



**The Middle East & North Africa
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The MENA Gender and Development eBrief receives material from various sources for its publication. Should you wish to refer to these sources/ sites directly, the list includes publications

from: AVIVA, www.aviva.org, AWID: www.awid.org, Democracy Digest: www.freedomhouse.org, Development Gateway: www.developmentgateway.org, Dignity: www.dignity.org, e-Civics: www.civics.org, Eldis: www.eldis.org, ESCWA: www.escwa.org.lb, GDB: www.developmentex.com, Global Knowledge Partnership: www.globalknowledge.org, IGTV: www.IGTV.org, ILO: www.ilo.org, One World: www.oneworld.net, Siyanda: www.siyanda.org, The Daily Star: www.dailystar.com.lb, The Drum Beat: www.comminit.com, The Soul Beat: www.comminit.com, The World Bank: www.worldbank.org, UNDP: www.undp.org, Wicejilist: www.wicej.addr.com, WLP: www.learningpartnership.org; WIDE: www.wide-network.org; IRIN News: www.irinnews.org, Women's UN Report Network: www.wunrn.com, Women Living Under Muslim Laws: www.wluml.org

NEWS & ARTICLES

GENDER ACTIVISM

Women's Participation, Security, Rights in the Arab World

Karama is proud to work in various sectors and areas that accelerate and enhance capacities to stop violence against women. Many of our projects are ongoing across the MENA region and highlights of Karama's achievements include:

Karama partners in Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, Iraq, Libya, and Egypt contributed to six new laws or public policies against



domestic violence and discriminatory practices since 2005.

In response to the Arab revolutions, Karama mobilized national and regional partners to build linkage, discuss best practices, and brainstorm strategies to lobby for women's inclusion and participation in post-revolution decision-making, peace building, and constitutional reform. As a result, Karama supported the launch of the Libyan Women's Platform for Peace and the Syrian Women's Forum for Peace, and will continue to work with partner in Yemen to launch the MANN ('together') network in 2013.

Karama convened a Regional Consultation on the UN Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in late 2009, joined by UNIFEM and the League of Arab States, which collaborated on such an event for the first time in its history.

Karama's international advocacy training has brought dozens of Arab female activists to the United Nations, generating the first-ever stakeholder reports on Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Egypt, Lebanon, and Somalia submitted to the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review.

Karama's media outreach program has resulted in over 150 articles, op-eds, broadcasts, and podcasts published in media across the Middle East, Asia, North America, Europe, and Latin America, building awareness and spurring debate on key issues for women in the region. For more information about Karama's work follow the link

http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/04_13/04_01/040113_karama.htm

Film on Violence Against Palestinian Women Refugees in Lebanon

ABAAD-Resource Center for Gender Equality in partnership with UNRWA and General Union of Palestinian Women in Lebanon launched its new resource: 'Ana Ahlam' - a 15-minute documentary film depicting the lives of Palestinian women victims of gender-based violence in refugee camps in Lebanon.

Ana Ahlam is based on a play that that is a story. ABAAD through this resource tries to raise awareness and empower women about their rights, and to speak up against violence.

Ana Ahlaam is the first ever documentary made by the Palestinian refugee community themselves. This is what makes this documentary so real, as it makes it more likely to reach the audience and combat GBV in the community. To watch the documentary:

<http://youtu.be/lkR9MSl52Nc>



GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Egypt: "They want to marry us at nine years old. Are these really the kind of men we want to run our country? Paedophiles?"

Women who stood shoulder to shoulder with men during the 2011 Tahrir Square protests that brought down Hosni Mubarak found their position in society undermined almost immediately. The parliamentary quota for women was removed without debate and a promised female vice-president failed to materialise, amid what political commentator Moushira Khattab called "a radical anti-feminist sentiment". Morsi threatened but stopped short of decriminalising Egypt's practice of female genital mutilation, carried out on almost three-quarters of Egyptian girls, making it clear he would not tackle an issue he called "a family matter".

The new constitution has swept away recognition of women's rights and left the door open to the legalisation of perhaps Egypt's most crippling social issue - underage marriage. Draft legislation that would allow the legal age of marriage to be lowered from 18 to 13 has been drawn up while clerics within the Muslim Brotherhood have indicated that marriage at the age of nine for girls is acceptable.

"They see women as, number one, objects of sex and, number two, to clean their floors. This is what the Egyptian 'brotherhood' is all about," said Fatma, 24, an engineering graduate marching with her friends, some in burqas, some in headscarves. The women keep close together, arms linked and eyes alert for the men flying down the side of the demonstration on motorcycles grabbing and screaming at females. "They want to marry us at nine years old. Are these really the kind of men we want to run our country? Paedophiles?" Political progress has been slow, with parliamentary elections scheduled for April now postponed with no new date. Frustrations have built. "They are like a pack of dogs, tearing out the weakest first, raping and harassing the women and the girls, getting rid of them, and then fighting among themselves to be pack leader," said Aya Kadry, 62. Around Cairo hundreds of tower blocks are being built, extending the Arab world's largest city leg by leg into the desert. This is where the vast majority of Egypt's women are already living the constrained lives that the educated and middle-classes fear will be imposed by a radical government. Child marriage is common, the norm among the poor. Doctors are bribed to sign documents asserting a 14-year-old is 18 but most people don't have the money so marriages go ahead without registration. Underage girls then have children who, essentially illegal, cannot have their births registered. Without papers those children cannot

attend school, encasing a whole new generation in poverty. In the poor district of Ezbet Khairallah 10 women are sitting around a metal cash box, holding the weekly meeting of their savings and loans group. Set up by the charity [Plan Egypt](#), it encourages women to squirrel away a few coins when they can and to discuss problems. "We do not really have time to talk to our neighbours, there is a great burden of things to do in the home and for some of us our husbands do not like us to go out of doors, although we have convinced them we should meet for this social fund because it



will help all the family," said Seham Ahmed, 38, who is taking the opportunity to show the group how to make a basic liquid soap. "I was married at 14," she said, thumping a stick round a battered bucket and most of the women around her nod. "Pulled out of school one day and married that night. I hope my daughters can wait a little while but it's quite difficult for girls who are not married at an early age to find a good man later and there is a lot of pressure. And fathers want girls gone because it is one mouth less to feed."

Asmaa Mohamed Fawzy is 21. She was engaged but her family allowed her to break it off when her best friend died in childbirth aged 16. "I liked having the ring but I was only 15 and didn't know any better. When Aya died it was a miserable tragedy and I'm very lucky that my mum agreed with me I should not get married. I get teased and bullied. They shout I am not pretty enough, why am I the ugly one, but I do not want to die or to have children who cannot go to school. It is probably too late for me now and I'm sad I won't have children."

Her mother, Naghzaky Abdalla, 47, also endures being shunned by her neighbours. "When her friend died I too made up my mind. We only have one so we can afford to protect her. A neighbour had died at 15 of bleeding: the doctors wouldn't treat her because she was married illegally and they don't want to get involved. The girls' bodies are not ready for childbirth and they are not ready for sexual relations which makes their husbands impatient with them.

"Three girls in our street stay indoors now for ever because their husbands divorced them. If they cannot prove they were married and they are not virgins then they cannot get married again so they are shunned. Many are divorced because of course these girls are too young to understand what marriage means, she is still a child. In our community, though, a girl should be married before she is 16, maximum."

Mrs Gihan, 45, a community activist with strong views, is fervently for the lowering the age of marriage to 13 in law. "We must do this," she said. "Because all the unregistered children who cannot go to school need to be helped. These girls are denied healthcare, their children are denied a future. They have already decreased the legal age of work from 14 to 12 and I think this age too should be lowered. When Mubarak listened to international pressure and raised the age to 18 it changed nothing here. If you decree a legal age then you simply criminalise and marginalise. Men leave their wives before they turn 18 and their

children are seen as being born into prostitution. We will raise awareness and stop child marriage this way." The stench of human waste coming from the river in another poor Cairo district, Manial Sheiha, is overpowering. The streets of packed earth are quiet with only children to be seen.

Nawal Rashid opens her door but remains on one side of the deep concrete threshold that she cannot cross - or allow visitors to cross - without her 70-year-old husband's permission. He is at work. Her three-year-old son plays behind her and she insists she married at 18 - which makes her 21 now - but her neighbours all say she was 14. "I accepted the older man to help my family as there were four other children and my parents are very poor. I am quite content and happy to have sacrificed myself for my family."

Next door is Etab, 19. She has two children and has returned to stay with her despairing mother Nearnat, 42, her ageing father and her three siblings.

"We thought by marrying her we would get her a better life," said Nearnat. "Now she is divorced because he was a bad man. She refuses to get married again because then her ex-husband would take the children and now her younger sister is begging me not to go ahead with her marriage. I regret that my daughter was married young because now if she leaves the house her reputation will be ruined. The community all tease me."

Outside in the street a group of young men explain why they want to marry young brides. "Children need to have their rights but also you want to marry a girl who is much younger so she will stay young and beautiful when you are old. Also you can control her better and make sure she is not one of these girls who goes around wanting to be harassed," said Abdel Rahman, 17. His friend Youssef, 20, agrees. "There are many girls who just want to be harassed, walking around in the streets with their eyes uncovered."

Their views are not a surprise to Mona Hussein Wasef, 26, who works for [Plan Egypt in Cairo](#). "For 18 days we were in Tahrir Square, side by side, men and women, educated and uneducated, rich and poor. Never have I felt so much solidarity. I was Egypt, we were all Egypt, fighting for freedom, shoulder to shoulder," she said. She is too fearful to attend any political demonstrations these days.

"Now we have never been so far apart, men and women. In such a short time, such a gulf. Now we are fighting just for the right to walk down the street without being assaulted. It is so hard, so shocking. To see the rights we had being ripped away and lost in the power struggle. To see us go backwards." For more information follow the link <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/mar/31/egypt-cairo-women-rights-revolution>

Child Protection a Low Priority in Indonesia

Last year, 12-year-old Riri was sent from her village in Central Java to live with her uncle and aunt two provinces away, in Jakarta, the capital. Over a period of four months, she was repeatedly raped by her uncle, who threatened to kill her and possess her with evil spirits if she reported the abuse. He then forced her to become a sex worker.

For two weeks, Riri was forced to charge US\$21 per sexual encounter in East Jakarta, according to the head of the shelter where she is now recovering. After fleeing from her uncle's house, she happened to rest mid-escape near the home of a local community leader, who brought her to the government-run shelter.

The extent of such abuses is unknown, Basuni said. Even if they are reported, they rarely make it up to the national level for recording. Efforts to protect children in Indonesia from abuse are obstructed by barriers to crime reporting, which may worsen with the threatened closure of police-run units that handle crimes against women and children.

Usman Basuni, assistant deputy minister for child participation at the Women Empowerment and Child Protection Ministry, told IRIN these specialized police units - known by their local

acronym, PPA - are at risk of closing because crimes against women and children are rarely reported, which has led police to shift their resources elsewhere.

According to the National Commission for the Protection of Children (Komnas PA), a child-rights NGO based in the capital, Jakarta, there were 2,637 reports of domestic abuse against children in 2012, up from 2,509 the previous year.

World Vision's child protection specialist in Indonesia, Pitoyo Susanto, said child abuse is severely underreported, what he called an "iceberg phenomenon", because of the public's view of child abuse as something to be resolved in the home.

"People still believe it's a private thing," said Susanto. "If neighbours know what's going on next door, they won't intervene. Even in the cases that are reported, we see that the abuse has been going on for years."

And should family members or survivors make a public claim, they risk being stigmatized, said Santi Kusumaningrum, co-director of the Centre on Child Protection at the University of Indonesia (UI). "Families have been asked to move out of villages by the rest of the community, with schools even refusing to accept the child." In addition, Kusumaningrum said parents often turn to violence when disciplining their children. "The



only way many parents know to deal with their children, if their child is misbehaving, is to hit them," she said. Influencing parent behaviours at the national level is near impossible, said the government's Basuni.

"When the government says 'don't beat your child', parents say it's their business, and the number of people who think this way is huge," he said. "The ministry doesn't have enough resources to make 240 million people aware of this issue." To read more about this issue follow the link <http://www.irinnews.org/Report/97800/Child-protection-a-low-priority-in-Indonesia>

Slow Enforcement of Laws on Women's Rights in Morocco

The girl at the police station in Marrakesh said she was not sure how old she was, 13 or maybe 14. Sitting on a chair in the unit that processes youth cases, she told a chilling account of being gang raped, and said she had no relatives willing to shelter her.

She gave conflicting statements and when she was finished speaking with two male police officers, no one was clear on what had really happened. There were only two consistent elements in her testimony: that her first name was Amal and that she was pregnant. Like many unmarried girls in Morocco, she would be afraid to admit to having had a sexual relationship because of the social stigma but also because it is illegal to have sex outside of marriage. Last year, 16-year-old Amina Filali committed suicide after a judge and her parents forced her to marry her alleged rapist, causing a national and international uproar. In 2004, Morocco changed its code of family law, shifting away from Islamic principles by giving more rights to women regarding divorce and polygamy, and raising the minimum marriage age for women to 18 from 15. But conservative judges have been finding ways around the law. Courts have granted special dispensation for minors to marry in 90 percent of the cases that have appeared before them, according to 2010 data reported by the Justice Ministry. And while human rights groups are urging Moroccan leaders to further reinforce women's rights, amending the penal code remains a sensitive issue. While the

government has ratified international treaties on human rights, its own laws do not yet conform, a situation that has led to protests, human rights groups say. In Amal's case, the police officers who questioned her late last month were extremely gentle. The presence of Najat Oulami, a member of the women's advocacy group Al Amane, seemed to help. "We help women navigate the system and make sure that every woman that comes to our offices asking for our help is treated well by the authorities," Ms. Oulami said. "We took Amal to our shelter, we gave her clothes and fed her. But she is a minor, we cannot take on the responsibility and the authorities need to deal with her case." Because Al Amane cannot shelter minors, Amal was sent to a different shelter, and her whereabouts are now unclear. To avoid more tragedies like the Filali suicide, rights groups say that Morocco must change Article 475 in its penal code, which allows for a charge to be dropped in cases of statutory rape if the two parties get married. One interpretation of this provision has allowed rapists to swap the charges against them for a wedding ring and a child bride. "The problem is, many judges are very conservative," Ms. Oulami said, "and they believe that it is better to save the girl's honor by giving their permission to let minors get married." Al Amane is one of several groups throughout Morocco working with Global Rights, a nongovernmental organization that aims to help women get more access to the justice system. A grant from the Netherlands has led to the creation of a Web site called Marsadnissa, or Women's Observatory, where judicial decisions are listed as a sort of database to help women's rights lawyers across Morocco argue the law more effectively. This kind of tracking mechanism is crucial, rights advocates say. "Judges don't know how cases are being decided across the country – there is no systematic collection and publication of court decisions at the local level," said Stephanie Willman Bordat, an American who is the Global Rights director for the Maghreb region of North Africa. "We'd like to see greater consistency in court decisions and greater protection of women's rights by the judiciary." In January, the Justice Ministry issued a statement saying it was in favor of abrogating Article 475 and human rights groups are confident it will be struck down by Parliament. The Islamist-led government, however, is not showing much impetus to act. "The pressure of civil society has already created an impact: It has become impossible now to marry a girl under the age of 16," Kachane Belcaide, a lawyer in the northeastern city of Khemisset, said last month. Still, "the current government seems to be divided," he added. "There is no sign that a special law on violence against women will be put forward." Observers say that any changes undertaken by Morocco will not mean much as long as there is not a strong and independent judiciary to apply the law. In fact, Moroccan judges themselves are demanding changes to the family code. In August 2011, judges formed the association of Moroccan judges, which now has 3,700 members, to protest judicial corruption and interference by the executive branch, which they say undermines their independence. Aziz Nizar, a judge and former president of the association, said initiatives like Marsadnissa would help change the system. "There are many ways to interpret a law," he said. "I frequently go on the Web site, read the decisions and am inspired by them. Sometimes I even enter comments and give my opinion on some cases." Despite the various initiatives, the biggest obstacle to advancing protections for girls seems to be the prevailing mentality in Morocco about women and their place in society. A recent [online documentary](#) about the rape law, "475: Trêve de Silence," in which Moroccans of all ages and from different parts of society were interviewed on pre-marital sex and rape, showed a clear consensus that a girl who had lost her virginity had lost her value. "A woman should stay at home and only go out to run errands," one man said in the documentary, suggesting that a rape victim was responsible because she put herself in danger. "She shouldn't be wandering around the streets." Even some women in the film said they believed that was normal for men to desire women. As one teenager put it: "The man is never guilty."

For more information follow the link <http://www.siawi.org/article5471.html>

Sexual Violence Against Women & Gang Rape - Analysis of the Egyptian case

With this paper, Nazra for Feminist Studies offers a feminist theoretical attempt to understand the rise of sexual violence against women over the past few months. We believe that it is important to raise this issue so that different political actors, even well intentioned ones, do not exploit women's concerns. We also wish to contribute to a debate that is currently underway on this sensitive issue based on our past experiences in combating violence against women. We welcome such a discussion, having long been advocates of the importance of a feminist debate on violence against women in general. This had always been our position whether through our advocacy efforts in combating violence against women, or supporting women human rights defenders all over Egypt, or through our attempts to link feminist issues to politics by supporting female candidates for office of various political leanings who



believe in women's issues, and place them at the top of their agendas. On the positive side, new stirrings of a feminist consciousness is emerging and taking shape day after day, constituting an integral part of the current political ferment in Egypt. This is best demonstrated by the fierce counterattack on the social and political gains made by Egyptian women—but we are also witnessing a comprehensive assault on women, one that is most clearly manifested in violence against them, particularly sexual violence. More information and to read the paper follow the link <http://nazra.org/en/2013/02/position-paper-sexual-violence-against-women-and-increasing-frequency-gang-rape-tahrir>

GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS

Syrian Refugee Women Marry for Family Survival -Matchmaker jobs on the rise

Nezar's face is tight with expectation as she arrives for the meeting. She is a heavy-set mother of 12 and as she arranges herself on the small sofa in Um Majed's living room she removes her black veil and the pious black gloves that allow her to shake hands with men who are not her relatives.

Um Majed sets down small cups of hot Turkish coffee to ease the tension. Nezar is a Syrian refugee and looking for a husband for her daughter. She lists the girl's qualities.

"She is tall and pretty," she tells Um Majed. "She finished the seventh grade."

"There is one available. He is Saudi," Um Majed answers.

This is what Nezar wants to hear. Saudis, flush with petrodollars, will pay well. She has high hopes for this Saudi.

So does Um Majed who will earn a \$287 fee if the two sides agree to the match.

Um Majed, 28, is also a Syrian refugee, a former housewife from Homs. Um Majed isn't her actual name but a respectable Arab moniker meaning 'mother of Majed,' her young son. She doesn't want her full name published because of her shame about what she does for a living: procuring brides, some as young as 12, for men as old as 70 from all over the Middle East in exchange for money.

Nezar too was a homemaker in Homs who arrived in Jordan last year. Her husband was a taxi driver but he can no longer work because he has a heart condition. Her son is badly injured.

"He was a fighter with the resistance army and they were removing a roadblock the regime set up on the street when he was hit by a missile," she explains. "Four others died. He has had three surgeries and needs another one."

Her daughter Aya is their best hope.

“My daughter is willing to sacrifice herself for her family,” Nezar says. “If the war had not happened I would not marry my daughter to a Saudi. But the Syrians here are poor and have no money.”

Nezar’s daughter is 17. The Saudi groom is 70.

Stories of men fighting and dying to overthrow President Bashar Assad’s regime have fixated the world but for women the war has different, troubling dimensions. Syrian women and their children make up 75 per cent of the 429,000 refugees in Jordan. The vast majority do not live in the camps set up by the Jordanian authorities. They flood into cities like Amman where they live on the charity of kindly Jordanians and aid organizations.

Many of these women are not equipped to support their families, having been raised to keep the home and hearth while husbands and fathers provided for them. The true cost of how the war is ripping apart the nation is evident in the brutal life choices Syrian women are forced to make to survive.

Grasping for the security of a husband and home, hundreds of girls are being sold into early marriage. These are undoubtedly forced

marriages but the truth has several shades of grey: some mothers believe they are protecting their daughters from further hardship and violence, others are desperate to pay the bills. Yet their voices are rarely heard because their lives are lived behind closed doors, their private tragedies not shared with outsiders.



“If you see how Syrians here live you will see why they marry their daughters to whoever will take them,” Um Majed says. “People are poor and they will do anything to pay the rent.”

The surplus of desperate Syrian refugees means marriage has become a buyer’s market with some grooms offering as little as \$100 cash for a bride.

The legal age of marriage in Jordan is 18 but some religious clerics will marry underage girls for a small fee. This puts the girls at even greater risk for exploitation because some of Um Majed’s clients want a temporary union lasting a few weeks or months after which the girl is returned to her parents.

In other words, it is religiously sanctioned prostitution.

“One of my brides has been married three, four times,” Um Majed says. “She is 15.”

Yet Nezar believes she is saving Aya from a life of hardship. What are her daughter’s prospects in Jordan where she has no right to work? There is little hope of the war ending and returning home. She will soon become a burden on her parents. No, a life in Saudi Arabia with a husband who can provide a home and children, perhaps send money back to Jordan, is the answer. She admits the marriage market is hazardous. Most of the potential grooms offer a few dollars to leer at her daughter. “You are already selling your daughter, you might as well sell her to someone decent,” she says. Nezar cuts the meeting short. Aya is having belly-dancing lessons to increase her appeal to the elderly groom. “I will take

3,000 dinars (\$4,300) from him,” she tells Um Majed. “If he was younger I would accept 2,000 dinars.” Read more

http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/03/22/young_brides_displaced_by_syria_conflict_sought_by_older_grooms.html

Ban Lifted for Women on Bicycles But with Restrictions in Saudi Arabia

A Saudi newspaper says the kingdom's religious police are now allowing women to ride motorbikes and bicycles but only in restricted, recreational areas

The *Al-Yawm* daily on Monday cited an unnamed official from the powerful religious police as saying women can ride bikes in parks and recreational areas but they have to be accompanied by a male relative and dressed in the full Islamic head-to-toe abaya.

Saudi Arabia follows an ultraconservative interpretation of Islam and bans women from driving. Women are also banned from riding motorcycles or bicycles in public places. The newspaper didn't say what triggered the lifting of the ban.

The official says women may not use the bikes for transportation but "only for entertainment" and that they should shun places where young men gather "to avoid harassment." To have more information <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/saudi-religious-police-lift-ban-on-women-on-bikes>

OIC Islamic States SG Message on International Women's Day 2013

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation joins the International Community in observing 08 March, the International Day of Women. It is indeed important for the international community to take cognizance of the chosen theme for this year, "A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women". It seeks to strengthen and make good on the international community's commitment to put an end to violence against women. The theme is also in consonance with the aspirations of the Islamic Ummah towards promoting the social welfare and well-being of women in OIC Member States.

Women comprise half the population in OIC Member States and the cause of seeking their advancement



and participation in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres constitutes an imperative. Muslim women and indeed women of the world are faced with a host of daunting challenges and issues that continue to impede their overall development. Our efforts must remain focused at removing discrimination against women and addressing such impediments. This would require a determined, sustained and committed collective effort to devote our energies and resources towards bring women into the mainstream of the societies by creating conditions that would facilitate with regard to playing their due role as partners in development. Their legitimate claims and demands for equal treatment, access to opportunities, role in affairs of the state including policy and decision making and protection from violence and abuse must be met.

Upon the assumption of office as Secretary General in 2005, I took the initiative of holding the first ever OIC Ministerial Meeting on Women in Istanbul. This meeting sent a strong message both within and outside the OIC, of our seriousness to address the issues and challenges faced by Muslim women. In the following meeting, held in Cairo in 2008, a landmark document known as OIC Plan of Action for Advancement of Women or OPAAW was adopted to provide the long awaited road map for the advancement of women and to ensure their participation in development and decision making. The same Meeting also

decided on the establishment of Women Development Organization in Cairo with a view to institutionalizing the implementation of OPAAW.

Women in OIC Member States are and have been holding high positions as Heads of Government, Cabinet Ministers, Parliamentarians, Ambassadors and civil and military bureaucracy. Much, however, remains to be done and OPAAW has afforded the opportunity to make targeted interventions to that end. The OIC, with the support of the international community and within the framework of OPAAW, is ready to act in areas like violence against women, female genital mutilation, improving girl's education, role of women in peace, security and reconciliation, as well as to promoting women's effective participation in addressing the socio-economic development challenges of our world. More information http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/04_13/04_01/040113_oic.htm

Arab Women's Progress & Challenges with Patriarchy

On the sideline of an April 2 conference hosted by Columbia University Law School, Shirin Ebadi, who in 2003 became the first Muslim woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, briefly discussed the consequences of the Arab uprisings on women with Women's eNews. The Iranian lawyer's answers were translated from Persian by her translator Shirin Ershadi.

Q: The Arab uprisings brought hope when they started in Tunisia. We now see that women's rights are endangered. Have these uprisings been a good thing for Arab/Muslim women?

A: It has been good, but not enough. The voice of Arab women has been heard and that's why I am saying it has been good; but unfortunately some countries want to retract the rights that women gained in the past. I am very glad that women are resisting. Women will only attain their rights when they learn how to resist dictators and oppressors.

Q: What is the main obstacle for women's rights in these societies?

A: I think it's the patriarchal culture. The patriarchal culture uses everything to legitimize itself. In Islamic countries, they interpret Islam in such a way that it is against women, whereas Islam has a different interpretation. With a correct interpretation of Islam, we can respect women's rights.

Q: The Arab uprisings seem to have energized women to fight for their rights. Can we say that we are witnessing a rebirth of the Islamic feminism?

A: I have issues with "Islamic feminism." Feminism means equality of rights between men and women. Then, it is not Islamic. However, a Muslim woman can be a feminist.

Q: Speaking of feminism, we have lately witnessed extreme manifestations of feminism in Muslim-dominated countries, such as the ones inspired by the Ukrainian group Femen. Last month, a young Tunisian woman posted topless pictures of herself online with the words "my body is mine, nobody's honor" written across her breasts and stomach. What is your take on this type of expression?



A: Here, the issue is the issue of freedom. People have to be free to do what they want to do. Of course, freedom is not unlimited and the limit of everyone's freedom is the freedom of others. Therefore, if one's freedom doesn't hurt the other person we cannot limit it.

Q: In 2009, after the contested reelection of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iranians took to the street but their attempt to defy the regime resulted in a huge crackdown. Can the Arab uprisings be an inspiration for the Iranians who want change?

A: What I can tell you is every day the number of those who oppose the government increases. Iran is like a volcano, any minute the lava may come out. So wait and see what happens.

Opposition to Sanctions

During the Columbia University law conference, Ebadi reiterated her opposition to economic sanctions against Iran for its nuclear program.

The lawyer, who in 1970 became Iran's first female judge, lives in exile in London and fiercely opposes the current Iranian regime. But she said economic sanctions "affect Iranian people and increase the corruption within the government." Instead she recommended "political sanctions" that would "specifically target" members of the regime and "third countries where Iranian officials enter and have assets."

She suggested, for example, to "target international satellites that broadcast Iranian propaganda in non-Persian languages." She said that today in Iran "16 TV stations hold propaganda of Iran in non-Persian." She also recommended sanctioning companies that provide the Iranian government with technology used for repression.

Shirin Ebadi is well-known for her defense of human rights, particularly those of women and children. At an April 2 awards dinner, she received the Wolfgang Friedmann Memorial Award from the **Columbia Journal of Transnational Law**. Since 1975, the prize has honored outstanding contributions to the field of international law. Ebadi was also honored as a Women's eNews 21 leaders for the 21st Century in 2004. To know more about the issue http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/04_13/04_01/040113_shirin.htm

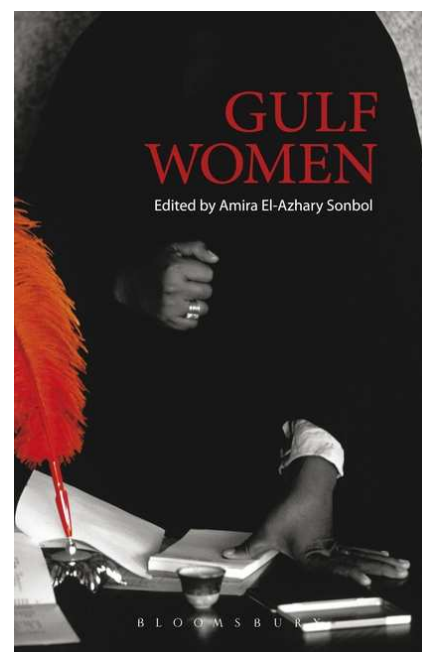
RESOURCES & CALLS

BOOKS & REPORTS

Gulf Women - Essays Collection

This ground-breaking collection of fifteen essays provides a greater understanding of the history of the Gulf and the Arab world as well as the history of Muslim women.

The result of a project aimed at finding sources and studying the history of women in the region, the articles are presented thematically and chronologically, starting with ancient history, and moving on to the medieval, early modern and contemporary periods. They present discourses regarding the life of women in early Islam, considering women's work and the diversity of jobs they performed as part of their economic contribution, the family, the legal system, and laws dealing with women and family from the pre-modern to the modern periods. For more information, please click <http://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/gulf-women-9781780930435/>

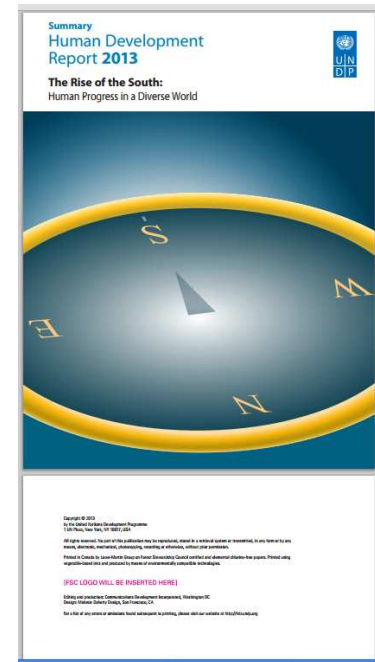


2013 Human Development Report - UNDP - Gender Inequality Index, The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World

The 2013 Human Development Report identifies more than 40 developing countries that have done better than expected in human development in recent decades, with their progress accelerating markedly over the past 10 years.

"The 2013 Human Development Report: The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World, looks at the evolving geopolitics of our times, examining emerging issues and trends and also the new actors which are shaping the development landscape."....."The 2013 Report identifies four specific areas of focus for sustaining development momentum: enhancing equity, including on the gender dimension; enabling greater voice and participation of citizens, including youth; confronting environmental pressures; and managing demographic change.".....

"Greater equity, including between men and women and across groups, is not only valuable in itself, but also essential for promoting human development. One of the most powerful instruments for this purpose is education, which boosts people's self-confidence and makes it easier for them to find better jobs, to engage in public debate and make demands on government for health care, social security, and other entitlements." Direct Link to Full 28-Page Report: http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR2013_EN_Summary.pdf

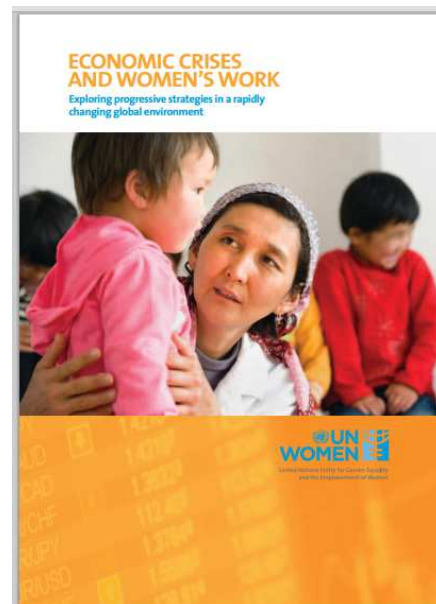


Economic Crises & Women's Work - Progressive Strategies

This document examines issues of women's employment and decent work in the context of the on-going global financial and economic crisis. Recognizing that financial and economic crises affect men and women workers differently for various reasons, it considers the implications of the crisis for women workers in formal, informal and unpaid activities.

Analysis of some specific regional crises shows how crisis response strategies can have different impacts depending on how gender sensitive they are. Additionally, it shows how policy responses that take into account the differentiated impact on women workers are more likely to result in sustained and equitable recovery.

Findings illustrate that the macro and sectoral policy responses to the East Asian crisis of 1997-98 as well as the ongoing crisis in the eurozone have adverse effects for women workers and consequent implications for the macroeconomics of adjustment and recovery. To read the publication follow the link <http://www.unwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Economic-crises-and-womens-work.pdf>



Women's Collective Action: Potential of Agricultural Markets

Development actors are increasingly prioritising 'investing in women' to ensure food security and sustainability—as well as equity—in agricultural development. In this context, collective action is a critical but poorly understood way for women small-scale farmers to strengthen their engagement in agricultural markets. This report provides rigorous new evidence, from quantitative and qualitative research carried out in Ethiopia, Mali and Tanzania, on the economic and empowerment benefits of women's participation in collective action groups across different agricultural farming systems and markets.

The success factors and intervention strategies that have enabled women to benefit most are analysed in order to identify lessons for the future. The research highlights gaps in both current development practice and the wider policy environment which need to be addressed to ensure that collective action in agricultural markets is effective and empowering for rural women.



Direct Link to Full 90-Page Oxfam Publication:
<http://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/oxfam/bitstream/10546/276159/1/rr-womens-collective-action-unlocking-potential-africa-agriculture-270312-en.pdf>

A Tool for Promoting Gender Equality in the Workplace

Gender Equality principles: Organizations will take concrete steps to attain gender equality by adopting and implementing policies and practices in seven key areas:

1. Employment and compensation.

Policies that eliminate gender discrimination in areas such as recruitment, hiring, pay, and promotion.

2. Work-life balance and career development. Policies that enable work-life balance and support educational, career, and vocational development.

3. Health, safety, and freedom from violence. Policies to secure the health, safety, and well-being of female workers.

4. Management and governance. Policies to ensure equitable participation in management and governance.

5. Business, supply chain, and marketing practices. Non-discriminatory business, supply chain, contracting, and marketing policies.

6. Civic and community engagement. Policies to promote equitable participation in civic life and to eliminate all forms of discrimination and exploitation.

7. Leadership, transparency, and accountability. Policies that are publicly disclosed, monitored, and enforced that display active commitment from top leadership. For more information http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/04_13/04_08/040813_gender2.htm

The screenshot shows the 'gender equality principles' website. At the top, it says 'A tool for promoting equality in your workplace'. Below the navigation bar, there's a 'Search Resources' section with a search bar and a list of results. The results include 'Employment and Compensation', 'Work-Life Balance and Career Development', 'Health, Safety and Freedom from Violence', 'Business, Supply Chain, and Marketing Practices', and 'Leadership, Transparency and Accountability'. There are also buttons for 'Assess your workplace', 'Search Resources', and 'Who's Involved in this?'. On the right side, there's a 'GENDER EQUALITY NEWS' section with a date 'April 25: Gender Equality Council Meeting' and a 'Successful Launch of the Gender Equality Challenge' section with a photo of a group of people.

COMMEMORATION

To commemorate the life and work of feminist and women's human rights activist, Sindi Medar-Gould

It is with great sadness that we hear of the passing of Sindi Medar-Gould, a life-long feminist and women's human rights activist. Sindi possessed a wonderful combination of passion and calm, and was often the 'voice of reason' and determination. Sindi was actively involved in Women Living Under Muslim Laws (WLUML) for a number of years, in particular as a trainer at our Feminist Leadership Institutes.

Sindi was the Executive Director of the Nigeria-based organization, BAOBAB, which grew out of WLUML's 'Women and Law' program between 1993 and 1996. From this time BAOBAB has continued to be a key part of WLUML's network.

Sindi dedicated her life to the women's rights movement and worked relentlessly to attain gender justice and equality. Her commitment, hard work, and jovial nature inspired many that crossed her path and worked alongside her. Even with her passing, Sindi will continue to move and inspire us.

'Sindi was always passionate, but somehow always calm. She has touched and inspired many.' (Zarizana Abdul Aziz, International Human Rights Lawyer and WLUML Board Chair)

'Sindi offered love, determination and experience to many young feminists. We crossed paths many times and she was always resourceful.' (Doaa Abdelaal, WLUML Board Member)

'Sindi was a passionate and committed leader, a voice of reason and positivity.' (Anthonia Onwordi, WLUML International Coordination Office)

WLUML is grateful for the years of Sindi's wisdom. Our hearts go out to her family at this difficult time. <http://www.wluml.org/news/commemorate-life-and-work-sindi-medar-gould>



ANNOUNCEMENT

Unpaid Work, Poverty & Women's Human Rights

The UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, invites States, United Nations departments and agencies, national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders to send contributions to the report in the form of

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

research studies, reports and examples of relevant policies or programming. Please send contributions in English, Spanish or French, in MS Word document, PDF or compatible format to: srextremepoverty@ohchr.org

At the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly (October 2013), the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, will submit a report concerning unpaid work, in particular unpaid care work and women's human rights.

Unpaid care underpins all societies, contributing to well-being, social development and economic growth. It involves domestic tasks (such as meal preparation, cleaning, washing clothes, collecting water and fuel) and direct care of persons (including children, older persons and persons with disabilities) carried out in homes and communities. It is estimated that if unpaid care work were assigned a monetary value it would constitute between 10 and 39 per cent of GDP. However, it is generally unrecognised and under-valued by policy-makers and legislators.

How societies address care has far-reaching implications for gender relations, power relations and inequalities, as well as human rights enjoyment. The costs and burdens of care are unequally borne across gender and class: care is predominantly done by women and girls, and research shows that the time and difficulty of engaging in unpaid care work are linked to levels of poverty.

Heavy and unequal care burdens may curtail the enjoyment of human rights by women and girls, including their rights to education, work, social security and participation, as well as to rest and leisure. Systematically unequal distribution of care work and household chores between women and men also raises concerns in terms of the right to equality and non-discrimination and the obligations of States in this regard. Inadequate State policies and practices regarding unpaid care may also undermine or violate women's rights to the highest attainable standard of health and an adequate standard of living. In addition, when care work is not adequately recognised or supported by the State, the rights of those who rely on care provision for their health, life and wellbeing may also be violated. To read the full announcement follow the link

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Poverty/Pages/UnpaidWork.aspx>

Women's Platform for Peace on Women, Peace & Security for Libya

In view of the leading role of Libyan women in the February 15th revolution, and in recognition of the great sacrifices made by the Libyan people in their quest for freedom, dignity and rights for both men and women, we regret to have noted systematic cases of human rights violations especially against women. Generally speaking, such abuse is either condoned as being in the name of the revolution, or given religious credence, although unsanctioned by moderate Islam. On account of this, many human rights activists and civil society organizations have come together to monitor this situation and make recommendations on combating such abuse to be submitted to the official authorities.

Amongst the major **violations** observed are in the following areas:

1. In the first drafting of the Election Law which completely overlooked any representation for women, even the minimal 10% quota. The argument presented was lack of requirements for equality. Any women representation seen today is the outcome of civil pressure that led to the change of the Law.
2. Dismissing Sara Al-Meslaty, a media professional who was assigned to host the ceremony for the handover of power to the National Congress, the highest legislative power, on account that she was not wearing the veil.
3. Refusal by the Ministry of the Wounded to treat raped women as victims of the liberation war.
4. Depriving women the right to join the military institution by a decision from the Chief of Staff.
5. Negligence on part of the Executive as regards women police officers, thus adversely impacting female prisoners and depriving them any care.
6. Refrainment by the executive bodies to condemn



violence against women and bringing the perpetrators to justice, as in the following incidents:

- Security officers in Beninah airport in Benghazi harassed Sanaa Al-Mansouri, a media figure, because she was not wearing the veil.
 - Harassment by officers in the fourth security support unit in Tripoli of Aicha Al-Maghrabi, a university professor and writer, because she was travelling in a car with her driver, unchaperoned by a *Mehrem*.
 - A group of armed men broke into a women's forum and forcibly pulled out Magdoline Ebeidah, a civil activist, and abducted her. The women who were present at this forum were intimidated and threatened. Presently, this activist has received political asylum in the UK.
 - The guards of the National Congress attacked Mona Al-Bakoush, a civil activist. This, in addition to the threats to many female activists and media professionals.
 - Verbal abuse by a deputy of the National Congress targeting female Congress members in a plenary. The argument was that they wore make up, dressed indecently and mingled with men.
7. The Supreme Constitutional Court amended the law governing marriage and divorce. And based on an interim constitutional declaration, has removed the restriction on polygamy, without waiting for the promulgation of the permanent constitution and the amendment of the personal status law in a comprehensive manner, thus ensuring adequate safeguards to all parties to the contract, including the children.
8. The State's negative response viz-a-viz the assassinations and the crimes against human rights. Instead, we see all these politicized *fatwas* (legal opinion based on Islamic Law) which overlook such violations and only call for and advocate to prevent raising any demands of the legitimate rights, which constitute one major principle of February 17th revolution. This is manifested in the following instances:
- Neglect of those who died on duty and the wounded security and army men.
 - Lack of seriousness in the investigations and final judgments, thus leading to increased rumours; which consequently lead to a state of lawlessness.

Recommendations:

1. Promoting religious discourse in a manner that highlights human rights and ensures human freedom and dignity. To read all the recommendations follow the link http://www.wunrn.com/news/2013/04_13/04_01/040113_libya.htm

G8 nations pledge action to halt sexual violence in war

"Rape is not a women's issue or a humanitarian issue -- it's a global issue."

So said Hollywood star and U.N. special envoy for refugees Angelina Jolie, standing with foreign ministers from the G8 nations in London as they pledged action Thursday to end sexual violence in conflict.

The Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, endorsed by the G8 nations -- Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, Britain and the United States -- commits them to taking greater steps to help the victims of sexual violence in war, prevent further attacks and hold perpetrators to account.

UK Foreign Secretary William Hague said the plans would help end "the horrific use of rape and sexual violence as a weapon of war in conflicts around the globe."

He drew a parallel with the efforts made to end the global slave trade, tackle climate change and agree to an international arms trade treaty -- the last having been achieved just last week at the United Nations.

"Today we know the facts about sexual violence in conflict and we have the means to address it, so we must not look away or rest until the world faces up to its responsibilities," he said.

Rape and serious sexual violence in conflict are grave breaches of the Geneva Convention, as well as being war crimes, Hague said. This means states have a responsibility to find those accused of such crimes and bring them to justice.

Under the declaration, the G8 nations agreed to draw up protocols on international standards for the investigation of rape and sexual violence and ensuring access to justice for survivors.

They will work together to raise awareness of the issue, which affects predominantly girls and women but also men and boys.

They also promised to boost support services for the victims, especially children, including health care, legal aid and counseling.

The agreement followed a meeting with the U.N. envoy on sexual violence in conflict, Zainab Bangura.

Together, the nations pledged nearly \$36 million in additional funds to help end sexual violence.

Jolie, speaking alongside Hague and Bangura, said the declaration was welcome, but "long overdue" for the survivors of sexual violence.

For more information follow the link http://edition.cnn.com/2013/04/11/world/uk-g8-sexual-violence/index.html?hpt=hp_t3



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