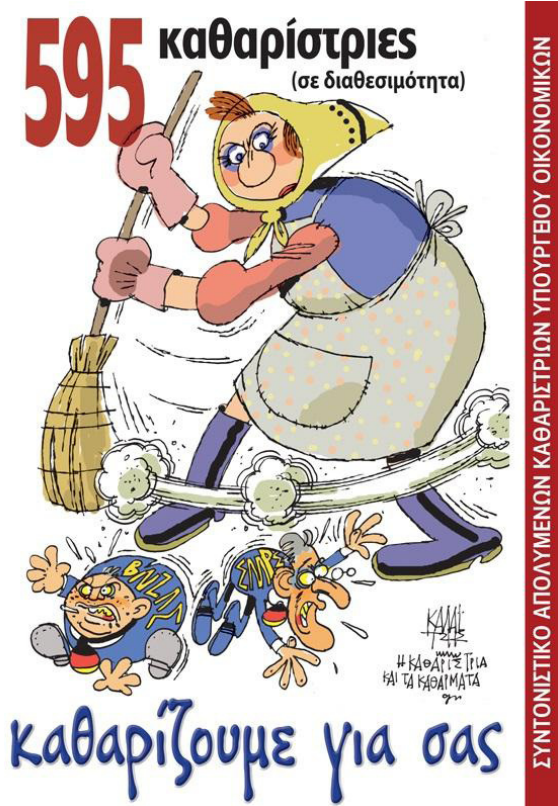
The so-called Troika (European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund) is closely scrutinizing the budgets and policies of the crisis countries, such as Greece, Spain and Portugal. Also economically stable EU countries are under constant pressure to reduce public deficits and debts. The deficit and debt limits for Euro countries established back in the 1990s have, in the aftermath of the economic crisis, been complemented with new EU-level mechanisms for economic governance, which have given the European Commission significant power over national economic policy.

The necessity and unavoidability of large cuts in public spending and the sacrifices "we all" have to make in order to save national economies have become the staples of government rhetoric around Europe. This has been the case also in countries, which do not suffer from acute economic problems. For example, in Finland the newly appointed government presented in May 2015 a harsh austerity plan for the next four years.

Governments have failed to assess the gender impacts of the implemented cuts and structural reforms, but women's organisations and academic gender experts have documented the gendered effects of austerity.

Gender equality and women's economic independence have been particularly affected in the crisis countries such as Greece, where the Troika has required great reductions in public sector wages and employment, successive cuts in pensions and other social benefits, radical changes in the employment model and reductions in funding for care services and education in return for financial help. As a result, women's employment rate has stopped increasing, interrupting the progress towards women's economic independence through better integration in paid work. Cuts in the already low public pensions have pushed older women into poverty.

All over Europe, cuts in public spending have affected the availability and costs of public care services, transferring the responsibility for care from the society to individuals, mainly women. At the same time, the number of female breadwinner households has increased, intensifying women's double burden. Finally,



The 595 fired janitors had brought renewed hope to the movement against austerity in Greece. "Clean for us", says this cartoon by Yannis Kalantzis, showing them sweeping away the Troika and former Prime Minister Samaras.

¹ See, for example, Maria Karamessini and Jill Rubery (eds.) *Women and Austerity. The Economic Crisis and the Future for Gender Equality*. London: Routledge





in crisis countries but also across Europe, the gender equality architecture has been dismantled or its funding reduced¹.

When welfare states are being dismantled, it is not enough to call for piecemeal measures to improve women's economic status. Ensuring gender equality and women's economic independence requires a full turn in economic policy and in the mainstream economic thinking that underpins it.

From austerity to neoliberalism

The unquestionable dogma of austerity is part of a bigger picture, namely, the neoliberalization of European societies. The readiness of governments to tackle the fiscal crisis with measures that dismantle the welfare state reveals their implicit or explicit commitment to the deregulatory, market-friendly and state-downsizing neoliberal economic project. In other words, the crisis of public budgets is being used as an excuse to turn European welfare states into neoliberal ones.

The orthodoxy about austerity is also connected to what Wendy Brown has described as the expansion of neoliberal rationality². Neoliberalism is more than a set of economic policies and the theory behind them. Rather, it is a normative way of thinking, which models everything from the state to human beings according to the model of the market. This neoliberal "economization of everything" eradicates borders between the economic and the social and the economic and the political.

The states have turned from the servants of their citizens to the servants of the economy: competitiveness, economic growth and - as the persisting austerity has revealed - good credit ratings have become the main goal and legitimization of governments. All policy from gender equality to education is assessed through cost-benefit calculations and against the goals of growth and competitiveness. Market values, priorities and metrics have conquered our everyday lives too. They determine the way decision-makers see us - as human capital rather than as citizens - and the ways we see ourselves.

Economy as "truth"

Feminist economists have shown that the economy is a gendered structure and that economic decisions have gendered effects. They have also provided a basis for an alternative economic strategy that insists on the incorporation of reproductive and care work into economic thinking and policies.

The economic status quo has, however, proven particularly resistant to critique. One reason for this is that the economy has for centuries been seen as an autonomous sphere detached from democratic decision-making, given over to economic experts and institutions.

Still today, dominant economic thinking represents itself as objective and value-free, and politicians as well as the media tend to treat mainstream economists' assessments and recommendations as such. As a consequence, economic decisions, such as public spending cuts, are portrayed as necessities that follow from economic truths, detached from justice, equality and human rights.

The cloak of objectivity and neutrality that surrounds economic knowledge and decisions casts opposing views, such as those of feminist economists, as biased and irrational. In reality, of course, economic knowledge is based on normative views about society and involves value assessments. It is also gender-biased.

This false neutrality is dangerous not only for gender equality but also for democracy. Whether made by governments or by EU institutions, economic decisions are always political decisions that can and should be contested. They are made by particular people - elite and mostly male - and guided by particular interests. These decisions are not neutral in their effects either, as they benefit some at the expense of others.

Achieving a feminist economy requires, therefore, struggles over both knowledge and policies. Feminist economists' work on alternative economic models must be disseminated and discussed, with the aim of challenging economic "truths". At the same time, feminists have to challenge economic decisions from a gender perspective and propose alternatives.



Fired janitors had been occupying the entrance of Greece's Ministry of Economic Development, among other creative tactics. Photo: FOSPHOTOS Panayiotis Tzamaros.

² Wendy Brown. 2015. *Undoing the Demos. Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. MIT Press.

³ See, for example, Ruth Pearson and Diane Elson (2015) *Transcending the impact of the financial crisis in the United Kingdom: towards plan F—a feminist economic strategy*. In *Feminist Review* 109, 8-30

⁴ Sylvia Walby (2015) *Crisis*. Polity Press (forthcoming)





I *Alternatives to austerity*

The rhetoric of necessity that surrounds the austerity in Europe hides the fact that alternatives do exist. First of all, in many cases it is open for debate, whether the fiscal crisis is real or constructed. Deficits can be tolerated. In countries where public debt is not exceptionally high, taking more debt in order to invest in well-being and employment creation, for example through investing in social infrastructure, would be a real option.

When the need to narrow down the deficit is real, cuts in public spending are not the only way. Too often the other side of the coin, increasing public revenue, is not examined to the same extent. For example, the Finnish government decided to cover the deficit entirely with spending cuts and structural reforms with no increase in the overall tax base. Cutting benefits and services rather than increasing taxes means that the least well-off carry most of what decision-makers like to call “the common burden”. It is also always a gendered choice.

Finally, when cuts are inevitable, there is plenty of choice as regard to where to cut. In Finland, the main argument used for cutting social security benefits, care services and education was that these form a large part of the state budget. But so does, for example, military spending. At the time when the Finnish governments cuts from crucial benefits and services in the name of economic necessity, it finds an equal amount of money to invest in new warships and planes.



I *Feminist resistance*

The established anti-austerity political parties, such as Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain, have not been very inclusive of women and gender equality issues. The Greek Syriza government has only six women among its 40 ministers. However, feminists have been visible in the broader anti-austerity movements, such as the 15M-movement in Spain.

The crisis has also sparked new forms of feminist activism, which focus on budgets and economic policies. In Finland, where little feminist attention used to be paid to the economy, austerity has changed the situation. New forms of collaboration between women’s organisations and trade unions have been created in order to contest austerity plans detrimental to gender equality. Also the feminist research community has taken action and conducted a preliminary gender impact assessment of the government’s austerity programme.

However, feminists who engage in debates about the economy must be careful with the way in which they frame their claims. It is not only the dominant economic thinking and austerity policies they have to contest. They should also challenge the expansion of the neoliberal rationality, the economization of politics and of all aspects of our lives.

This is not easy. Neoliberal gender equality discourses, which frame gender equality as a contribution for economic growth, competitiveness and business profitability rather than as a value and a question of justice and human rights, are widely used by European governments and the EU institutions. It often seems that only arguments about costs and benefits are able to turn the heads of decision-makers and make them see the importance of gender equality.

The pull of economized arguments and language is strong, and their use in the struggle for a feminist economy may be unavoidable. It is, however, important to remember that gender equality is a value and a question of justice and women rights. If feminists do not hold on to this frame, no one else will.



Feminist Environmentalism

Some Australian Perspectives

WHO Global Health Observatory Data reports that urban population in 2014 accounted for 54% of the total global population, up from 34% in 1960, and continues to grow. ...It is estimated that by 2017, even in less developed countries, a majority of people will be living in urban areas. www.who.int/gho/database/en/

Is there a distinctive women's way of looking at planning, development and the environment? Certainly Jane Jacobs (1916-2006) thought so and was derided in the 1960s for her emphasis on community planning by the largely male urban planning establishment. Her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) was widely read in Australia in the 1960s and 70s, and it seems to bring relevance now that we are looking at a world where cities account for more and more of the population.

For a challenging account of how over-development can affect communities, and food supply, and biodiversity, many women in Australia were influenced also by Arundhati Roy whose writing about issues such as the Narmada Dam project, and India's nuclear weapons industry, won her the Sydney Peace Award in 2004.

Certainly women have played a significant part in the work of conservation of the natural environment in Australia since pre-colonial times, and in the 19th and 20th centuries as field naturalists, gardeners, educators, scientists and in sympathetic and sensitive agricultural pursuits. Now 'conservation' is a concern of governments at every level and partnerships are routine between public, private entities and community groups. Does this really make a difference?

Women Traditional Owners - 2014 Victory

One long running dispute in which women have played a significant role has been to stop the Australian government plans to build a national radioactive waste dump at Muckaty Station in the Northern Territory.

Traditional owners of Muckaty Station won a long-running dispute over a nuclear waste dump last year, meaning returned waste will be stored at Lucas Heights. *With no permanent national repository, the Australian*



Photo: Jagath Dheerasekara

by Sheila Byard and Priscilla Todd

byardsm@gmail.com and iawiwn@womenalliance.org

*Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation has been forced to build an interim waste store at Lucas Heights for a French shipment including 28 stainless steel canisters of reprocessed waste and six cemented drums of technological waste, including gloves and protective clothing worn by French nuclear workers. **Kirsty Needham** Sydney Morning Herald June 19, 2014. <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-news/victory-for-traditional-owners-over-muckaty-station-nuclear-waste-dump-20140619-zsdf.html>*

Feminist Ecologies in Australia

It is 15 years since Australian born Germaine Greer set about restoring a property she purchased in south-east Queensland to its pre-colonial rain forest biodiversity. In 2014 she published *White Beech: The Rainforest Years*, a book that has been widely read in Australia and beyond because of the way it looks at environmental degradation through a new lens.

Since the appearance of 'White Beech' Professor Greer has spoken a number of times in Australia about the way much 'conservation' work is mere tinkering at the edge of the problem. Her theme is that everyone needs to understand how we can contribute to making the country sustainable in the twenty-first century in the face of a changing climate. She asserts that private owners like herself





may do more effective work than public bodies, bound as they are to bend to stakeholder opinion. Above all, it is a women's issue since it is they who suffer the effects of environmental degradation more acutely than men due to women's dependence on the land to generate income and for the nourishment of their families.

In November 2014, Professor Greer delivered a lecture 'Mother? Nature?' followed by the 'Feminist Ecologies in Australia' symposium held at the University of Melbourne with papers from notable contributors to the field of environmental humanities including Professor Kate Rigby (Monash University), Professor Robyn Eckersley (University of Melbourne), Associate Professor Linda Williams (RMIT), Professor Alison Bartlett (University of Western Australia) and a wide range of other participants. Some of the feminist ecological perspectives discussed in the papers included the Pine Gap women's anti-nuclear and anti-war protests in 1983, Australian women activists who were instrumental in the successful 'World Park' Antarctica Campaign, Australia's major mining towns and their increased levels of domestic violence against women and female economic hardship, Judith Wright's poetry, Elizabeth Jolley's fiction, the performances of Jill Orr and even a performance of a contemporary field recording of birds in a local urban environment.

Earth can survive without people; People cannot survive without earth: This was the topic of a more recent address by Professor Greer in April 2015 at the University of Adelaide. Noting the passion of such doers such as the late Wangari Maathai, who led Kenyan women to propagate native trees in what became the Green Belt Movement, Professor Green's lecture focused on how women around the world have taken action to protect the environment locally by comparison with the difficulty that the conservation movement has had in mobilising action.

"Most of us love Earth and have no desire to migrate to another galaxy," she was quoted as saying. "There is no easy answer. But one way of relieving our own unease and anguish, perhaps the only way, is to start doing it for ourselves. If we can rebuild a fragment of a single ecosystem, train ourselves to acquire the skills and the knowledge to reverse the process, we can be amazed at our planet's power to regenerate."

A new kind of movement - 1 Million Women

www.1millionwomen.com.au

A growing number of women and girls are taking individual action across Australia to protect the planet and climate for future generations. Founder of 1 Million Women, Natalie Isaacs, says, "Over 300,000 women have pledged to save 150,000 tonnes of carbon pollution from their daily lives. Women are powerful. We make 85% of decisions that make up the household's

carbon footprint. We have enormous influence as consumers".

Key areas of focus are: A Low Carbon Life - a key solution in the fight against climate change. Commitment to a Youth Program presented at schools around the country, to be expanded in 2016. Women's Economic Power - by engaging, informing and guiding women to understand and utilise their own economic power from daily purchasing decisions to divesting superannuation, banking and investments away from companies that invest in fossil fuels. A Collective Voice - taking a stand on big climate challenges and fighting for climate justice.

This organisation is supported by an impressive list of ambassadors and it partners with a range of ethical businesses and organisations.

1 Million Women was chosen by UNFCCC's Momentum for Change: Women for Results initiative as one of six women-led global initiatives highlighted at COP19 in Warsaw.

The Coming Generation's Views on Climate Change

A third year medical student at Flinders University's Arural clinic school in Hamilton, Victoria, and a member of Doctors for the Environment Australia, Kate Wheldrake, says, "My generation needs no convincing of the need to take urgent action on climate change. We have studied the basic science, and we have understood the need for technological improvements to enable our economies to transition away from fossil fuels.

We have joined the climate marches; taken action in our schools and universities; met our MPs. We have even sued our governments when they fail to take effective action. On the whole, our frustration and (yes) anger has grown at the lack of significant commitment to change. After all, the current crop of politicians will be long dead but we will still be around, and so will our children, when the major effects of climate change are felt.

Give us real options - give us some projects to work on - give us hope for a safe climate future. Many young people will be encouraged by the Lancet Commission's conclusion www.thelancet.com/commissions/climate-change that 'achieving a decarbonised global economy and securing the public health benefits it offers is no longer primarily a technical or economic question - it is now a political one'. This means we can now demand that our political leaders end their excuses and delaying tactics, and commit to meaningful action on reducing the greenhouse gas emissions that endanger our world now and in the not-too-distant future."

(extract from Women's Agenda 9 September 2015)



International Women's News Favourite

Violet Shivutse: A seat at the table for caregivers in Kenya

Violet Shivutse, a 47-year old farmer, is the founder of Kenya's branch of the Home-Based Care Alliance, which brings together around 30,000 caregivers across 11 African countries. The vast majority are women and these carers collectively treat and care for around 200,000 friends, relatives and neighbours, many affected by HIV and AIDS.

"Our main goal ... is to make sure we have a collective voice to lobby for recognition of caregivers as key players in healthcare provision and HIV and AIDS in our communities. Most of our caregivers have gone to a level where they are really recognized by senior government people", says Violet.

"It hasn't always been this way. It has been a long, hard struggle to get to this point. For years, caregivers received little or no recognition for the critical role they played in filling the gaps where formal healthcare facilities were lacking." Violet knows from experience that to advocate effectively women need to organize, define goals and then insist on a place at the decision-making table.

The fact that Violet remains rooted in her community is key to her effectiveness

Working with small-scale farmers in western Kenya in the late 1990s, Violet saw that male farmers had the power to take out loans or benefit from agricultural extension schemes, while women were more likely to be found in the fields, working hard, with little support and no role in decision-making.

She also noticed that many women in her community were dying in childbirth, and that the response of the nearby hospital was to blame traditional birth attendants. Shaken by the death of a local woman, Violet made contact with the local hospital and asked them to include traditional birth attendants in their outreach programmes instead of ostracizing them.

The hospital agreed to work with traditional birth attendants to facilitate mobile clinics for women in the villages. Since many of the attendants were illiterate, they were unable to fill out the hospital's paperwork so Violet agreed to be their secretary.

It was the first step on a journey that would lead Violet to form the Shibuye Community Health Workers. Since the group's inception, it has expanded its work to include other health issues such as measles outbreaks, diarrhoea, and providing advice on sanitation, good nutrition and family planning.

Then, as Kenya's AIDS pandemic took grip in the mid-

1990s, caregivers found themselves under increasing strain. In 1996, the country's HIV prevalence rate hit 10.5 per cent and three years later HIV and AIDS was declared a national disaster and a public health emergency. Since the beginning of the crisis, Kenya's caregivers have been on the frontline of the response - treating long-term patients at home, ensuring their fields were tended, tackling stigma and defending the land rights of women with HIV/AIDS.



A long hard struggle for Caregivers to gain recognition

Yet initially their efforts were barely acknowledged. "Every time resources for HIV and AIDS came or meetings (were held) to discuss policy around HIV, caregivers were excluded or represented by big organizations," Violet says.

Her epiphany came during a meeting in Nairobi in 2003 to discuss the effect of HIV and AIDS on Africa. "The donors, the policy-makers in the room said: 'We know caregivers are there but they are fragmented, they work in small groups so it becomes difficult to bring them to a decision-making platform because they can't represent each other well'," she said.

Violet relayed this to her community and set about creating a local chapter of the Home-based Care Alliance, which was already working on HIV and AIDS in other countries across Africa. The women organized and started talking to the authorities about how to refine policy around HIV and AIDS. One of the first meetings was with the Constituency AIDS Control Committee, part of the National AIDS Control Council.

As the Home-based Care Alliance grew, Violet realized there was a need to address some ingrained misconceptions about the nature of healthcare. "The view was that health begins at the health facility. So we came in to say, health begins in the community." Violet explains that the work caregivers were doing on HIV and AIDS was an economic necessity, as they helped prop up a national health system under incredible strain, but it was also a moral and social imperative.

"Caregivers strengthen the social fabric because for us, in an African context, any sick person belongs to their community ... It's not just about health facilities that are collapsing. No. It's actually what ... people should do when people fall sick and have a long-term illness. We are not just responding to healthcare," she said.

Today, the Kenyan branch of the Home-based Care Alliance has around 3,200 members. In recent years Violet's advocacy work has focused on creating enabling relationships between communities and health facilities, helping caregivers organize and access resources and key policy-making forums.

For Violet, who often represents caregivers in global meetings, the fact that she remains rooted in her community is key to her effectiveness. "I think this is a comprehensive, holistic way of doing development where you are not just handpicked to sit on a committee, but you come from a community," she says.

A report from UN Women, Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights, calls for radical reforms to the global policy agenda thinking which will transform economies and make women's rights and equality a reality. Included is a series of case studies from all over the world which illustrate how governments, organizations, and individuals are working to transform the economic landscape for women.



International Women's News / Nouvelles Feministes Internationales

President:

Joanna Manganara
16 Skoufa Street
Athens 10673
Greece

iawpres@womenalliance.org

Executive

Vice Presidents:

Bashan Rafique
United Kingdom,
Jessica Kehl-Lauff
Switzerland

Secretary General:

iawsec@womenalliance.org

Treasurer:

iawtreas@womenalliance.org

Membership Officer:

Pat Richardson
P.O. Box 380
Nambucca Heads NSW 2448
Australia

iaw.membership@womenalliance.org

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