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"The devil is in the details": development, women's rights and religious fundamentalisms

Dealing with the escalation of violence against women across the world requires a wider adoption of a feminist approach to working at the nexus of development, religious fundamentalism and women's rights.



In August 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the agenda that will guide global development priorities until 2030. The agenda is not without its shortcomings, but the inclusion of a stand-alone goal to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" and the recognition of gender equality as "a crucial contribution to progress across all the Goals and targets" constitute a significant step up from the minimal gender commitments of its predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Read more:

<http://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/devil-details-development-womens-rights-and-religious-fundamentalisms#sthash.RkAXVxbe.dpuf>

Women 'outweigh' clerics in Iran's parliament for first time in history



An Iranian woman holding her daughter casts her ballot during elections in Tehran

The new Iranian parliament will see more women than clerics, whose number have reached an all-time low, parliamentary elections results have shown. This is the first time women have outnumbered clerics in the country's history.

According to the official voting results issued on Saturday, 17 women will become members of the 290-seat parliament compared to clerics who only won 16 seats, AFP reports. Although the clerics fall just one seat behind women, their overall number has reached an all-time low.

What is more, female politicians have beaten their previous record as the highest number of seats they managed to get in the past was just 14. Compared to the previous election, the number of women almost doubled.

"As a young woman, I ran to inspire women and give them courage to fight for their rights. I ran to play my role in the destiny of the country and stop extremists from capturing seats in parliament," Fatemeh Hosseini, one of the "winners", said as reported by AP.

Read more:

<https://www.rt.com/news/341573-iran-parliament-women-clerics/>

What can you do to close the gender gap in your workplace

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/03/what-can-you-do-to-close-the-gender-gap-in-your-workplace>



If you could make one change in your organization today, what would it be? What if I told you there was a step you could take to increase profit margins, raise your team's collective intelligence and create a more innovative, fair and equal workplace?

What's the secret? Help more women get the experience and opportunities they need to reach leadership roles.

In partnership with the Peterson Institute for International Economics, EY recently undertook a comprehensive study of gender inequality in corporate leadership. The sample size was both massive and global, surveying nearly 22,000 organizations across a wide variety of industries in 91 countries.

Read more:

<http://www.wunrn.com/2016/05/what-you-can-do-to-close-the-gender-gap-in-your-workplace/>

Egypt – Top Religious Leaders Start Outreach Program to End Female Genital Mutilation-FGM

The Islamic University of Al Azhar, the highest academic center of Sunni Islam, has joined the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate in Egypt in the fight against the epidemic of female genital mutilation.

Fides News Agency reported that Coptic Orthodox Patriarch Tawadros II and Sheikh Ahmed al Tayyeb, imam of al-Azhar, signed a joint statement on Monday committing their fight against the many abuses children in Egypt suffer.

Statistics show that more than 70 percent of all Egyptian children suffer some form of abuse or violence within their families and communities, Fides added.

As many as 850 leaders of churches and mosques, including imam, priests, monks, and pastoral workers are expected to attend preparation courses that will allow them to engage more effectively and lead the fight against "genital mutilation, early marriage, kidnapping and sexual abuse."

Child agency UNICEF has warned that at least 200 millions girls and women around the world in 30 different countries, mainly in Africa, have been subjected to genital mutilation, suffering "profound, permanent, and utterly unnecessary harm."

The practice is carried out for various reasons, often a mixture between cultural and religious beliefs, but is primarily aimed at ensuring girls remain "pure" before marriage, so as not to damage their marriage prospects or the family's status.

Read more:

<http://www.wunrn.com/2016/05/egypt-top-religious-leaders-start-outreach-program-to-end-fgm/>

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Fleeing violence, Syrian women try to cope in Turkey and Lebanon

Amima and Fatima Jebari are Syrian sisters who fled last year to the southern Turkish city of Gaziantep, near the Syrian border, after the Free Syrian Army entered their village in the north, they said, and violence ensued between the rebel group and the government forces of Bashar al-Assad in the continuing civil war.

The women, who are in their 40s, paid the equivalent of about \$150 to people smugglers to bring them across the border to Turkey. Their arrival, however, did not offer much relief from violence as refugees and the countries in the region hosting them remains the most compelling humanitarian challenge facing the world today.

Given Turkey's long border with Syria, its history of active trade and its initial hospitable policy, it has taken in the most Syrian refugees in the world, an estimated 2.7 million people, according to the United Nations, many of them widows and children. The refugees first began arriving on April 29, 2011, soon after the Syrian government began to viciously attack protestors demonstrating for an Arab Spring revolution.

Read more:

<http://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/fleeing-violence-syrian-women-try-cope-turkey-and-lebanon>

Women Suffer Under ISIS: For Sunnis, Lives Curtailed; for Yezidis, New Accounts of Brutal Rapes

The extremist armed group Islamic State should urgently release Yezidi women and girls they abducted in 2014, Human Rights Watch said today, following new research with recent escapees who were raped and traded between members before they fled. Islamic State (also known as ISIS) also routinely imposes abusive restrictions on other Iraqi women and girls and severely limits their freedom of movement and access to health care and education in areas under its control, Human Rights Watch said today.

In January and February 2016, Human Rights Watch interviewed 21 Sunni Muslim Arab women from the Hawija area of Iraq and 15 women and girls from the Yezidi minority ethnic group, all of whom had fled ISIS-controlled areas, most in late 2015. Several of the Yezidis, abducted by ISIS in mid-2014, had spent more than a year in captivity. They described being forcibly converted to Islam, kept in sexual slavery, bought and sold in slave markets, and passed among as many as four ISIS members. Human Rights Watch first documented systematic rape of Yezidi women and girls in early 2015.

“The longer they are held by ISIS, the more horrific life becomes for Yezidi women, bought and sold, brutally raped, their children torn from them,” said Skye Wheeler, women’s rights emergencies researcher at Human Rights Watch. “Meanwhile, ISIS’s restrictions on Sunni women cut them off from normal life and services almost entirely.”

Read more:

<http://www.wluml.org/news/iraq-women-suffer-under-isis-sunnis-lives-curtailed-yezidis-new-accounts-brutal-rapes>

Morocco – Continued Call for Stronger Domestic Violence Law, Penal Code Reforms



Women from various regions of Morocco hold placards as they protest against violence towards women, in Rabat, November 24, 2013. The placard reads, “In memory of all women victims of violence”.

A bill addressing violence against women [VAW] in Morocco had been in limbo for more than 10 years when, on March 17, lawmakers finally took up the issue and passed the bill. But there are detractors, including some unexpected ones: Nongovernmental organizations that have long lobbied for legislation to protect women opposed the bill, saying it fails to address the urgent needs of Moroccan women.

Moroccan police, prosecutors, judges, and other authorities often fail to prevent domestic abuse, punish the abusers, or assist survivors, Human Rights Watch said in a letter to the Moroccan government. In part, that is because Moroccan laws don't provide officials with guidance on responding effectively.

Read more:

<http://www.wunrn.com/2016/05/morocco-continued-call-for-stronger-domestic-violence-law-penal-code-reforms-services/>

Female refugees to Europe face “Cycle of violence”



A Syrian woman carries her child inside a customs building after their arrival, along with hundreds of others, at the port of Piraeus near Athens, Greece.

NAJLA SITS ALONE atop a hillock in the Moria reception camp, the main registration point on the Greek island of Lesbos. She is waiting for a friend to come back, she says, then backpedals and shows a cheap ring on her left hand. The 27-year-old claims she has been married for eight years, but never had children. Her story is vague on details and she appears guarded. Being a woman on the move, far away from home and with little support or community, is no easy task.

She fled Iraq when the Islamic State group (ISIS) took hold of her hometown. “I had friends who were raped or forced to marry fighters. I had to escape,” she says.

Together with the man she calls her husband, she joined a group fleeing to Turkey through the mountains of the Kurdistan region. “Every day we lost someone on the way. They either died of hunger or from the cold,” says Najla.

Read more:

https://www.newsdeeply.com/refugees/articles/2016/05/13/female-refugees-face-cycle-of-sexual-violence?utm_source=Refugees+Deeply&utm_campaign=44d3f959ab-Refugees+Deeply+Weekly+05+145+13+2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8b056c90e2-44d3f959ab-117437241

Syria's women prisoners face suffering even after release

Ever since the start of the Syrian revolution in mid-March 2011, the Syrian regime's security forces have spared no effort to arrest peaceful protesters who called for the downfall of the regime. Their waves of arrest were not limited to men; they also included hundreds of women and girls who opposed the Syrian regime.

According to a joint report issued by the Syrian Network for Human rights (SNHR) and the Syrian Center for Statistics and Research, 2,850 women, 120 of whom are girls below 18 years of age, continue to be held by the Syrian security forces across the country.

Meanwhile, the Center for Documentation of Violations in Syria reported about 1,800 cases where women have been arbitrarily detained, including 69 girls who are below 18.

The three organizations confirmed that since March 2011, at least 19 women, including girls below 18, have been killed due to torture during detention.

Although many of the women arrested by the regime made it out of prison, these women had another suffering to deal with outside the prison. They had to face a society whose treatment of women is governed by customs and traditions, and most of the women were subjected to physical abuse and raped by those in charge of the security branches where they were detained.

Ever since the first months of the protests, the government forces adopted a sexual violence policy aimed at terrorizing and suppressing protesters.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/05/detained-syrian-women-face-tougher-experience-when-freed-1.html#ixzz490JcDk35>

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

“When a country bans abortion, it creates horror stories”. Pan-European protest

There were demonstrations against the proposed anti-abortion bill across Poland on 9 April. The bill, waiting for enough signatures to be tabled in the Parliament, would allow abortion only if it is necessary to save the woman's life. The proposal would also increase the maximum jail term for those who do abortions from two years to five.

Three former Polish first ladies, Danuta Wałęsa, Jolanta Kwaśniewska and Anna Komorowska, have denounced the move. Danuta Wałęsa, the wife of ex-president Lech Wałęsa, made comments in a radio interview directed at Jarosław Kaczyński, the leader of the governing conservative Law and Justice party, who is unmarried: “I urge you to come to your senses. You don't have children, you don't have a wife. What do you know about the life of bees, given that you don't live in a beehive?” she said on Radio Zet.

Since the nationalist Law and Justice Party (PiS) won an absolute majority in Parliament last October, it has, according to news reports, “sanitised” the judiciary, the internet, the media and the civil service, and filled the highest court with its supporters to limit its autonomy.

Read more:

<http://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/feature-when-country-bans-abortion-it-creates-horror-stories-pan-european-protest>

Experts: More Women in Iran's parliament signals shift in society



Iran President Hassan Rouhani took to Twitter over the weekend to praise the fact that 17 women will be part of the country's new parliament, according to the Islamic Republic News Agency.

"It is an outstanding record. I hope such a success will promise more effective activity of competent women in all fields," Rouhani tweeted, according to IRNA.

Thirteen women were elected in the first round of the election on February 26 and four more won seats in a runoff election Friday, adding to the boost of moderates and reformists in the next parliament.

Most of these women are aligned with Rouhani, said Reza Marashi, research director with the National Iranian American Council.

"It's progress," he said, "but it's not where we want it to be."

It will take more involvement of women to build a better future inside Iran, he said.

Not since the 1979 revolution have so many women been elected in Iran.

"This demonstrates the very important, very real and undeniable role women chart for the country," Marashi said.

Read more:

<http://edition.cnn.com/2016/05/02/middleeast/iran-women-parliament/>

Will Iran's new parliament improve women's rights?



The problem was the Guardian Council, a body which has veto authority over any legislature, which in this case rejected all 33 bills introduced by women deputies.

Seventeen women are going to be elected to office as a result of the recent parliamentary election in Iran. While this marginal increase in women's representation will not change the overwhelmingly masculine character of the Iranian Parliament, it is still fair to wonder whether these newly elected women deputies and reformists will have an impact. Will they be able to usher in laws that advance gender equality?

The Supreme Leader's position on women's rights is not clear. Ayatollah Khamenei encouraged women to take part in this year's election by stating that, "There is no need for women to take permission from their husbands to take part in the elections." But will he issue similar statements in support of amendments to the discriminatory laws currently in place?

Read more:

<https://www.opendemocracy.net/leila-alikarami/will-iran-s-new-parliament-improve-women-s-rights>

Egypt – Culture & Traditions Remain Strong, As For Nubian Marriage



Nubian women sell traditional handicrafts at the Nubian Gharb Suheil village, near Aswan

CAIRO — Some Nubian women have left their region's villages to make their own way, either by completing their studies or seeking out new job opportunities, and have succeeded in integrating into the world outside their societies. Others remain constrained by Nubia's traditional mores and customs. Still others have gradually moved away from those traditions. Nevertheless, the bonds of marriage continue to stand, as families insist that Nubian women marry Nubian men in order to preserve the Nubian heritage throughout their lives, according to accounts given by Nubian girls to Al-Monitor.

Nubia is located in southern Egypt along the Nile River and extends into northern Sudan. It is characterized by a local cultural heritage distinct from the rest of the Nile River Valley, as reflected in their traditions and customs, as well as their various forms of art and architecture.

Read more:

<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/contents/authors/reham-mokbel.html>

RESOURCES & CALLS BOOKS & REPORTS

Qualitative research on women's economic empowerment and social protection - a research guide

The FAO's Social Protection and Rural Women's Economic Empowerment research programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) falls under FAO's Strategic Objective 3 of Reducing Rural Poverty and is delivered through two flagship initiatives: the Rural Women's Economic Empowerment Initiative (RWEE) and the From Protection to Production (PtoP) programme.

The research seeks to gain a better understanding of how social protection policies and programmes can be improved to enhance impacts on rural women's empowerment. The programme also aims at identifying ways in which social protection schemes or systems can be strengthened with regard to reducing gender inequalities and improving rural women's economic and social empowerment, actions which can lead to more sustainable pathways out of poverty.

A number of case studies will analyse the impact of social protection programmes on rural women's economic empowerment, particularly in two domains: economic advancement and power and agency.

Read more:

<http://www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/gender&id=76367&type=Document#.VzhR3TV95dg>

For a direct link to report:

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4420e.pdf>

ILO: Large gender gaps remain across broad spectrum of global labour market

New ILO report highlights the enormous challenges women continue to face in finding and keeping decent jobs around the world.



Despite some modest gains in some regions in the world, millions of women are losing ground in their quest for equality in the world of work, according to a new report prepared by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as part of the ILO's Women at Work Centenary Initiative .

“The report shows the enormous challenges women continue to face in finding and keeping decent jobs,” said ILO Director-General Guy Ryder.

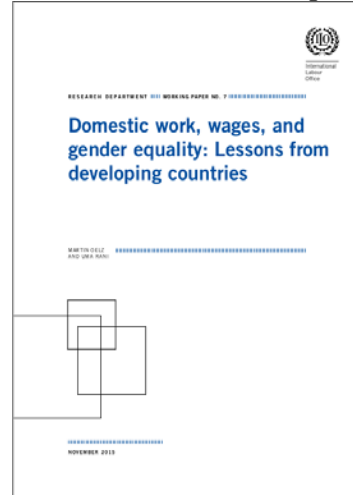
“Our actions must be immediate, effective and far-reaching. There is no time to waste. The 2030 Agenda is an opportunity to pool our efforts and develop coherent, mutually supporting policies for gender equality.”

The report, *Women at Work: Trends 2016* examined data for up to 178 countries and concludes that inequality between women and men persists across a wide spectrum of the global labour market.

Read more:

http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_457267/lang--en/index.htm

Domestic work, wages, and gender equality: Lessons from developing countries



The ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) calls for inclusion of domestic workers into minimum wage coverage and for effective measures for ensuring compliance.

This paper seeks to contribute to a better understanding of developments regarding labour market participation and remuneration in the domestic work sector in comparison with other sectors, drawing on latest available household and labour surveys data and legal information from a diverse group of developing countries (Brazil, Costa Rica, India, Indonesian, Mali, Mexico, Peru, Philippines, South Africa, Turkey, and Viet Nam).

The paper looks at the basic characteristics of female domestic workers, gaps in minimum wage coverage, compliance, and the extent of minimum wage violations.

Read more:

http://www.ilo.org/global/research/publications/WCMS_429600/lang--en/index.htm

For a direct link to paper:

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---inst/documents/publication/wcms_429600.pdf

World Employment and Social Outlook 2016: Transforming Jobs to End Poverty

This report shows that poverty has tended to decline in many emerging and developing countries whereas it has tended to increase in the majority of advanced economies, including in terms of the incidence of working poverty.

The World Employment and Social Outlook 2016 shows that decent work is paramount in the fight to reduce poverty. The report shows that poverty has tended to decline in many emerging and developing countries whereas it has tended to increase in the majority of advanced economies, including in terms of the incidence of working poverty.

The report examines the types of jobs and incomes that the poor have come to rely on, paying particular attention to the quality of jobs and the role of social protection in poverty reduction. It shows that it is not possible to reduce poverty in a sustainable manner unless decent work opportunities are made available to the poor. This finding relies on an analysis of labour market and poverty trends over the past two decades in more than 100 countries, covering a range of advanced, emerging and developing economies.

The report also examines the role that policies play in enhancing decent work opportunities and reducing poverty. It documents a range of country initiatives in the areas of job-centred economic policies, employment programmes, enterprise development, social protection and social dialogue.

Read more:

http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/books/forthcoming-publications/WCMS_474903/lang-en/index.htm

Call for Input – The Care Economy & Impact on Low Income, Marginalised & Disadvantaged Women

Call for evidence on care

Submissions deadline: 31st May 2016

The UN Secretary General has convened a High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment. The panel that next meets in July prior to delivering an implementation plan in September 2016, has agreed six priority areas of which addressing the care economy is one.

This is a unique opportunity for those working on the care economy to collaborate on a joint statement on:

- The recognition and value of care work as a contribution to development and as valuable and skilled activity in the economy
- An assessment of what we know works to prioritise investment to both reduce the intensity and difficulty of care work and increase the quality of care
- An assessment of what we know works to shift perceptions, norms and gender roles about care in order to achieve women's economic empowerment that is optimised, shared across families and sustained across generations.

The panel's focus will be on developing concrete policies and actions that have been shown to work and will reach low income, marginalised and disadvantaged women.

Read more:

<http://interactions.eldis.org/call-for-evidence-on-care>

Investing in the Care Economy – Gender Analysis of Employment Stimulus in 7 OECD Countries

This study shows that investment into the care economy of 2 per cent of GDP in just 7 countries would create over 21 million jobs and help countries overcome the twin challenges of ageing populations and economic stagnation. Investing in care narrows the gender pay gap, reduces overall inequality and helps redress the exclusion of women from decent jobs.



Read more:

<http://www.wunrn.com/2016/04/investing-in-the-care-economy-gender-analysis-of-employment-stimulus-in-7-oecd-countries/>

For a direct link to report:

http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/care_economy_en.pdf

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