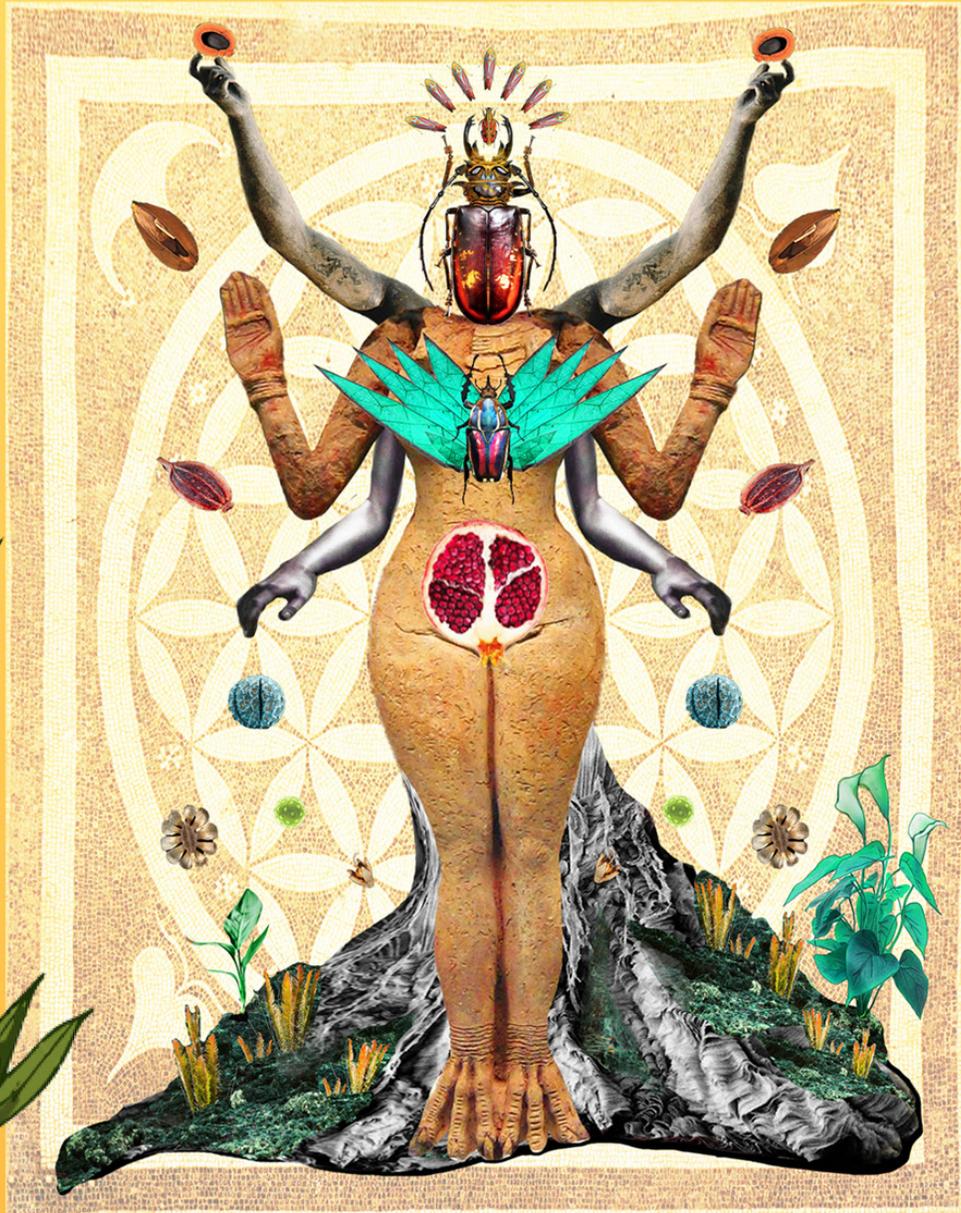


GLOBAL CONVERSATIONS



PATHWAYS TO GENDER EQUITY
Achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5

WINTER EDITION 2019



The cover design for this issue is intended to highlight the numerous different ways women and girls relate and contribute to the physical and social environment around them. The central image is based on Ishtar, the Mesopotamian goddess of love and war and the predecessor to what later became Aphrodite. The arms and hands are added to reflect the many contributions women make to societies across the world. She holds and releases seeds and spores to symbolize how women bring life into this world. The imagery is also in reference to women playing a fundamental role in agriculture and food security, and women and girls' rights to have access to land, food and water. The pomegranate at her core represents the seeds of life and knowledge she holds within, as well as a reference to reproductive rights and the right to consent. As she stands - she blends with the land around her, as millions of women around the world are the caretakers of Mother Earth - many times finding themselves at the forefront of fighting for land rights. The beetle is seen as a symbol of rebirth, as is SDG 5 for renewed respect and rights of women and girls. The beetle is also chosen because their exteriors shine with many colours, symbolic of all ethnicities, religions and gender identities. In the background, the Flower of Life is based on the circle and symbolises sacred geometry. The circle reflects a new shape of governance, in contrast to the triangle in which we find hierarchies such as patriarchy. Many of the themes represented in this image are discussed within this issue, as our contributors sought to highlight the critical role women and girls play in all societies and how achieving gender equity is a goal that everyone benefits from.

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Letter from the Editors in Chief

As 2019 begins, we are excited and proud to share Global Conversations' second issue, Pathways to Gender Equity: Achieving SDG-5. We would like to thank the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy for its continuing support of student-run global journalism. We also want to thank the students who work tirelessly in writing and editing these pieces, their hard work makes these issues what they are. We also want to extend our sincere gratitude towards Gilda Monreal for her amazing cover artwork - and the long nights spent contributing both in writing and artwork towards this issue.

This issue is done in partnership with the Hart House Global Commons. Global Commons is an interdisciplinary space connecting students around the world to form meaningful dialogue on a topic of global importance. This year's winter topic is focused on Sustainable Development Goal Five - achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls. Our writers have addressed this topic from a multitude of perspectives ranging from AI and Environmental Activism to migration and politics.

The variety of perspectives present in this issue represents the diverse nature of the students in the Masters of Global Affairs program, which creates important depth to discussions on these complex, global issues. We believe this pluralistic approach to be necessary in furthering our collective understanding of this vital issue, and hope that this issue will contribute towards meaningful action aimed at achieving gender equity in our own communities and around the globe.

Editors-in-Chief,

Tim Robinson & Alexandre Parrott-Mautner

Introduction

In 2015, the United Nations set forth a collection of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in order to guide international attention and action towards solving some of the world's most intractable problems by 2030. Recognizing the limitations facing women the world over, as well as the crucial role they must play to make progress on a host of other issues, the UN included SDG5 among its 2030 goals. SDG5's mission is to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", by seeking to end discrimination, violence, and harmful practices against women, recognize their current contributions to society, and ensure greater access to political, economic, and social rights and opportunities.

More than one year on from the #MeToo movement and two years since the inaugural Women's March, issues of female rights, contributions, and aspirations have gained prominent international attention in both the Global North and Global South. This new rising era of public consciousness towards women's issues have garnered some high-profile successes in the West, which often overshadow the slow but steady progress made in the developing world. Nevertheless, enormous constraints towards progress still remain, and, in many cases, they are only growing.

In collaboration with the Hart House Global Commons, the Winter edition of Global Conversations examines the multifaceted issues facing women, highlighting both the successes and obstacles confronting SDG5 in a variety of contexts. Some articles draw attention to promising signals of women's progress, be it from technology, economic forces, or political mobilization. Still others note the continuing or growing obstacles facing women, including episodes of violence and social marginalization. In assessing both the successes and failures of achieving SDG5, Global Conversations writers muster a multi-disciplinary, intersectional analysis to provide concrete steps for attaining the laudable goal to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

-Geordie Jeakins, Director of Written Content

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The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Toronto or the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy or its staff

The Need for a Gendered Lens in Environmental Activism

BY ALI CANNON



A RECENT report by the Global Witness cited 2017 as the deadliest year on record for environmental activists. Two hundred and seven people were killed, and while the majority of murdered defenders were men, female environmental activists were found to face distinct and heightened risks. Not only did they face threats and attacks from powerful economic and political interests, but they also confronted systemic gender-based offences, including sexual violence. In order to achieve the fifth sustainable development goal—gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls—it is necessary to apply a gendered lens to environmental activism.

DIFFERENTIAL VIOLENCE AND EXCLUSION

The majority of the killings in the report were concentrated in remote forested areas of developing countries, areas that are rich in resources, but lack enforcement when it comes to law and environmental regulation. Rural Latin America has been disproportionately affected, accounting for nearly 60 per cent of murders and the highest documented levels of violence.

While extractive industries have been and still remain pervasive perpetrators of violence, agribusiness was identified as the most dangerous industry for the first time. This trend was driven by an increasing consumer demand for soy, palm oil, sugarcane, and beef, which is providing incentives for large agricultural businesses to push the frontiers of arable land into virgin forests. Other industries implicated by environmental concerns include poaching, logging, and hydroelectricity.

However, only considering murder as a metric for abuse in activism is a gendered issue in itself. Indeed, the trends of murder and violence are not equally distributed. In times of conflict, men and boys are significantly more likely to be killed whereas women and girls are more likely to experience non-lethal violence, especially displacement and forms of sexual violence. In addition, women are also more likely to be subjected to smear-campaigns, threats against their children, and attempts to undermine their credibility.

Women opposing extractive processes in Latin America

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS, POK RIE

have been the subjects of defamation campaigns that are disseminated from high-level government officials and industry players. The campaigns are meant to diminish the political and social standing of female activists by perpetuating traditional disqualifications that women are ‘spoiled’ or “neglecting their obligations as caregivers.” As a result, the role of women in environmental activism is overlooked and the violence that they face is hidden by their communities, organizations, and families.

Beyond defamation, powerful economic and political interests spread fear and hinder the pursuit of justice through the use of violence against women, including rape and murder.

Thus, for women the barriers to activism are twofold. First, there is the conventional yet dangerous public struggle to protect resources. Second, and more pointedly, is the often-overlooked internal struggle of women for the right to speak within their own communities and families. Women defenders are targets of violence for defending their land from degradation and for challenging prevailing patriarchal attitudes.

It is especially troubling that women don’t often have the freedom to advocate for environmental issues as they are often the most adversely affected by changes in the environment.

Although women make up almost half of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, the proportion who retain ownership of agricultural land is significantly lower. Without secure rights over land, women are more vulnerable to displacement when environmentally degrading industries, such as agribusiness or mining, appropriate their land.

The traditional role of women as caregivers and food gatherers also connects them more intimately to natural resources. This means that it is women who are more directly affected when water is contaminated or basic foods are scarce.

THE BOTTOM LINE ON THE FRONT LINE

Environmental defenders are on the front lines for our planet, advocating against environmental degradation,

resource exploitation, and safeguarding human rights. These spokespeople deserve protection, yet combating violence against environmental activists is becoming more and more difficult as it continues to spread. Decreased national governance capacity, as well as the ever-increasing power of multinational corporations, has led the World Economic Forum to identify “violence perpetrated by corporations against the most powerless” as one of the top ten global risks to peace and security. The intersection of gender and environmental advocacy warrants additional attention as women, especially women in developing countries, tend to hold the least social, political, and economic power.

Justice is rare in environment-related violence and it is very likely that we are unaware of the full extent of the problem due to underreporting. However, there are glimmers of hope. Certain countries, such as Nicaragua and Honduras, experienced declining levels of environment-related violence. Additionally, there is an increasing number of civil society groups and international institutions that are uniting around human and environmental rights. Still, more needs to be done.

Primarily, it is the responsibility of the state and businesses to act responsibly and to guarantee safety. In reality, the areas in which the violence is the most prevalent also tend to be the areas with the highest governmental corruption and negligence. In fact, after criminal gangs, governmental actors were the second highest perpetrator in killings of environmental defenders.

Consumers have a moral obligation to demand the goods they consume aren’t the product of human rights abuses and environmental degradation committed by corporate or government actors. Consumers should also be aware of the origins of the products they consume, especially those that are derivatives of agriculture and mining. Consumer responsibility is integral to leading the movement to support environmental activists and women.



Ali Cannon graduated in 2018 from Western University with a Bachelor of Science Honours in Environmental Science, with an area of emphasis in genetics and the environmental determinants of population health.

Lost Motherhood, Lost Childhood

BY FIONA CASHELL



On December 7, 2018, the United Nations Committee Against Torture issued a report on the forced sterilization of Indigenous women in Canada. In the report, it recommends that Canada criminalize the practice and ensure impartial investigations into allegations of forced sterilization.

The issue was first brought to the attention of the committee by a 2017 Amnesty International Canada report, an Indigenous law firm, Maurice Law, and an independent report co-written by Dr. Judith Bartlett and Senator Yvonne Boyer. In their report, based on interviews with Indigenous women in Saskatoon, they found that the women felt they had been coerced into tubal ligation, commonly referred to as getting one's "tubes tied", following childbirth. The women claimed they were harassed into signing consent forms for the procedure, being told they would not be able to leave or see their newborns until the procedure took place.

When speaking to the UN Committee Against Torture in November, the Secretary General of Amnesty International Canada Alex Neve said, "It is impossible not to conclude that this arises from a context of deeply entrenched racism and colonialism. This is tied up with stereotypes of Indigenous women as being incapable mothers." The history of oppression of Indigenous women is ongoing, especially in regard to motherhood.

INDIGENOUS FAMILIES AS A MEASURE OF CONTROL

Indigenous women have historically faced unique repercussions from Indigenous policy. Beginning from the creation of the Indian Act in 1876, Indigenous women were treated differently under the law than Indigenous men. The legislation disrupted the traditionally matrilineal Indigenous communities in Canada by linking status to a woman's husband or father. In other words, the policy allowed Indigenous men to pass status onto their non-status wives, but Indigenous women would lose theirs by marrying a non-status man.

Directly targeting Indigenous families, the residential school system, beginning in the 1870s and officially ending only in 1996, was an assimilation policy aimed at Indigenous children. The policy forcibly removed the children, aged four to sixteen, from their homes and communities. The practice has since been labelled a cultural genocide and its legacy includes removing seven generations of Indigenous people from their communities.

Likewise, from the 1950s to the 1980s, during the period when residential schools remained open, 20,000 Indigenous children were put up for adoption to middle-class families in Canada. The policy, which is known as the "Sixties Scoop", has led to a cultural disconnect between Indigenous children, their culture, and their biological families. Today, Indigenous children make up a disproportionate number of children in foster care, representing 90 per cent of children in care in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. One Indigenous woman, whose

identity was withheld by the press, feared having another child apprehended by Child Services again so much so that she decided to give birth in secret in her home.

THE LEGACY OF SEPARATION

Indigenous women disproportionately experience social, psychological, and physical consequences from the policies that have and do impact the family structure. Indigenous women face the highest rate of domestic violence in Canada. According to the Department of Justice, 24 per cent of Indigenous women have been assaulted by a spouse or former spouse compared to seven per cent of non-Indigenous women. Scholars and community members have linked this disproportionately high rate of violence to intergenerational trauma resulting from the aforementioned policies meant to assimilate Indigenous people.

The Canadian government also continues to interfere with childbirth for Indigenous women living in remote communities through Health Canada's evacuation policy. This policy, which is rooted in forcing Indigenous women to use hospitals rather than traditional health services, has nurses arrange for women 36 to 38 weeks pregnant to give birth in an urban area. The practice can be detrimental to the new mother's mental health and community connection.

In the case of coerced sterilization, Indigenous women suffer both physical and psychological consequences. Some women were told that the procedure was reversible. In an interview with CBC, lawyer Alisa Lombard said of the women who have come forward, "Many have had bouts and persistent depression, anxiety — many are no longer with us because of those ailments and those circumstances." One of the women in the Saskatoon report commented on the disregard her doctor seemed to have for her well-being, recalling the event saying, "What really appalled me – the doctor said, 'well, you're tied, cut and burnt; nothing will get through that.'"

SEEKING JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The recommendations brought forward by the UN are being supported by the Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde, advocating for Indigenous

women to be a part of the policy creation. Meanwhile, the federal government is being asked by Amnesty International Canada to appoint a special representative to gather information on the targeted sterilization practices.

So far, the Saskatoon Health Region has started cultural sensitivity training of all maternal health staff and has asked staff to be more proactive in addressing racist behaviour. Further, a lawsuit that was launched in 2017 by two women affected by sterilization in the Saskatoon Health Region has since grown to include 60 women.

The current Canadian government is attempting to compensate for the injustices of past policy. On January 7th, Premier of Saskatchewan Scott Moe offered an apology to survivors of the Sixties Scoop. The apology evoked split reactions from survivors who were present, some of whom were quoted saying that the apology was a positive gesture, however, more needs to be done in order to educate future generations about the policy.

Whatever shape policy takes after these revelations have been brought to the public, the treatment of Indigenous women must continue to be examined. It will require significant efforts to reduce the multi-generational trauma of which Indigenous women continue to feel the effects of. These events do not occur within a vacuum and their historical ties must be examined in order to create positive change.



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What Rwanda Can Teach and Must Learn about Gender Equality

BY VANESSA HAYFORD



THERE is only one country in the world today with a parliament made up of more women than men. Many would assume this would be a Scandinavian country, where gender equality has come quite a long way. But what may come as a surprise to many is that this country is in Africa.

Rwanda, a small country in the east of the continent, has been hailed as a global model for gender equality for decades. As one of the top ten countries in the world in gender equality, and ranking fifth in the world in terms of reducing the gender gap, Rwanda's efforts toward accomplishing SDG5 are far outpacing those of the majority of developing nations around the world.

FROM GENOCIDE TO CLOSING THE GENDER DIVIDE

In the spring of 1994, decades of animosity between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes of Rwanda gave way to a horrific genocide. Within 100 days is estimated that 800,000 Rwandans were killed. With so many men either killed, arrested or exiled from the country, Rwandan women made up roughly 60-70 per cent of the country's population by June of that year.

With so much devastation and destruction left behind, Rwanda's government and social structures became a blank slate upon which to rebuild, and this process could not be done by men alone. In the years immediately following the genocide, women stepped-up to fill the gaps in human capital and take up roles that had been traditionally filled by men in the process of the country's reconstruction. Women's presence in Rwanda's workforce gradually started to increase and in 2003, President Paul Kagame introduced a new constitution for the country that required 30 per cent of elected positions to be filled by women. Ten years later, the Rwandan parliamentary elections resulted in 64 per cent of seats being filled by women, a world record-breaking outcome and a model for other states to follow.

Successful efforts toward closing the gender gap did not stop there. Government policies have come a long way to ensure equal participation of men and women. Rwanda's parliament includes a Minister for Gender and Family Promotion and a gender monitoring office to promote family welfare and the empowerment of women and girls. Today, Rwanda has achieved 86 per cent participation of the female labour force and now has women earning 88 cents per dollar earned by their male counterparts. Women in Rwanda have also been given

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS, PAUL KAGAME

the same land rights as men, and government policies have ensured that girls and boys are equally as likely to attend school.

After all of Rwanda's accomplishments in gender equality, the country is now ranked fourth in the world in the Global Gender Gap Report. When comparing this ranking to developed countries like the United States—which is ranked 49th worldwide—and even Canada—which sits in the 16th spot—Rwanda's performance is truly impressive.

STILL A LONG WAY TO GO

Kagame's leadership in progressive policies toward gender equality in the aftermath of the genocide has clearly produced some excellent outcomes for women's representation in politics and the workforce. Rwanda's achievements in gender equality are a testament to the fact that political will is a key requirement if a state wishes to make any similar advancements. As the case of Rwanda has also shown, however, political will alone in the fight for gender equality will only result in superficial accomplishments at best.

While Rwanda may be doing well to accomplish SDG5, women in Rwanda continue to face many serious social issues. Young girls are still expected to get married as soon as they have completed their schooling. Women in decision-making positions are still stigmatized, their abilities still questioned, and their authority still undermined. In home life, women are also still expected to cater to their husbands and fulfill domestic obligations, even those who have achieved success in their careers. Moreover, gender-based violence and the tolerance for such violence continues to be a serious problem in the country.

All of this suggests that policies may have changed and may have been effective in achieving specific goals, but the culture of patriarchy persists. The empowerment women experience in public life has not transferred over to private life, and sadly, no amount of legislation or policy creation can overcome attitudes of male superiority.

LESSONS TO LEARN

Many have posited that the discrepancy between the progress that has taken place institutionally and that which has occurred socially in Rwanda is due to the fact a cohesive and effective feminist social movement has yet to form in the country. Despite Rwanda's pro-women policies, the perception of feminism in the country today is that it is too aggressive and, above all, too Western. A woman who is considered a feminist is seen as a woman who is only preoccupied with herself and not the betterment of her country.

This narrative has fed into an idea that perhaps Kagame's pro-equality policies are not created with the intention to build women up; rather, they are intended to build up the country in general. The empowerment of women as a collective is in the interest of development, given the services women can provide on the institutional level, but pushing for the empowerment of individual women falls outside of this goal.

It is a known fact that gender equality is a powerful tool for development, but a woman's value must be recognized in its entirety for sustainable development to take place. For a country like Rwanda to truly realize gender equality, a shift in culture and attitudes is required; one that values women's empowerment socially as well as legislatively. While it may seem that Western feminism may be the answer to this, Rwanda and all other African states in particular must experience a movement that is organic and outside the scope of Western influence. Equality is not something that should be forced upon people or dictated to them by a government policy. It is something that is hard-won by women who have been empowered to stand up and push for change in their own way.



Vanessa is a second year student in the Master of Global Affairs program with the Munk School of Global Affairs. Prior to pursuing her Master's degree, Vanessa worked as a constituency assistant a local Member of

Parliament, with a focus on immigration casework, and as an equity assistant for Scotiabank Global Banking and Markets.

Big Legacy on a Small Island

BY ISAAC CRAWFORD-RITCHIE



ICELAND has long been considered a progressive nation in its implementation of gender equality policies. Since 2009, Iceland has ranked number one in the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index in such categories as political empowerment and the gender wage gap. Iceland's progressive gender equality policies have cemented its role as a model for other countries that are pursuing more fair and egalitarian societies. However, more significantly, a legacy left by a mass movement in 1975 precipitated domestic change in Iceland while it also began to inspire women around the world.

MAKING HEADWAY

The question of how a small island with a population of less than 340,000 became the model of gender equality can be answered by examining its history. In 1915, after decades of organized petitioning, women over 40 were granted the right to vote in national elections. The right to vote expanded in 1920 to allow for universal women's suffrage after the age barrier was reduced to 18 years old. But, after decades of frustration over a continued lack of political representation and wage inequality, feminist movements in Iceland took an unprecedented step towards equal pay and political representation.

1975 WOMEN'S DAY OFF

On October 24, 1975, Icelandic Women took part in a mass demonstration on the streets of Reykjavik, dubbed as the Women's Day Off. Women left their jobs in the middle of the work day to demand equal pay and greater political representation. Although there had been women's demonstrations in various parts of the world before, the Women's Day Off marked a special occasion in the history women's rights movements, as 90 per cent of women in Iceland participated in the mass demonstration. The movement was not only a landmark event in the history of the country, it initiated a sequence of changes towards social equality, the legacy of which travelled far beyond the small island nation. Iceland passed the Gender Equality Act in 1976 which aimed to ban gender discrimination in schools and workplaces. Soon thereafter, Iceland became the first country to democratically elect a female president when Vigdís Finnbogadóttir was elected as head of state in 1980. In 1983, there was a sharp increase in the number of women in the Icelandic Parliament, as female representation in politics rose from approximately eight per cent to 25 per cent. With more political representation, women's issues began to

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS, ICELANDINPICTURES

take their rightful place in the platforms of mainstream Icelandic political parties. Today, only one of Iceland's major political parties does not use a form of gender quota system for party-list selection of candidates. Furthermore, since the 1970s, there has been a continued increase in female political representation which reached its peak in 2016 when 48 per cent of the seats in the Icelandic Parliament were filled by women.

A NEW LAW FOR A NEW ERA

The advancement of Icelandic women in political life reached a historic point in 2017 when Iceland passed an unprecedented equal pay law. Although Iceland formally outlawed gender-based wage discrimination in 1976, the Gender Equality Act failed to adequately address the gender wage gap which, in 2017, was approximately 16 per cent. In response, a law was enacted in January 2018 that forced employers to regularly provide reports to demonstrate that they are paying both their male and female employees fairly. The difference between this law and equal pay laws in other countries is that it places the burden of proof on both public and private sector employers to demonstrate compliance with equal pay standards. Icelandic officials hope that the enhanced enforcement mechanism will further Iceland's policy efforts towards achieving gender equality, as it does not require an employee to have to go through a difficult legal process to prove that he or she is facing discrimination.

A LASTING LEGACY

The legacy of the 1975 Women's Day Off is widespread and persistent. Not only did it induce Iceland's current position as the world's most gender-equal state, it also prompted similar women's movements around the world. In 2016, thousands of Polish women took the streets of Warsaw to protest legislation that would place a total ban on abortion. Thousands of women left school and work and refused to do domestic housework to take part in what became known as the Black Friday demonstrations. The protestors in Warsaw inspired similar demonstrations in other Polish cities such as Kraków and Gdańsk, as well as in other European cities including Berlin, London, and Paris. Claiming

inspiration from Women's Day Off, the movement succeeded in changing the government's position. Moreover, the International Women's Strike has also been heavily influenced by the 1975 demonstrations in Iceland. Beginning in 2017, women in more than 50 countries have been organizing annual global strikes on International Women's Day, another movement which has borrowed heavily from Icelandic women's struggle. The strike in the United States on March 8, 2017 was organized in partnership with the Women's March, called 'Day Without a Woman', and it used similar methods as the 1975 Icelandic demonstrations. Hence, the legacy of Iceland's 1975 protests has lived on through organizations and movements such as Black Friday in Poland and the International Women's Strike, and continues to further the goal of gender equality on a global scale.

There is still much to be done to fully realize U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5) of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, but Iceland has been an unlikely global leader in this front. With a long history of working towards gender equality, Iceland's 2018 gender equality law has shown that the country's leaders are committed to further bolstering Iceland's strong position on gender equality. The island nation's efforts to fully materialize gender equality, set in motion by the 1975 Women's Day Off, have not only precipitated change in Iceland, but have also inspired women's movements across the world. For such a small and seldom discussed country, the legacy of 1975 looms large.



Isaac is a first year Master of Global Affairs student at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy. Prior to the MGA program, Isaac received his Honours BA degree in Political Science from Western University. His primary interest is collective security within international institutions. Specifically, he is interested in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) including its evolving role in the modern global security environment, expansion into the former Soviet Union, the alliance's presence in Eastern Europe, and the NATO-Russia relationship.

When Intimate Partner Violence Turns Deadly

BY EMMA SCHWARTZ



THE gun control debate in the United States is frequently reignited by news reports of seemingly random mass shootings, taking place in public venues including concerts, movie theaters, and schools. Far more common than such indiscriminate carnage, however, is intimate partner violence (IPV). As the vast majority of domestic violence victims are female, the United Nations has included the elimination of gender-based violence in its mission to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” globally. In the U.S., the gendered dimension of the gun violence epidemic demands attention. Ready access to firearms in America and a lack of comprehensive gun control legislation across states has made domestic violence a particularly deadly threat; as a result, the interplay

between gun ownership and IPV constitutes an important—although often overlooked—challenge to the safety of American women.

GUN VIOLENCE AS A GENDERED ISSUE

Women constitute 85 per cent of all IPV victims and approximately 95 per cent of those murdered in domestic homicides. In the U.S., more than two-thirds of all domestic homicides are committed with a firearm, and over half of all mass shootings (involving four or more victims) are considered domestic rather than random. Crucially, domestic abuse becomes significantly more deadly in the presence of a gun—such assaults are 12 times more likely to end in homicide if a firearm is involved. More than 40 per cent of American households contain at least one gun and, due to this prevalence, women in America are 16 times more likely to be killed with a firearm than are those living in other developed countries.

AN “AMERICAN” MENTALITY

The politics of gun control in the U.S. have long been heated. The Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees citizens “the right to bear arms,” and approximately half of all American citizens view legislation aimed at reducing gun violence as an infringement on their Constitutional rights. To reinforce this pro-gun sentiment, the National Rifle Association (NRA) has spent over \$200 million since 1998 on political lobbying, and encourages its millions of members to support “guns rights” legislation. Pitting the values of personal freedom and liberty against concerns for public safety, NRA campaigns warn the public of the supposed dangers of gun control measures, which allegedly range from the complete repeal of the Second Amendment to the destruction of democracy and rise of communism in the U.S.

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS, JANE FOX

CLOSING LOOPHOLES, PROTECTING WOMEN

Debates surrounding gun control in the U.S. will likely always be based on the competing interests of personal liberty and public safety. However, continuing to overlook the gendered aspect of firearm violence puts women in America in avoidably high levels of danger. Reducing the risk of domestic gun homicide will require closing legal loopholes that allow IPV offenders to keep firearms, taking a statistics-based approach to analyzing the consequences of gun violence, and using common sense to shift the debate's rhetoric away from its current polarizing tone.

Due to a lack of federal oversight, legislative loopholes exist in many U.S. states that put women at particular risk of being injured or killed with a firearm. Many states lack laws requiring individuals with restraining orders against them to surrender their firearms, despite the fact that such gun relinquishment programs decrease the rate of domestic homicide by 25 per cent. Even those convicted of domestic violence are often allowed to keep their guns for months or even years without the weapons being seized by law enforcement. Further, while an Oregon bill making it illegal for any person convicted of stalking their partner to own a gun, passed in March 2018, similar legislation—including the Domestic Violence Gun Homicide Prevention Act of 2014—introduced at a federal level has failed.

This “boyfriend loophole” allows Americans convicted of violence against a non-spousal partner to own a gun

Finally, attempts to expand the definition of “domestic abuse” to include non-spousal partners has been successfully opposed by the NRA in states such as Louisiana. Closing this loophole is particularly important because

more women are murdered by their dating partners than by their spouses. This ‘boyfriend loophole’ allows Americans convicted of violence against a non-spousal partner to own a gun as such crimes are not considered ‘domestic violence.’

In addition to closing loopholes, increases in federal funding for gun violence research and the disaggregation of data based on stalking history and other warning signs of IPV are crucial to protecting women from being injured or killed with a firearm. The 1996 Dickey Amendment bans the nationally-funded Centers for Disease Control from using federal money to “advocate or promote gun control,” thus inhibiting the gathering and analysis of national statistics on gender-based firearm violence. Embracing, rather than shunning, statistics is the only way to thoroughly inform policy. Overall, protecting IPV victims will require a scientific understanding of the warning signs of domestic violence and at-risk populations that can then be incorporated into gun control policy.

Finally, shifting the rhetoric that surrounds the gun debate will be key to making American women safer. As a consequence of the pro-gun mentality in the U.S., state and federal efforts to keep firearms out of the hands of domestic violence perpetrators is often met with opposition from voters and lobbyists that does not exist in otherwise similar countries. By talking about gun violence as a gendered issue and focusing on domestic (rather than only random and public) shootings, the media and the public can take steps to depolarize this issue. While IPV-related gun violence is generally not seen as newsworthy, and seldom—if ever—sparks widespread interest, it is a pressing issue that must be addressed within the U.S. gun debate.



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The Two-Sides of Global Trends in Female Genital Mutilation

BY NATASHA COMEAU



WITH the publication of BJM Global Health's report on November 6, 2018, many international news agencies were quick to celebrate an impressive decline in female genital mutilation (FGM) rates globally. FGM, the practice of cutting female genitalia, is a tradition in many cultures that dates back centuries and is associated with ensuring premarital virginity, marital fidelity, and cultural ideas of femininity, modesty, cleanliness, and beauty. FGM also carries many devastating health consequences for women, especially in childbirth as well as their overall sexual and mental health.

The report claims that rates of FGM for girls aged 14 and under have fallen from 71.4 to 8.0 per cent in East Africa, from 57.7 to 14.1 per cent in North Africa, and 73.6 to 25.4 per cent in West Africa over the last 20 years. These statistics suggest drops significantly greater than previous studies have reported and thus many experts are advising caution over the numbers. The UN predicts the rate is closer to 35 per cent across these regions. This study, therefore, requires a critical examination to understand this downward trend, the risk factors that could reverse the decline, and what interven-

tions have been effective in contributing to communities abandoning the practice.

CRITIQUING THE NUMBERS

The report combined a massive amount of data from dozens of surveys conducted by the UN and other official agencies that reached more than 200,000 girls in 31 countries. While this report provides new hope for advocates who have long been working to eradicate the practice of FGM, there are a number of limitations to the study that must be highlighted. First, the imperfect demographic surveyed in which mothers were asked about whether their daughters aged 14 and under had undergone FGM. This raises the concern that girls may still undergo the practice later in life as each ethnic group has unique traditions. Mothers may also not be willing to disclose if their daughters have been cut for fear of prosecution in countries where national laws ban FGM.

The second limitation is that survey data may not be reaching communities where FGM is the most prevalent. For instance, Kenyan data does not include the

Kisii, Kuria, and Maasai ethnic groups where FGM remains near universal. Further, limited emphasis is placed on the regions where FGM is seen to have increased over the last 20 years, including Yemen and Iraq. Finally, the study misrepresents the fact that the absolute number of girls undergoing FGM will continue to rise with population growth, despite declines in percentages. UNICEF and UNFPA warn that, although girls are one-third less likely to undergo FGM, population growth means that by 2030 one-in-three girls worldwide will be born in the 30 countries where FGM remains prevalent.

RISK FACTORS AND INTERVENTIONS

It is, therefore, not yet time to celebrate these declining rates as an outright victory. Risk factors which threaten reversing the positive downturn include poverty, poor quality of education, strong support for FGM among local leaders, FGM's influence in the marriage market, and gendered cultural forces. The report does not suggest why rates may have dropped so dramatically, but many have suggested that successful interventions have included policy changes, national and international investment in education and advocacy, and community-based initiatives. National laws banning FGM have been introduced in 22 of the 28 practicing African countries. Effective local-level approaches have been found in 8,400 West African communities where leaders have publicly denounced the practice. Further, the Maasai communities in Southern Kenya have begun developing alternative rites of passage for young girls.

LEGALIZATION AND MEDICALIZATION

On the other side of the FGM debate, some have come forward arguing for the legalization and medicalization of the practice. They argue that women should be afforded the right to make informed decisions about their bodies given they receive the highest standard of care while being cut in medical facilities. As a compromise, a number of American doctors wrote in the *Journal of Medical Ethics* arguing for less invasive practices in hospitals to prevent serious health risks and work to uphold cultural and religious traditions. They argue that bans on FGM are “culturally insensitive and supremacist and discriminatory towards women.” They question why women in the global north are allowed to opt for

labiaplasty and other medically unnecessary cosmetic surgeries when we forbid racialized women in the global south from consenting to FGM in a medical setting. The medicalization of FGM is already occurring in Kenya, where the practice has been illegal since 2011; yet 15 per cent of women have been cut by a medical practitioner. This likely because women must pay expensive fees to undergo the practice and continue to risk serious health consequences. Most recognize these costs and believe the benefits of cultural tradition and marriageability outweigh them. Due to increased medicalization, the practice is moving out of the control of traditional practitioners, especially elderly women who are generally the most influential in sustaining the custom in communities.

Those pushing for the legalization of FGM have also argued that there is a double standard between the circumcision of boys and girls as both practices have cultural roots and lack the consent of minors. Medical experts have responded by emphasizing that the two practices cannot be compared. The World Health Organization says male circumcision has a “very low rate of adverse events, which are usually minor (0.2 to 0.4 per cent),” while FGM “has no health benefits, and it harms girls and women in many ways.” Consequently, there is no international movement to end male circumcision because billions of men (a third of the world's male population) have undergone the practice without negative medical impacts.

The health consequences of FGM for women, however, are significant and is motivating a global movement to end the inhumane practice. While the declining rates reported are promising, they should be considered with caution. Absolute numbers of FGM will continue to rise with population growth. Comprehensive interventions including policy change, education, advocacy, and community-based initiatives are, therefore, necessary to curb this harmful practice.



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Empowering Women Through International Trade

BY YUSHU MA



THE Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5) aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030. According to the United Nations, gender equality is a fundamental human right, as well as a necessary condition for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Women should have equal access to education, health care, work opportunities, and they must have a voice in political and economic forums. But how is SDG5's target of empowering women related to international trade, and what measures can countries adopt in order to achieve this goal?

BENEFITS AND POTENTIALS

Currently, women's participation in international trade and business is inadequate. According to the UN, at the global level, more than 750 million women and girls are married before the age of 18. It is still legal in 18 countries for husbands to prevent their wives from working. A World Trade Organization (WTO) report shows that, globally, women generate only 37 per cent of the world's GDP and only about 33 per cent of small and medium sized enterprises are owned by women. Female business ownership rates can be as low as three to six per cent in

some developing countries. Another survey shows that women only run 20 per cent of exporting companies in the world. By reviewing these figures, it becomes clear that women are underrepresented in international trade and business.

The promotion of women's participation in trade will generate economic benefits for societies at large, creating more prosperous and sustainable communities. According to research conducted by the McKinsey Global Institute, advancing women's equality could add \$12 trillion USD to the global economy by 2025 if countries can emulate the progress towards gender parity that has been achieved by the best performers in their respective regions. In a similar scenario, if women played identical roles as men in the labour market, \$28 trillion would be added to global economic growth by 2025.

Furthermore, a UN study stated that if female farmers enjoyed the same opportunities and access to resources as men in developing countries, agricultural productivity would grow by 20 to 30 per cent. As a result, total agricultural output would grow by four per cent and the total population affected by hunger in the developing world would drop by 12 to 17 per cent.

McKinsey's research ranked countries and regions with 15 gender equality indicators, including female labour force participation rate, education level, financial inclusion, legal protection, and political representation. They found that South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa fare the worst in achieving gender equality. On the other hand, this also means that these regions have enormous potential for greater economic growth if they are to succeed in eliminating gender-based barriers.

THE BUENOS AIRES DECLARATION: PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN TRADE

History was made in December 2017 in Argentina during the Eleventh Ministerial Conference. For the first time, 118 WTO member states endorsed a collective initiative, termed the Buenos Aires Declaration, to promote women's economic empowerment in the world economy. The main objectives are; promoting female entrepreneurship; identifying and removing barriers that limit women's participation in trade; and promoting inclusion of women-led businesses. This initiative demonstrates the willingness and aptitude of the global community to create a cooperative framework to tackle gender inequality in international trade.

LESSONS FROM CANADA: ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH TRADE AGREEMENTS

Canada has become a global leader in promoting women's participation in trade. According to World Bank data, Canada's ratio of female to male labour force participation rate was 86.9 per cent in 2017, the highest amongst G20 countries. In comparison, this figure was 81.6 per cent in the United States and the world average was only 67.5 per cent.

Canada can provide valuable lessons for other countries in promoting gender equality through bilateral free trade agreements. Gender-based equality of opportunity has been a policy priority for Canada's economic agenda. The updated Canada-Chile Free Trade Agreement (CCFTA), for example, includes a gender chapter—the first of its kind for any G20 country. This chapter

references SDG5 and acknowledges the importance of ensuring gender equality in international trade. It also provides a framework for Canada and Chile to initiate cooperation on gender and trade issues under the Gender Committee of the CCFTA. Moving forward, Canada has sought to incorporate gender provisions in future free trade agreements to promote women's participation in trade and to encourage the economic empowerment of women. For example, the modernized Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement, signed in 2018, also includes a chapter dedicated to gender equality.

WHAT'S NEXT

Moving forward, countries can work to promote gender equality in trade by incorporating gender components in all future free trade agreements. When WTO member states reached the Buenos Aires Declaration in December 2017, they agreed to report on their respective progress in the implementation of the joint declaration in 2019. However, the Buenos Aires Declaration is not a binding international treaty nor does it specify any clear targets. In other words, WTO members did not make any firm policy or financial commitments. Keeping this in mind, incorporating gender perspectives in trade agreements seems like the more feasible alternative.

The WTO has more than 160 member states, which makes reaching a binding provision to reduce gender inequality a very challenging task. Regional cooperation or arrangements amongst countries of similar histories, political values, and levels of development could also be the more viable option. For example, the G20 group successfully agreed to reduce the gender gap in labour force participation rates by 25 per cent by 2025. Similarly, Canada's recent success in incorporating measures to warrant gender equality in its bilateral trade agreements can serve as a template for future bilateral and multilateral trade regimes.



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Saudi Arabia's War on Women

BY DEAN LAVI



WITH multiple actors at play, the Yemeni conflict has become a proxy war and a hotbed for conflict between the Houthi Iranian forces and Wahhabi fundamentalists. From the funding of Wahhabi mosques in Europe to the atrocities committed on Yemeni civilians, the Saudi Arabian monarchy is complicit in a four decades long enterprise of ultra-conservative global jihad. Saudi Arabia has a central role in advancing regressive Wahhabi cultural moors, and in doing so, is leading a tacit war on women.

WAHHABISM AS PUBLIC POLICY

Experts estimate that in the past four decades Saudi spending on ultra-conservative Muslim cultural institutions across the globe ranges anywhere from \$75 to \$100 billion USD. The result? A thriving ultra-con-

servative Muslim world which has also spread to some parts of Western Europe as well. Its strictly austere interpretation of the Koran has experienced a global renaissance, one growing increasingly independent of direct Saudi Arabian influence. In essence, this robust global Wahhabi community acts as a testament to the Saudi campaign's success. For women in these communities, Wahhabism has adversely affected their rights and standard of living, promoting intolerant views of women under strict Sharia Law. In November of 2018, Saudi security officials spent the month torturing jailed women's-rights activists on Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's (MbS) orders. As part of the government's campaign to squash criticism of the regime, the imprisoned women were lashed and given electric shocks in prison; at least one attempted suicide.

Saudi Arabia's politics abroad are equally troubling for women's rights and health. Almost three years have

PHOTO SOURCE: NOT OF THE PROPERTY OF GLOBAL CONVERSATION

passed since crown prince Mohammad bin Salman's decision to intervene in Yemen. Marketed as a swift military operation in Yemen to rid the capital of Houthi control, Western analysts saw Mbs' actions as a bold move from a rising Crown Prince. Americans fawned over Mohammad, praising his moderate policies at home as the conflict in Yemen metamorphosed into a humiliating stalemate for the Saudi regime. With no capacity to impose its will, Saudi strategy has turned ever more violent and less distraught by civilian casualties. What has resulted is a humanitarian catastrophe for the Yemeni people, with more than 1.3 million children now suffering from severe acute malnutrition according to the United Nations (UN).

“What is shocking about Yemen is that these 85,000 deaths are not a result of drought or climate change, they are entirely the result of a man-made conflict, that is fueled by countries who have the power to stop it.” – Save the Children

Western media has been slow to acknowledge Saudi Arabia's war crimes, allaying responsibility towards multiple actors—including Iran—while rarely reminding readers that no other country, other than Saudi Arabia, is dropping bombs over Yemeni towns. Yet, the UN remains hesitant to state plainly Mbs's role in the conflict, instead only asking for Saudi Arabia to stop blocking Yemen's ports.

On the ground, the effects of the conflict have devastated Yemeni communities and specifically women and children, and Saudi Arabia's large-scale bombing campaign is tantamount to ethnic cleansing.

Saudi Arabia must unilaterally end its military campaign in Yemen

There is only one productive route forward: Saudi Arabia must unilaterally end its military campaign in Yemen. While it would be foolhardy to assume this will bring an immediate end to the conflict, it will challenge the Houthis to respond in kind, and create the necessary conditions for peace talks to gain traction in the region. This would move the region closer towards a resolution more decisively than any cease-fire, allowing leaders of both regimes to more readily accept a quid pro quo end to the conflict. The only end in sight to the growing human rights abuses affecting Yemeni women is an end to this conflict, and Saudi Arabian policies continue to fan the flames of war. The UN and the global community must stop being hesitant to call a spade a spade. Mbs's actions in Yemen represent egregious violations of international law and the laws of war. Otherwise, global silence on the conflict will be seen in history books as bystanding to another modern genocide.

Mbs's patience seems to be running thin as an increasingly critical international community takes aim at the egregious violations of human rights taking place at home and abroad. As his revered moderation takes on a new light, we can expect things to get worse for women before they get better.



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Mining Bodies

BY GILDA MONREAL



EXTRACTING minerals from the earth to benefit humankind is one of the oldest documented human activities, dating back millennia. Today, extractive industries account for a quarter of global GDP and play a significant political, social, and economic role in 81 countries. Even as industries move more towards renewable resources, extraction will continue to be essential to power electric and solar infrastructure, as well as to store data and run artificial intelligence. Yet, despite our dependency on these industries, we have a limited understanding of their important role in contributing to gender equality.

EXTRACTION AND EXTERNALITIES FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN AND GIRLS

Extractive industries have targeted drilling, mining, and fracking operations on resource rich lands located on or near Indigenous territories, which has had a pronounced effect on 370 million Indigenous peoples living in an estimated 5,000 communities across 90 countries. Targeting Indigenous regions for extraction is a practice that spans across continents, with cases of human rights violations recorded in many of these regions. Indonesia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Canada, Ecuador, Chile, and Brazil are just a few of the countries where negative externalities of extractive industries on Indigenous communities have been registered.

As a consequence of extractive industry processes, human rights violations disproportionately impact Indigenous women and girls. The costs to Indigenous women and girls include increased rates of sexual and domestic violence, reproductive illnesses and toxic exposure, and social stressors that threaten Indigenous culture and centuries-old wisdom. Food and water insecurity rates are also higher due to contamination and increased desertification caused by mining activities. Additionally, environmental toxins from extractive industries have led to higher rates of cancers, in addition to higher levels of toxins in women's breast milk, placenta cord blood, blood serum, and body fat, which consequently affect the health of future generations. Not only is the extractive industry affecting Indigenous women and girls' health and culture, but it is also having an impact on their living standards, leaving them with higher rates of economic insecurity. Indigenous women experience a widening income gap in regions where extractive industries are concentrated, resulting in increased rates of poverty and exploitation.

Furthermore, camps for extractive industry workers are predominantly male, located in relatively isolated areas, and have high rates of drug use. These factors lead to

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS, KATIE DOUGLAS

increased rates of human trafficking, as well as sexual and gender-based violence in the surrounding regions. For instance, with the arrival of the Bakken oil boom, North Dakota saw a rise of 300 per cent in crime, and now has the eighth highest rate of rape in the United States. In Canada, the Albertan Oil Sands have some of the highest rates of domestic violence in the country. As a species that has become dependent on fossil fuels, humans have come to rely on the outputs of extractive industries worldwide and consume them at increasing rates. Consequently, the global political economy conveniently overlooks human rights violations against Indigenous women and girls that arise from the practises of these extractive industries.

EXTRACTION AND CONSENT

Within today's economic and gendered political framework, an estimated 65 per cent of the world's land falls under Indigenous customary ownership, yet the majority of states do not acknowledge these legal rights. Consequently, Indigenous territories are often targeted for their natural resources, a practise which is linked to systematic land dispossession and displacement. These occurrences are repeatedly justified by the legal pillar of terra nullius. Terra nullius, otherwise understood as 'no-one's land', reflects the justification of colonial rule over Indigenous territory. In other words, it is a term that embodies structural dispossession of land and the subsequent imposition of power and ownership of a geographical territory. This practise is one which mirrors the imposition of power and assumptions of ownership often forced upon Indigenous women and their bodies, as evidenced by disproportionately higher rates of murder, abduction, and sexual violence against Indigenous women and girls worldwide.

Terra nullius, carefully woven into the fabric of dominant economic growth models, abnegates accountability on behalf of state violence, and compounds the costs of violence on Indigenous women and girls. At the forefront of the interpretation of terra nullius lies the notion of consent. We own land, we do not ask for its consent to be owned, and therefore we deforest, contaminate, and erode it as we see fit. In this sense, Indigenous women metaphorically stand as an embodiment of our relationship with land as well. Too often, the rights of

consent of Indigenous women and girls are not recognized, as they are raped, abducted, poisoned with pollutants, and culturally disregarded at higher rates than any other female population on earth. Ecological abuse becomes their abuse.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5 has set out to achieve gender equality, in part by eliminating all forms of violence against women, and by ensuring their full and effective participation in political and economic decision making. If global leaders are to design policies to achieve this goal, Indigenous women and girls must be included, and the definition of gender equality must be expanded beyond equal employment and wages to include the fundamental right of legal, informed, and participatory consent. Moreover, to achieve inclusive gender equality, the practises of extractive industries must be addressed.

Progressive international environmental initiatives such as The Paris Agreement and COP24 are just beginning to understand the holistic interconnection between body and land that Indigenous communities have practiced for millennia. If we are sincere in our pursuit of gender equality and environmental sustainability, we must better understand the role of extractive industries, especially in the context of the fourth industrial revolution that is ever more resource-dependent. Furthermore, we will be challenged to confront our fragmented relationship with land and to question the feasibility of implementing gender equality within a patriarchal political and economic framework. Most importantly, we will have to acknowledge the notion of consent as a fundamental pillar of human rights if we are to achieve true gender equity that is inclusive of Indigenous women and girls.



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An Unfriendly Homecoming

BY RACHAEL WEBB



THE Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda has had an especially destructive impact on young women and girls who were abducted throughout its decades-long campaign. In addition to being forcibly conscripted for combat by LRA leaders, young female captives were often required to 'marry' fighters and bear their children. Following a 2008 peace deal that led the LRA to leave Northern Uganda, these women returned home, only to discover that they were no longer wanted in their communities. Now, over ten years after the peace deal was brokered, resources to help with the reintegration of captives and their children are drying up, and these young women are on their own.

THE CONFLICT

A movement motivated by political and religious beliefs, the LRA is a Ugandan rebel group well known for its ruthless violence. The LRA was launched by Joseph Kony in 1987 to overthrow the established government, which had been blamed for the suffering of the Northern Acholi people. Fighting spread into neighbouring countries, and caused mass internal displacement within Uganda and abroad. In order to sow discord and fear within Uganda (and later in South Sudan and other nearby states), the LRA frequently attacked civilians. While this violence included horrific mutilations and

mass killings, the LRA is possibly best known for its use of child soldiers. Estimates of the number of kidnapped children vary widely from 20,000 to 80,000. Children were often forced to kill their families in order to bond them to their captors and eliminate a home to which they could return.

While both boys and girls were captured by the LRA and trained to fight, female captives were often forced to play another role within the group; as wives. The primary goal of these marriages was the creation of a new generation of fighters. Furthermore, young women captured by the LRA were used to reward male soldiers; the higher the rank of an LRA fighter, the more wives he would have. Reports show that about 40 per cent of these child 'wives' gave birth at least once during their captivity, with numbers of children born to LRA child brides ranging from 2,000 to 10,000. In addition to the psychological trauma and rape that captive girls experienced within the LRA, sexually transmitted diseases and physical abuse are also widely reported.

RETURNING HOME

Following the 2008 peace agreement between leaders of the LRA and the Ugandan government, young kidnapped women began returning to their homes, only

to discover that they were often no longer welcome. Due to the LRA's tactic of targeting civilians, almost two million people in Northern Uganda were forced to live in camps during the more intense years of the fight between the militant group and government forces. The memory of these camps—which led to many deaths due to the lack of basic resources and sanitation—means that the return of once-captive women and girls is frequently met with hostility. Families and other community members express fears that the women remain loyal to the LRA, or that their militant husbands might come looking for their absent wives, bringing with them more violence. As a result, ex-captives are often ostracized by their community, sometimes to the point of being forced to leave, abandoning any possible emotional and financial support they might have received.

Moreover, captives who had been taken at a young age are further disadvantaged due to the disruption in their education and the unlikelihood of returning to school following their reintegration into society. Surviving captors of the LRA, many of whom reenter society as young adults, are often unable to support their families through methods other than hard labour or marriage, and are frequently abused due to the stigma surrounding ex-militant women.

Another crucial barrier to the reintegration of LRA 'wives' is the common attitude towards their children. While returning women are treated with suspicion, their children are often seen as an extension of their fathers and are thus viewed as violent criminals. This perception is often reinforced by the children's lack of education and their observed tendencies towards violence. Returning women and girls are often forced to choose between their families and their children, leading to more psychological trauma and rejection from their communities.

STEPS FORWARD

NGOs have been active in supporting the reintegration of female captives into their home communities through means such as mediation, employment assistance, healthcare, and counselling. Yet as time since the peace deal passes, funding for reintegration initiatives decreases, and their impact lessens. While a decade ago,

support from reintegration programs might have meant a multi-month counseling and training period, today, returnees may undergo only a week's worth of the same process.

Although the peace agreement with the LRA is over a decade old, the militant group is still active and recruiting. Girls and young women are still trying to return home, but resources for their reintegration are slowly disappearing with time. In response, some grassroots organizations have emerged with the goal of improving the situation of young women and their children who return from LRA captivity. Future paths forward are complicated. The post-conflict struggles that women undergo differ from those which men experience, but are equally important. These issues are inherently related to the fifth Sustainable Development goal (SDG) of the United Nations: gender equality. Extending beyond gender, empowerment, and inclusion, SDG 5 also highlights the importance of eliminating violence and discrimination against women and girls.

To fully achieve the goal of gender equality, the international community needs to address the barriers that women, especially forced mothers, face within their own communities during societal reintegration after long-term captivity. Without an approach that is tailored towards the experience of these young women, reintegration processes and post conflict reconciliation will fail to meet the needs of the victims of the LRA in Uganda and similar groups around the globe. Grassroots organizations, supported with government and international funding, are a good option for former female captives to get the initial help they need. However, it is difficult to know if any reintegration program will be enough to bridge the gap between returning women and civilian victims of LRA militants. In the meantime, young female returnees and their children are forced to live between two worlds, accepted by neither.



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The Growing Scourge of Latin American Femicide

BY AMAL ATTAR-GUZMAN



IN 2016, the United Nations announced the UN Sustainable Development Goals to the international community: an initiative to address global challenges and achieve peace and justice for all. For this ideal to become reality, gender equality and women's empowerment is among the most important goals to achieve by 2030. As stated by the UN, gender equality represents not only "[...]a fundamental human right, but necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world." So far, Latin American member-states are among those aiming to achieve this goal. But, one question remains: how will this goal be achieved with the continuing rise of femicide in Latin America?

FEMICIDE IN EL SALVADOR

El Salvador has the highest rate of femicide in Latin America. One woman is reportedly killed every 18 hours due to gender-based violence. Absolute numbers are much higher in other countries, such as Brazil; however, according to a report from the Gender Equality Obser-

vatory, femicide "has a scope in El Salvador that is seen nowhere else in the region," due to its small population of approximately six and a half million people. One of the principal causes of this epidemic is gang violence, which involves roughly 500,000 Salvadorans. Gangs like MS 13 and Barrio 18 target young girls and women, using their bodies as leverage to either convince men and boys to join, or to exact their revenge on rivals through murder and or rape. According to government lawyer Yolanda Blanco, "girls are the objects of vengeance for the gangs. They are in the eye of the hurricane." This bleak situation helps explain the disquieting figure that women represent 93 per cent of sexual assault victims in El Salvador.

This negative societal impact, along with the statistically significant threat of death by a partner, is also exacerbating the situation. A tragic example of this was Karla Turcios, a Salvadoran journalist who became the 152nd victim of femicide in 2018. Her body was found two hours outside of the capital city of San Salvador, in a

ditch by the highway. The brutality of her death—whereby she was allegedly strangled and mutilated—along with many others before her, has caused a national outcry, to the point where the President declared a national crisis. Gender-based violence police task-forces, along with special women’s courts, were established in order to address the issue. Despite this, gender-based homicides have continued to rise, with a record 299 femicides reported by the National Police since Ms. Turcios’ murder in April 2018. As the new year begins, numbers are still rising.

A REGIONAL ISSUE

Despite having the highest femicide rates, El Salvador is not the only Latin American country plagued by femicide. In Peru, a record 43 femicides and 103 attempted femicides was recorded within the first four months of 2018. One incident, in particular, shocked the country. In Lima this past April, Eyvi Ágreda, 22 year old woman, was stalked, doused by gasoline, and lit on fire by her aggressor on a bus after work. According to witnesses, her aggressor exclaimed prior to committing the act, “I’m burning you because if you’re not mine, you won’t be anyone’s.” From this attack, she received second to third degree burns over 60 per cent of her body.

According to experts, one trend is apparent; the culture of machismo in this region is a primary contributor. María Ysabel Cendano García, head of a women’s non-profit, indicated that “those who commit femicides, or attempted femicides, claim they are being disrespected or cheated on...The objective is to punish.” Similarly, Peruvian psychoanalyst Educardo Gatelumendi indicates how machismo not only harms women, but can also inadvertently harm men. He warned that “boys raised in macho homes end up being adults who are really like big children: emotionally infantile, dependent, spoiled, violent, demanding and impulsive.” Eyvi’s aggressor was one of those men. His inability to accept rejection costed her life as she died two months after the attack.

GROWING LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL PUSHBACK

While their situation is dire, there has been push back. After Karla’s death, public protests erupted in El Salva-

dor, demanding social and judicial action for the victim. The same goes for Eyvi’s case, where Peruvian civil society demanded the courts justice for her gruesome death. Additionally, at the regional level, the activist grassroots organization of #NiUnaMenos—which actively protests against femicides and advocates for various distinct issues of women’s’ rights across Latin America—has sprung into action.

The international community has also responded. Recently, the Development Bank of Latin America and the United Nations Programme for Development launched an initiative to aid governments in their fight against the gender-based violence in Argentina, Ecuador and Peru. The initiative provides a wide range of support, including education, institution and infrastructure building, following a bottom-up approach. While setting a precedent, the initiative still does not include the majority of Latin American countries grappling with this issue. Although Eyvi’s country will benefit from these efforts, Karla’s will not. Another major hurdle for combatting femicide in Latin America is chronic underreporting in the region. Implementing impactful strategies at a grassroots level is complicated when states do not have up-to-date data.

Such challenges need to be addressed and resolved soon. Femicides are directly contributing to other global challenges within the region. For example, many victims of gender-based violence from El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala make up a large part of the Central American Caravan, greatly contributing to the present migration phenomena. This, on top off entrenched societal values at the domestic level and a lack of sufficient data, makes achieving the goal of gender equality in Latin America ever-more challenging.



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Assessing Abe's Policy of 'Womenomics'

BY ROBBIE FRANK



IN 2013, the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, announced his goal of ameliorating the status of women in Japan – an initiative titled ‘Womenomics,’ which refers to his views on gender policies on which his candidacy was based. The central tenets of these political reforms are focused on increasing the workplace participation of women, eradicating the existing wage gap between the genders, and investing in public services such as extended daycare hours and more flexible working arrangements. As of September 2018, however, Japan still lags behind other G7 nations and ranks third to last among the 35 OECD countries in terms of minimizing the wage gap at a difference of 24.5 per cent. Furthermore, the country falters with regards to political representation of women, being ranked 158th in the world. Although the country as a whole has made some effort to advance women’s role in society, many women choose to become expatriates in locations

where women are not as susceptible to the limitations of corporate glass ceilings due to gender. As a key member of the international community, there is still much to be done by the Japanese government to address this brain drain of Japan’s skilled female workers.

A CULTURAL GAP

Historically, Japan has differentiated the roles of men and women in civil society. While women were largely segregated from men in domains such as education, Japan was generally considered to be a society where women were valued, treated with respect, and awarded responsibility. Although many outdated customs - such as the ‘patriotic’ duty of Japanese women to have children - are no longer prevalent, modesty, discretion, and loyalty are virtues that remain highly regarded in Japa-

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS, STEPHAN GEYER

nese society. Some key ideas about the role of women in society that persist in order to gain respect include working in the home and being educated separately from men. Though this may seem like an issue that contributes to Japan's patriarchal society from an outside perspective, Japan has long segregated the sexes without facing significant international backlash. Nonetheless, Prime Minister Abe is seeking to improve the status of women as a starting point, both to appease Japan's Western allies and to rectify the sense of growing inequality felt by Japanese women when compared with their international counterparts.

EMPTY PROMISES

Critics point to the lack of female representation in Japanese politics to highlight the weak resolve by Abe's government. In October 2018, five years after the announcement of 'Womenomics', Prime Minister Abe shared his new 20-person cabinet. Satsuki Katayama, the only female member, was appointed as the minister in charge of regional development and women's empowerment. Although some argue that Abe's cabinet has gained momentum in the right direction, many of the commitments have been left behind, such as providing better educational opportunities for women and increasing female labour force participation. For example, a report from August 2018 called out a medical school in Tokyo for manipulating test scores to systematically exclude female students in favour of less qualified men. As a result of the lack of follow-through on many of these promises, supporters have begun to question whether these initiatives were genuine aspirations or simply strategic manoeuvres to gain political favor. Women in recent years continue to share stories of harassment, abuse, and other forms of gender discrimination in the workplace and in political settings.

FALSE POSITIVES

Japan seeks to achieve gender parity for women's political participation. The government passed a law in May 2018 to urge parties to have equally gender-balanced cabinets and to make a stronger effort to achieve gender quotas. In spite of this, these laws are not enforced, and penalties or fines are not issued for those who fail to abide. It is not surprising that the Japanese government has gained little support by setting a voluntary quota.

Changing legislation to prevent political parties from circumventing these efforts would yield more significant results. This problem also extends to the private sector, as well. In addition to the lack of female representation in politics, there are few women who act as corporate leaders in the business world. In April 2018, Teikoku Databank Ltd., a credit research agency, highlighted that only 7.8 per cent of company presidents are female, a nominal increase from 5.5 per cent in 1998.

FUTURE EFFORTS

Current policy to address the lack of corporate and political opportunities for Japanese women have not been properly tackled. The Japanese government needs to develop enforceable policies if they hope to see advancement in this regard. Abe's government needs to make an active effort to rectify these discrepancies in representation through legal requirements, as well as striving to alter the deeper cultural elements that support patriarchal social attitudes in Japan. Boys and girls are still educated separately in many parts of Japan, and furthermore, many senior administrators in Japan hail from a more male-dominated era, making it difficult to enact change. By involving Japan as a participating nation in the international community and with the advancement of technology, native Japanese women are now exposed to more significant political and business opportunities outside of Japan. The key thing that Abe's government will need to address is how to level the playing field between Japanese women and their international counterparts on a foundational level.



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Nigerian Women Unite!

BY GITANJALI GOOLSARRAN



GENDER and religion in Nigeria form a fascinating political nexus that is growing increasingly apparent in the run up to the country's national elections. The controversy around Nigeria's Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill is a recurring topic of contention, having languished in the upper house of parliament for years. In December of 2016, the bill was denounced by a senior Muslim cleric, Nigeria's Sultan of Sokoto, on the grounds of its perceived incompatibility with Islamic principles. As Nigerians prepare to cast their votes in February 2019, women are once more at the center of a discourse pushing for action on gender.

In Nigeria, religion operates in the context of two faith demographics of roughly equal size, geographically distributed with Muslims in the north and Christians in

the south. While not denying religious dynamics gender inequality in the country, it is important to reorient the conversation by providing a less religiously anchored commentary on female agency in Nigeria.

It is important to reorient the conversation by providing a less religiously anchored commentary on female agency in Nigeria

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS, ITU PICTURES

In its first iteration, the gender bill was presented in 2011 by Senator Christina Anyanwu covering “gender inequality in politics, education and employment in Nigeria.” The bill has included provisions to support a minimum legal age of 18 for marriage, and is against female genital mutilation (FGM). Yet issues of contention arise in legislating gender equality across statutory, customary, and shari’ah law because the proposed reforms are perceived to contradict both Islamic and constitutional foundations – particularly those around property, inheritance and guardianship.

While the contentious issues said to be hampering the bill are indeed its inheritance and widowhood clauses, it bears noting that the Gender bill would also legislate that 35 per cent of government ministers, and 20 per cent of state commissioners, be female. In a country where the political access of female candidates has been constrained in large part by the limitations on women’s access to the financial capital, this provision would be a boon to women’s representation in Nigerian politics.

Systemic exclusion from formal avenues of accessing political and economic systems mean that women today suffer from historic disadvantages in accessing the political sphere. These often span beyond traditional barriers one might attribute to religion, and Islam in particular. Historical financial disempowerment has direct implications for women’s rights, and particularly for women’s formal participation in politics.

In spite of this, in the present election, there are six female candidates out of the total 34, who have placed themselves in the running – among them, a lawyer and businesswoman, a chartered accountant, and a linguistics professor.

Actors such as the Nigerian Women’s Trust Fund (NWTF), the African Women’s Development Fund, the UN Women program Women and Democracy in Nigeria, the Centre for Democracy and Development have been supporting female politicians by providing grants and financial support, activism and advocacy, and advertising platforms.

More broadly, Nigeria has a number of notable female leaders who are active in the the nation’s politics. Operating across the blurred boundaries of the political and

religious worlds, Nigeria’s women are also engaging in creative and meaningful ways – including the bridge building work of an interfaith coalition of women tackling challenges from HIV/AIDs to climate change.

While Nigeria’s long-awaited gender bill has yet to be passed, women are increasingly active in formal politics, and are engaging in politics more broadly for the betterment of their communities. The message they embody is that the strongest tool for advancing the SDG-5 is increased support of women’s own agency across the political playing field and beyond.

“Culture does not make people.
People make culture. If it is true
that the full humanity of women
is not our culture, then we can
and must make it our culture.”

~Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie



Gita is in her second year of the Master of Global Affairs program. She has deep interests in global networks, inclusive economic growth, and human rights in conflict and development. In the past, Gita has done research and interned in Latin America and the Caribbean on issues of transparency, oil and development in the Global South. She spent this summer in New York working on projects on development and migration in the Middle East, and will be completing her fall semester abroad at King’s College London, in the Department of Political Economy.

Is Artificial Intelligence the Key to Achieving Employment Equity?

BY ABE RAVI



ADVANCES in machine learning and neural networks could be transformational for labour economics by automating jobs in fields ranging from the finance to healthcare. The proliferation of machine intelligence poses a profound dilemma in workplaces requiring high levels of emotional intelligence. Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be a remarkable platform for promoting gender equality and empowering women in occupations that require high levels of emotional labour, in which women are continually over-represented, such as healthcare. Several studies have shown that women have exceptionally high emotional quotient (EQ) skills, which they can use to advance their careers in the digital economy.

CHANGING DYNAMICS IN THE CORPORATE SECTOR AND R&D

The United States has witnessed significant gender diversification in its workforce in the past half century due to the rapid advancement in technology, in parallel with the democratization of education. Between 1970 and 2016 the share of women's aggregate employment rose by 14 percentage points, from 43 per cent to 57 per cent. Similarly, data from the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics illustrates that the proportion of women working in management positions expanded from 17 per cent to 51.4 per cent between 1971 and 2012. As a result, businesses have been able to leverage this diversification to gain an array of benefits ranging from novel perspectives and innovative corporate cultures, to increased social capital.

GAPS AND HOLES IN THE CURRENT LABOUR MARKET

Despite the increased representation of women in the workforce over the last 50 years, obstacles still stand in the way of achieving gender equality in the labor market. Currently, women are underrepresented at executive and board positions. Women occupy a mere 14.6 per cent of executive officer positions among Fortune 500 companies. Likewise, only 4.6 per cent of Fortune 500 companies are led by female CEOs. These statistics are particularly striking, considering the increasing prominence of women in higher education. For example, data from the U.S. Department of Education reveals that as of 2017, 56 per cent of all students on American university campuses are female. Likewise, as of 2017 women between the ages of 18 and 24 earned more than two-thirds of all master's degrees, 75 per cent of professional degrees, and 80 per cent of doctoral degrees. However, AI has the opportunity resolve the disparity between the disproportionate number of women in higher education and their under-representation in high-level occupations in the labour market.

MACHINE LEARNING WILL AUTOMATE THE STANDARDIZED WORK-FLOW

As neural networks become increasingly sophisticated, machines will be able to perform a majority of the current five-part standardized workflow, which include: (1) Data Collection; (2) Data Analysis; (3) Data Interpretation; (4) Determining Recommended Course of Action; (5) Implementing the Recommended Course of Action. Intelligent machines will likely augment or replace occupations that have standardized workflows, such as doctors, financial advisors, and business consultants. For example, a 2018 report by PricewaterhouseCoopers found that approximately 30 per cent of jobs in the financial services sector are vulnerable to automation in the next decade.

A GLIMPSE OF THE FUTURE: THE EMERGING VALUE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The fundamental flaw surrounding AI, however, is that intelligent machines lack emotional intelligence. Dr. Kai-Fu Lee, a world-renowned expert in AI, argues that an AI economy will increasingly value ‘human relating’ skills such as compassion, engagement, empathy, and influence—psychopathological skills that are currently beyond the operational capacity of intelligent machines. In the context of healthcare, a future career as a radiologist will involve the development of personalized treatment plans, as AI machines take on primary responsibilities such as image interpretation and the performance of minimally invasive medical procedures. Similarly, a future career in consulting or finance will involve persuading the executive team to adopt operational improvements suggested by heuristic algorithms. Future careers in an AI economy will heavily emphasize and reward skills such as empathy, inspiration, and persuasion. In the emerging digital economy, workers can and should leverage ‘human relating’ skills to effectively compete with automated machines.

CATCHING LIGHTNING IN A BOTTLE

The current structure of the global labour market lacks the capability to address the complications produced by the new wave of automation. Institutional problems in both governments and businesses have prevented the even distribution of the rewards from technological growth and globalization. Consequently, there has been stagnant wage growth, reduced benefits, and a general lack of economic security amongst the middle class. The development of AI systems can help re-integrate those that have been left behind by automation and globalization due to the market demand for emotional intelligence.

Prospective job seekers can exploit the lack of AI emotional intelligence aptitude by sharpening their own EQ skills. A recent article by Megan Beck and Barry Libert in the Harvard Business Review, argues that there is an ongoing paradigm shift in the labour market. Historically, the market has undervalued emotional intelligence

and overvalued tangible skills. This trend is changing, however, as machines automate tangible skills and the workplace requires strong EQ skills to complement machine intelligence. According to these experts, EQ skills can be developed through small, daily changes, such as being open to criticism and feedback regarding one’s own interpersonal skills. Individuals and businesses that have sharp EQ skills are well-positioned to succeed in the digital economy.

In particular, women may have a unique opportunity to take advantage of these emerging labour market trends. According to a study conducted by the Korn Ferry Institute, women scored better on average in indicators for emotional intelligence, such as demonstrating empathy and a predisposition toward coaching and mentoring. Furthermore, in the U.S., women currently outweigh men in jobs that require high emotional intelligence such as school teachers, nurses, and social workers. As technological progress continues to shape the nature of the workforce, women may have the opportunity to leverage these EQ skills and experiences in analytical fields such as law, medicine, and engineering as the highly standardized and routine aspects of these sectors become automated by machines.

CHALLENGES MOVING FORWARD

Although AI has the potential to create new career pathways that may contribute to greater gender equality in STEM and other analytical fields, there are still many hurdles that stakeholders must navigate. In October 2018, Amazon’s machine-learning experts discovered that their new recruiting algorithm showed bias against women. Hence, companies that develop and employ various machine learning tools are quickly realizing that these algorithms are a double-edged sword. Policy makers and stakeholders should be well-informed about the effects of AI on the labour market in order to craft effective regulations that will create an equitable and sustainable economy.



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An Invisible Migration

BY RACHEL BRYCE



WOMAN and children make up half of global migration flows. Too often, however, migrating women are belittled or ignored in public narratives and global policy. As the international community has committed to Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5) to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, the intersection of gender and migration must be highlighted.

The UN Migration Agency (IOM) effectively summarizes the belittlement of women on the move and emphasizes its incompatibility with SDG5: "...the traditional perception of female migration as a by-product of male migration is fundamentally incompatible with the idea of gender equality." Importantly, this analysis focuses on women and girls in transit, rather than the equally important stages of migration in countries of origin and host countries. Women face discrimination at every stage of their journeys, with domestic violence acting as the main push factor behind women leaving their homes, and sexual violence following them into refugee camps and host countries. But, with predominant global fears surrounding flows of migrants who are often de-

picted as full of violent men (a claim worth refuting in a separate article), it is essential that we bring to light the experiences of women and girls, and the distinct international legal protection that they require.

"A VIOLENT AND DANGEROUS INVASION"

The predominant narrative coming from countries that have the greatest means to welcome and support asylum seekers and migrants seeking a better life is one of fear-mongering and hatred. In November 2018, President Donald Trump justified his unconstitutional decision to close irregular border entry points along the American-Mexican border to the incoming asylum seekers, saying "...these are tough people, they are not little angels and we are not letting them into our country." That is not to say that women and girls in this so-called 'Migrant Caravan' were not tough—in fact, their strength and resilience, demonstrated by travelling over 4,000 kilometers north, is indisputable—it does, however, posit that this loaded, traditionally masculine language hides the diverse experiences of migrating women. Saliently, the language that overly victimizes women can also be just as destructive for the goal of universal gender equality.

The pattern of anti-immigrant demagoguery is by no means limited to the United States. Across Europe, right-wing leaders warn against the inflow of 'dangerous' Middle Eastern and North African migrants. A senior Hungarian minister in Victor Orbán's anti-immigration government has said: "If we let [migrants] in... our cities, [...] the consequences will be crime, impoverishment, dirt, filth and impossible urban conditions." Granted, the fear-mongering in Europe also involves concerns around cultural differences and the disproportionate burdening of certain E.U. countries over others. Regardless, the militarized response from right-wing governments perpetuates the image of strong, violent male migrants coming to take over the European continent. This is patently false.

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS, WILLIAM PROBY

There is evidence of alienated migrants or refugees becoming associated with terror groups in countries such as India, with respect to Rohingya refugees—the Muslim minority group in Myanmar, which has faced intense persecution. However, categorically characterizing refugees as violent, dangerous men hurts all migrants, but especially the doubly-discriminated migrant women.

THE REALITY OF MIGRATION

In reality, the vast majority of migrants leave on perilous journeys to find better lives, fleeing extreme poverty and violence. Women and children make up a larger proportion of South-South migration flows and internal displacement, as they can rarely make the lengthy and dangerous journeys with which we are more acquainted since 2011 in Europe. The IOM has noted that “... gender roles influence decisions to migrate [...] both because of the attempts to avoid discrimination and the limitations that hamper women’s abilities to migrate.” That said, the ‘Migrant Caravan’ from Central America consisted of over 2,000 women and children. A key difference between the European journey and the Latin American journey has been institutional opposition. Whereas governments closed borders and impeded the movement of asylum seekers in Europe, the countries of origin and Mexico currently have no such barriers—that is, until the caravan reached the U.S. border. Additionally, more women have fled through Mexico as part of the caravan because of the safety that comes with the larger group. When travelling alone, more than 80 per cent of female migrants report being victims of sexual assault. The most important point to clarify is that these asylum seekers are not dangerous. They are not to be feared; rather, they themselves are fleeing out of fear. Historically, women and girls have had very slim chances of leaving their home countries due to patriarchal societies and lack of support. Increasingly, more women are now leaving their unsafe living situations. For example, in South Africa, a growing number of women have been found to be travelling independent of their spouses. Importantly, women migrants are still more vulnerable to violence, exploitation, abuse, and trafficking. As migration is an essential way out of poverty and violence, efforts must be made to address these threats, to alter the dominant narrative to acknowledge the needs of women migrants and develop gendered migration policies.

SUPPORTING WOMEN ON THE MOVE

Making it easier for women and girls to leave extreme poverty, violence, and other serious threats to their livelihood will allow them to access the benefits of migration. Particularly when it comes to South-South migration, this will be essential. Countries need to invest in their migration systems to facilitate the journeys of women seeking better lives, whether alone or with families. Furthermore, encouraging civil society to continue to fill in political gaps may make migratory paths safer for women and girls, as we see along the path of the October and November 2018 ‘Migrant Caravan’. This human compassion has been missing from the systems governing the flow of people, resulting in persistent violent attacks against asylum seekers, thus dissuading women and children from those treacherous routes. Some argue that such tough policies are successful for that very reason; if the countries do not want migrants settling or passing through, violence is the most effective deterrent. This is morally reproachable, as it completely ignores the human rights of these individuals. Additionally, it is in contravention of the SDG5 by further alienating women from accessing the opportunities—in host countries—that their male counterparts might still be able to access. By making it near impossible to enter more prosperous host countries, states are effectively selecting only those willing to make such treacherous journeys to claim asylum, who most often are single men.

If states and citizens are to fully commit to achieving SDG5, migration narratives must change to reflect the diverse reality of migration flows, reduce fear, and welcome women into safer communities. When women are allowed to move freely and contribute fully to society, we are all better off.



Rachel is in the second year of the combined JD/MGA program at the University of Toronto. She earned her Bachelor of International Economics at the University of British Columbia. In 2016, Rachel volunteered with refugees and migrants in the Calais Refugee Camp, clarifying her path towards international migration law and policy.

The Case for Including Yemeni Women in the Peace-Process

BY EMMA AMARAL



THE now famous portrait of Amal Hussein captured the peaceful but haunting face of the emaciated seven-year-old before she became one of 85,000 children in Yemen who have died from starvation. Tragically, in death, she and murdered journalist Jamal Khashoggi have turned global attention towards the impasse of over three years of war in Yemen. But what we haven't heard in the global dialogue is how the lives of women have been particularly affected, and their notable absence in the peace process. Research demonstrates that Yemeni women are integral to peace efforts across different levels, such as within their families, in humanitarian work and psychosocial support, and in civic life. Without their participation at the negotiating table, reaching a long term solution remains unlikely, and any potential agreement risks lacking gender specific provisions.

Radhya Almutawakel, co-founder of the Yemeni human rights organization Mwatana, is hopeful about the current United Nations peace talks underway in Sweden,

only the second time that the warring Houthi rebels and the Yemeni government have been brought to the table since the war began. Meanwhile, recent figures indicate that Yemeni lives are hanging in the balance; over 60 per cent of the country is living in emergency or crisis levels of food insecurity, a strain felt particularly by women and girls. For example, Suha Basharen, a Gender Specialist with CARE Yemen, speaks to the implications of food insecurity in traditional Yemeni society: “men and boys eat first, and only then can women and girls eat. Even with food shortages, men still eat first, and women and girls – including pregnant and lactating women – still eat last. There is nothing left for them by the time it is their turn.” The resulting malnutrition among women and girls is exacerbated by the blockage of humanitarian access into the country as well as a lack of health-related infrastructure.

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), “an estimated 1.1 million pregnant and lactating women are malnourished as lack of humanitarian

PHOTO SOURCE: CREATIVE COMMONS, FELTON DAVIS

access to conflict-affected areas and difficulties obtaining food and medical supplies persist. A further 75,000 pregnant women are at risk of developing complications due to the dire state of health services in Yemen.” The UNFPA also estimates that over three million Yemeni women and girls are at risk of gender-based violence (GBV) and 60,000 are at risk of sexual violence. Reported GBV incidents increased by 36 per cent in 2017 and child marriage rates have escalated to 66 per cent as of 2017. Furthermore, an estimated 76 per cent of internally displaced persons (IDPs) are women and children, with about one-fifth of IDP households as well as host communities headed by women below the age of 18.

Basharen states that Yemeni women are under even further stress by having to “step into roles that are traditionally filled by men, because so many men are now being killed or injured or are forcibly disappeared.” According to Nadia Al-Sakkaf, a Yemeni researcher specializing in gender and politics, this diversification of gender roles should not be confounded with empowerment. Women are required to keep their communities surviving in the face of poverty, but with few resources or support. Al-Sakkaf notes that this may allow Yemeni women more freedom of mobility in search of sustenance (such as selling their home cooked food or becoming maids for little remuneration), but this is driven by increasing responsibility and not changing cultural values. In some areas, gender norms have become even more restrictive due to conservative groups in power. However, research by Saferworld found that some women did feel more empowered, resilient, and self-reliant during the war, which reflects the complexities of gender roles and conflict. In any case, families and communities are at continuous risk of destabilization due to the high death toll of women. Areej Jamal Al-Khawlani from UN Women warns that while women have the “double burden of being the family’s main provider while also performing their expected role of primary caregivers in the family,” women and children also account for the largest number of civilian victims. Yemeni women have reported that because of these security concerns, their public participation has been restricted.

While women are the hardest hit in Yemen, their voices are notably absent from the peace table. According to Al-Khawlani, “all parties to the conflict tend to think that while the conflict is ongoing it’s not the time to

address women’s right and empowerment issues.” However, because of the gender-specific consequences of the Yemeni conflict, “ceasefire agreements can and should contain gender-sensitive provisions. When women are part of these negotiations, the agreements address issues such as sexual violence and include women in follow-up mechanisms.”

The Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (CFFP) has accumulated a body of evidence that points to additional positive outcomes when women are involved in peace agreements. Research by Vogelstein and Bigio found that when women and civil society “meaningfully participate in peace negotiations, the resulting agreement is 64 per cent less likely to fail and 35 per cent more likely to last at least 15 years.” And when women are involved in peacekeeping and security forces, “the security sector has increased accountability and less abuses against civilians.” The CFFP report also highlights successes from female-led initiatives across Yemen, such as women facilitating truce agreements between rebels and local communities.

The Yemeni Women Pact for Peace and Security has provided the UN with policy recommendations to end the war and engage in peacebuilding, and are an example of an organization that should be meaningfully incorporated into the peace-building process. According to Al-Sakkaf, “It is Yemen’s women who during the conflict have maintained the social fabric of society and kept communities together. They are the nurturers, mediators, peacemakers, and keepers of tradition.” Despite the tragedies they have endured, women in Yemen are able to unite the country in a long-lasting and comprehensive way. Therefore, in their understandable haste for a solution to the conflict, international leaders should not overlook Yemeni women.



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MUNK SCHOOL OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS