

Issue #154

Collective for Research and Training on Development. Action  
Middle East & North Africa Gender And Development Electronic Brief

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## In Algeria, Women 'Imams' Battle Islamist Radicalisation



Hundreds of female religious guides have been at the forefront of Algeria's battle against Islamic radicalization since the civil war that devastated the North African country in the 1990s.

Their aim is to steer women away from false preachers promoting radical forms of Islam.

The surge of the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq, and even in Libya next door, as well as the growing influence of Al-Qaeda-linked militants and Salafists, has them working around the clock.

Known as "mourshidates," their goal is to spread the good word of Islam and a message of tolerance, helping those who have strayed from it.

"Killing is a capital sin, so how is it that people can kill innocent ones in the name of Islam," asks Fatma Zohra, who is in her mid-40s, her hair and neck concealed under a matching purple veil and a hijab.

Like the other 300 mourshidates appointed by the religious affairs ministry, Zohra holds a degree in Islam and has learned the Koran by heart.

Read more:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/169476-in-algeria-women-imams-battle-islamist-radicalisation>

## After Decades of Conflict, Israeli Women Say 'Enough'



As Israel readies for a general election, the issue of peace with the Palestinians has been noticeably absent from debate. But a group of women is seeking to change that.

Braving intermittent rain to stand for hours outside Israel's parliament building in Jerusalem this week, thousands of women, young and old, religious and secular, Arab and Jewish, chanted and waved placards, demanding a solution to the conflict be found, or at least discussed, by politicians.

The Women Wage Peace organisation, formed after a devastating summer war in the Gaza Strip that killed nearly 2,200 Palestinians and 73 people on the Israeli side, are hoping their voice will be heard as Israelis go to the polls on March 17.

"We're the only non-partisan organisation which is working on the ground to bring new hope for peace, and bust the myth that there is no one we can talk to about it," says Michal Shimar, a founder of the group.

Women Wage Peace counts some 7,000 members, all female, and another 15,000 supporters mostly active on social media, Shimar says.

Read more:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/170284-after-decades-of-conflict-israeli-women-say-enough>

## **Qatar Women Launch Start-ups despite Social Constraints**



Qatari women are increasingly defying social constraints and joining the workforce in the booming energy-rich country, which offers support for new enterprises and encourages start-ups by university graduates.

They benefit from a national "Qatarisation" program, which aims to increase the number of working citizens by guaranteeing them jobs and high wages in industry and government departments.

The program also helps people set up their own businesses in the small Gulf emirate.

Maryam al-Subaiey, 28, started her own company, Q-Talent, which sells items "Made in Qatar."

"I was the director of programs and creation at Qatar TV," she told AFP. "Before that I worked in marketing, and the ministry of foreign affairs. And I started several youth initiatives. So I just reached a point in my life where I wanted to create something that's my own."

Former first lady Sheikha Moza bint Nasser al-Misnad, had played a major role in opening the way for women in the Gulf emirate.

Read more:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/170458-qatar-women-launch-start-ups-despite-social-constraints>

## **Turkey – street protests across Turkey after woman killed for allegedly resisting rape**



Thousands of women's rights activists have taken to the streets in cities across Turkey after a woman was allegedly killed for resisting an attempt to rape her.

The burnt body of Ozgecan Aslan, 20, was found in a riverbed in the city of Mersin in the south of the country on Friday. Police have arrested three men in connection with the death: a minibus driver, his father, and a friend.

Officers believe the driver allegedly tried to rape Ms Aslan, who fought back with pepper spray but was then stabbed to death and beaten around the head with an iron pipe. Banners at the protest read "Enough, we will stop the murder of women!" Other demonstrators carried pictures of Ms Aslan, whilst some performed protest dances. The vast majority of the demonstrators were themselves women.

The murder has caused an outcry across Turkey and the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has telephoned the woman's family to offer his condolences, according to BBC News.

Read more:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/street-protests-across-turkey-after-woman-killed-for-resisting-rape-10047078.html>

## UN's 59th session on the status of women kicks off in NY

*The 59th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women gets under way in New York on Monday and will run from March 9-20, bringing together diplomats, NGOs and high-profile figures such as former US secretary of state Hillary Clinton.*

The year 2015 marks 20 years since the landmark Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted in the Chinese capital at the Fourth World Conference on Women. Once considered the world's most comprehensive framework for advancing women's rights, the 1995 Beijing agreement was signed by 189 governments.

Attending its signing as then US first lady, Hillary Clinton delivered a keynote speech in which she famously said: "Let it be that human rights are women's rights – and women's rights are human rights – once and for all."

But 20 years on, the UN says the deal's commitments have been only partially fulfilled.

As the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) gets under way in New York on Monday, organisers say their focus will be to review the progress made so far in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration.

Read more:

<http://www.france24.com/en/20150309-un-59th-session-commission-beijing-20-status-women-rights-new-york/>

## A Gaza Artist Creates 100 Square Feet of Beauty, and She's Not Budging



The artist NidaaBadwan has hardly left her small room for more than a year, creating her own world of color and a striking set of self-portraits.

NidaaBadwan's room is less than 100 square feet, lit by a single window and a bare bulb. She has slathered one wall with aquamarine paint and covered another in a patchwork of colored egg cartons. There is a medium-size mirror, an antique sewing machine and iron, two easels, a large yellow ladder and a gas canister on which she boils water to make a sweet cappuccino drink from a packet.

Alienated by Gaza's restrictive religiosity and constant conflict with Israel, Ms. Badwan, 27, has hardly left the room for more than a year. Within its walls she has created her own world, and a striking set of self-portraits that are at once classical and cutting-edge.

"I wait for the light," said Ms. Badwan, who sometimes takes a week or even a month to construct photographs that look like paintings. "Everything is beautiful, but only in my room, not in Gaza. I'm ready to die in this room unless I find a better place.

"You can say now there is another life for me," she added. "I feel I'm not living here. The project made new windows for me."

Read more:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/28/world/middleeast/finding-gaza-unbearable-artist-creates-her-own-world-in-one-room.html?smprod=nytcore-ipad&smid=nytcore-ipad-share&r=1>

## GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

### Algeria Passes Law Banning Violence against Women



Algeria's parliament passed a law on Thursday criminalizing violence against women, in a move criticized by both Islamist lawmakers as well as Amnesty.

The law makes inflicting injury on one's spouse punishable with up to 20 years in prison, and allows a judge to hand down life sentences for domestic violence resulting in death.

The bill passed in a vote attended by more than half of Algeria's 462 MPs, and the result drew the ire of some of the assembly's Islamists.

Abdelallah Djaballah of El Adala party said the new law "takes revenge on the husband and on the man in general," accusing the legislation of seeking to "break up the family."

In contrast, a deputy from the ruling National Liberation Front told Agence France-Presse that Thursday was "a great day" following the adoption of the anti-violence measures.

Between 100 and 200 women die each year in instances of domestic violence in Algeria, according to statistics published by local media.

Read more:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/170194-algeria-passes-law-banning-violence-against-women>

### Turkey: Men wear skirts in İstanbul march to protest violence against women



Men at a protest condemning violence against women marched down İstiklal Avenue sporting skirts in a demonstration of solidarity for women's rights on Saturday in İstanbul.

"I wore a skirt today because we all see the violence that is taking place against women lately. In addition to this, we see the even more monstrous side of the issue, [when people say] things such as 'Women who wear miniskirts deserve to be raped,' or 'then they shouldn't have been wearing a miniskirt [if they didn't want to be raped],'" protestor Bulut Arslan told Today's Zaman, while wearing a wrinkled beige skirt that reached just above his knees.

Arslan also held a sign that read, "Not fooled by your patriarchy, I'm a human!" and said: "The important thing we need to address is the issue that the oppressive, anti-women's-rights and patriarchal people are not just a problem for women, but for all of society. Just as one doesn't have to be an Alevi or a Kurd to support Alevi and Kurdish rights, just as we don't have to be an animal to take up animal rights, in the same sense we do not have to be a woman to support women's rights. We all know that liberation can only be achieved in a joint effort. We all need to act together; we all need to stand against [violence against women] together."

Read more:

<http://www.wluml.org/news/turkey-men-wear-skirts-istanbul-march-protest-violence-against-women>

## German Woman Fighter Dead in Kurd-IS Clashes in Syria



A young German woman has been killed fighting alongside Kurdish forces against Islamic State group jihadists in northeast Syria, a monitoring group said on Sunday.

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights head Rami Abdel Rahman said the woman in her 20s was "killed in the past few hours" in a battle since Saturday for the Kurdish-held town of Tal Tamr in Hasakeh province.

The German, whose name was not immediately available, would be the third Westerner killed among Kurdish ranks in Syria.

Briton Konstandinos Erik Scurfield and Australian Ashley Johnston both died in clashes elsewhere in Hasakeh.

At least 40 Kurdish fighters and IS jihadists have been killed in the Tal Tamr battle, the Observatory said earlier on Sunday.

News of the German woman's death, which was not immediately confirmed by Berlin, came on International Women's Day.

Women account for around 35 percent of the fighting force of the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), numbering around 7,000, and they receive the same training as their male comrades.

Read more:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/170615-german-woman-fighter-dead-in-kurd-is-clashes-in-syria>

## Syria – women fear abuse in marriage, but also fear stigma of divorce



Meet "Nur", a Syrian refugee who has suffered sexual exploitation at the hands of her Turkish husband. But was it rape, and can she even escape?

The night after their wedding, Eren stood over Nur in a dusky Mediterranean hotel, "You are old enough! Get ready to fuck or I will send you back to the camp!"

A friend of Eren's married a Syrian woman last year who he said was pious and subservient. Wanting the same, Eren pursued an arranged marriage with Nur, promising her escape from the Kilis Camp on Turkey's southern border.

After he raped her repeatedly on their honeymoon, Nur fled, taking shelter at her brother's house. But Nur says the stigma of divorce for Syrian women is unbearable, and so she prepares to reconcile with Eren.

Having fled the war, Syrian women and girls are vulnerable to exploitation and increasing levels of abuse. Some look to marriage for protection, others are victims of pimps or matchmakers out for profit. Recently, a Turkish man in Gaziantep threw his 22 year-old Syrian bride from a 5<sup>th</sup> story window. Still, the stigma of divorce is so strong that some women, like Nur, a refugee living in a camp in southern Turkey, would rather risk abuse.

Read more:

[http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/culture/syrian-women-fear-abuse-during-marriage-but-divorce-frightens-as-much\\_29402](http://www.yourmiddleeast.com/culture/syrian-women-fear-abuse-during-marriage-but-divorce-frightens-as-much_29402)

## Egypt's Dar Al-Ifta Warns Women Against Marrying IS Fighters on-line



Egypt's state-sponsored Islamic authority warned women Wednesday against marrying fighters from the Islamic State group online, saying such unions would push them into a "circle of terrorism."

Dar al-Ifta, the body that issues rulings on Islamic sharia law, said it made the warning after noticing several IS calls on social networks for girls to marry its jihadists "through video conferences."

"Dar al-Ifta warns girls from adhering to these calls that go against sharia," a statement said.

Such actions would push them into "the circle of extremism and terrorism through illegitimate marriages that neither please Allah or his prophet."

Read more:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/170046-egypt-s-dar-al-ifta-warns-women-against-marrying-is-fighters-online>

## *GENDER & HUMAN RIGHTS*

### Britain Rejects Stricter Ban on Gender-Based Abortion



British lawmakers rejected a bid to explicitly outlaw abortion based on the gender of the foetus on Monday.

Cultural preferences for boys is thought to lead to mothers aborting female fetuses in India and China, and the attempt to strengthen the law against the practice reflects concerns it could be taking place in some immigrant communities in Britain.

Health minister Jane Ellison had argued against the bid, saying that abortion on the grounds of whether the foetus is male or female was "already illegal".

But some MPs had said the amendment was needed because the law does not specifically address the practice.

"It is necessary because there is no explicit statement about gender selective abortion in UK law," said lawmaker Fiona Bruce as she proposed the amendment.

"The law is being interpreted in different ways because when the 1967 Abortion Act was passed, scans to determine the sex of the foetus were not available."

Read more:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/168767-britain-rejects-stricter-ban-on-gender-based-abortion>

## Head of U.N. Women: No Country has Reached Gender Equality



The head of the U.N. agency promoting equality for women is lamenting that a girl born today will be an 81-year-old grandmother before she has the same chance as a man to be CEO of a company — and she will have to wait until she's 50-years-old to have an equal chance to lead a country.

Twenty years after 189 countries adopted a blueprint to achieve equality for women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka said in an interview with The Associated Press that not a single country has reached gender parity and equality.

The executive director of U.N. Women spoke ahead of International Women's Day on Friday and next week's meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women. The commission will review the 150-page platform for action to achieve equality that was adopted at the groundbreaking U.N. women's conference in Beijing in 1995. Then-U.S. first lady Hillary Clinton inspired delegates and women worldwide when she declared in a keynote speech: "Human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights."

Read more:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/170282-head-of-u-n-women-no-country-has-reached-gender-equality>

## Iraq – Zekra Alwach becomes Baghdad's first female mayor



A woman has been named as mayor of Baghdad for the first time, a government spokesman said Saturday, amid widespread corruption and rampant violence.

Zekra Alwach, a civil engineer and director general of the ministry of higher education, becomes the first female to be given such a post in the whole country, where international rights groups have condemned women's rights abuses.

As mayor -- the most important administrative position in the capital -- Alwach will deal directly with Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and holds has the prerogatives of a cabinet minister.

She will begin work Sunday, according to a municipal source.

"Abadi sacked the (former) mayor Naim Aboub and named Dr. Zekra Alwach to replace him," government spokesman Rafed Juburi said.

Aboub's removal was not designed as a punishment, although he was regularly accused on social media and by Baghdad residents as incompetent, the spokesman added.

Read more:

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2015/02/22/Abadi-names-Baghdad-s-first-female-mayor-Zekra-Alwach.html>

## Islamic state has imposed strict dress and behavior rules for women in areas ISIS controls in Iraq and Syria



Women living under Islamic State's control in Iraq and Syria are facing increasingly harsh restrictions on movement and dress, which are rigorously enforced by religious police and are leading to resentment and despair among moderate Muslims.

Residents of Mosul, Raqqa and Deir el-Zour have told the Guardian in interviews conducted by phone and Skype that women are forced to be accompanied by a male guardian, known as a *mahram*, at all times, and are compelled to wear double-layered veils, loose abayas and gloves.

Their testimonies follow the publication this month of an Isis "manifesto" to clarify the "realities of life and the hallowed existence of women in the Islamic State". It said that girls could be married from the age of nine, and that women should only leave the house in exceptional circumstances and should remain "hidden and veiled".

Read more:

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/17/isis-orders-women-iraq-syria-veils-gloves>

## International Women's Day 2015, ILO: Progress on gender equality at work remains inadequate

*While there have been many achievements on gender equality since the Beijing Declaration on women rights was signed by 189 governments in 1995, many challenges remain, including a motherhood pay gap.*

Two decades after the world's largest gathering of women adopted a far-reaching agenda for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, women are only marginally better off with respect to equality at work.

"Are working women better off today than they were 20 years ago?" asked ILO Director-General Guy Ryder. "The answer is a qualified yes. Has this progress met our expectations? The answer is decidedly no. We need to be innovative, to reframe the debate and to intensify the focus on ensuring the rights of women at work, and promoting gender equality and women's economic empowerment." (See ILO Director-General's statement )

Progress in realizing the Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 has been mixed, the ILO said in a *briefing note prepared for International Women's Day* .

At the same time, the ILO also published a new working paper on the "motherhood pay gap" that imposes a wage penalty often over and above the wage gap already experienced by women worldwide. According to "*The motherhood pay gap: A review of the issues, theory and international evidence*", mothers often earn less than women without children, depending on where they live and how many children they have.

Read more:

[http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_348035/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_348035/lang--en/index.htm)

## Woman Wins Award for Best Drama at Saudi Film Festival



A female Saudi film-maker won an award for best drama at the Saudi Film Festival, the chief juror said Wednesday, hailing a higher quality of entries despite the kingdom's cinema ban.

The five-day festival was only the second in seven years, and aired films at an arts and cultural centre in the Gulf coast city of Dammam.

At the awards ceremony on Tuesday night, Hana al-Omair took the Golden Palm Tree prize for her drama "Complain", said Abdullah al-Eyaf, the head of the festival jury.

It tells the story of a hospital worker who lodges a complaint against a colleague, an act symbolising everything wrong in her life.

Another woman, ShahadAmeen, won second prize in the drama category for "Eye & Mermaid", a fantasy about a girl who discovers her father has tortured a mermaid to extract beautiful black pearls.

Mohanna Abdullah took third place for his film "Adam's Ant", the story of a prisoner who tries to befriend an ant in his cell.

Read more:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/168967-woman-wins-award-for-best-drama-at-saudi-film-festival>

## U.S. Supreme court to hear Abercrombie Hijab Case



The U.S. Supreme Court will make a rare foray into popular clothing Wednesday to weigh in on accusations that Abercrombie & Fitch illegally rejected a Muslim job applicant because of her hijab.

Abercrombie argued that its store policy forbids sales staff -- whom it calls "models" -- from wearing "caps" of any sort, and that Samantha Elauf, then 17, should have made clear in her 2008 interview that she could not comply due to her religion.

"Before her interview, MsElauf knew the position required her to model the Abercrombie style, knew the style of clothing that Abercrombie sold and also knew that Abercrombie did not sell headscarves," the company said in a court brief.

It stressed that floor staff are expected to sport a "classic East Coast collegiate style."

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) filed a complaint on behalf of Elauf against Abercrombie & Fitch, which is known for sales associates often dressed in racy attire, and attorneys say she is protected by the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

Read more:

<http://www.naharnet.com/stories/en/168680-u-s-supreme-court-to-hear-abcrombie-hijab-case>

## The Future of Work must also deal with the Future of Women at Work

Two decades ago the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing adopted a visionary and far-reaching Declaration and Platform for Action on gender equality and women's empowerment. What progress there has been since then must be tempered by the reality that it is far less than what we had hoped to see by now.

In the areas of national gender equality policies, and legislation against discrimination based on sex, much has been accomplished. Nevertheless, progress on the ground remains elusive.

Globally, only about half the world's women are in the labour force, compared to nearly 80 per cent of men – a figure basically unchanged in 20 years. A large gender pay gap hasn't narrowed much, with women still earning on average 23 per cent less than men. And new evidence is emerging that mothers suffer a wage penalty, often over and above the gender pay gap.

The percentage of women in top management and in positions of political leadership has improved. But women head up only 5 per cent of Fortune 500 companies, and only one out of 12 governments worldwide. The percentage of women who work as self-employed or unpaid family members has declined. But women remain over-represented in low-wage employment.

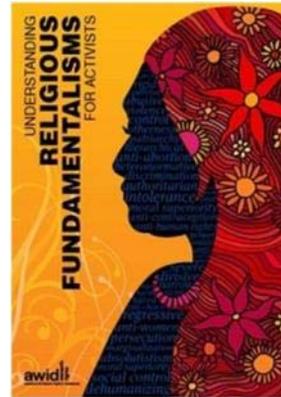
Read more:

[http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/who-we-are/ilo-director-general/statements-and-speeches/WCMS\\_348734/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/who-we-are/ilo-director-general/statements-and-speeches/WCMS_348734/lang--en/index.htm)

## RESOURCES & CALLS

### BOOKS & REPORTS

## Understanding Religious Fundamentalisms For Activists



*AWID is excited to introduce a new manual for rights activists facing religious fundamentalist opposition to their work. This user-friendly resource manual brings together the innovative research and analysis produced by AWID's Challenging Religious Fundamentalisms (CF) program over the past six years, drawing on the experiences of hundreds of women's rights activists in diverse regions of the world.*

This manual covers key areas of AWID's research, including understandings of religious fundamentalisms; factors that lead to their growth; the impacts on women's rights and human rights; and strategies used to counter religious fundamentalisms. It also includes concrete examples, visuals, and a series of discussion questions and participatory activities to encourage reflection on how religious fundamentalisms affect the day-to-day work of activists and how to strengthen activist responses.

Read more:

<http://www.awid.org/AWID-s-Publications/Religious-Fundamentalisms/Understanding-Religious-Fundamentalisms-for-Activists2>

## Global survey shows rising women's participation in cooperatives

*An ILO-ICA joint survey reflects gains for women in co-operatives while pointing to the need for better recognition by governments*

An online survey conducted by the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Cooperatives Unit and the International Co-operative Alliance shows 75 per cent of survey respondents feel that women's participation in co-operatives has increased over the past 20 years.

The findings come ahead of a panel and debate to be held 10 March at the United Nations in New York, called "Cooperatives: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment." The panel is being organized as a side event to the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, which takes place from 9 to 20 March.

Regarding the survey findings, president of the International Co-operative Alliance, Dame Pauline Green said, "The Alliance and ILO joint survey highlights the unique effectiveness of the co-operative model in providing women with a dignified way of out of poverty, often away from violence and abuse."

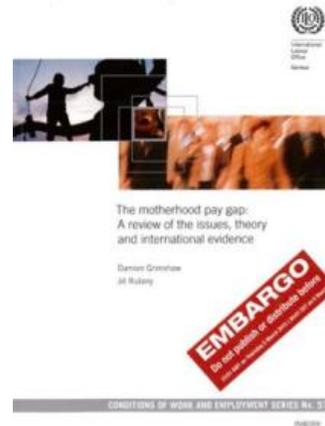
"I am also thrilled with the survey's indicators towards a high number of women in leadership positions, particularly in our finance and insurance co-operatives," she added.

Key findings indicate that co-operatives are having an increasingly positive impact on women – 80 per cent of survey respondents felt that co-operatives are better than other types of private or public sector business in advancing gender equality.

Read more:

[http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_349679/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_349679/lang--en/index.htm)

## The motherhood pay gap: A review of the issues, theory and international evidence



Evidence that mothers suffer a wage penalty over and above the penalty for being a woman raises concerns not only for gender equality but also for the capacity of societies to manage a sustainable balance between their economic aims of active female participation in paid work and the social aims of providing a fair distribution of income to support the reproduction and rearing of children. These concerns underpin ILO Conventions designed to combat inequality in women's position in paid employment, especially associated with motherhood status.

Read more:

[http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/working-papers/WCMS\\_348041/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/working-papers/WCMS_348041/lang--en/index.htm)

For a direct link:

[http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms\\_348041.pdf](http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_348041.pdf)

## Sustainable development from a gender perspective: A glossary



The Brundtland Report (1987) still provides the most quoted definition of sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Acknowledging the importance of gender equality for sustainable development, it also highlights the varied interactions between social, economic and ecological dimensions of development.

Nevertheless, sustainable development is still often seen primarily as environmental sustainability, with gender concerns often taking a backseat.

Currently the international community is discussing the elaboration of a new framework of development goals, possibly called sustainable development goals (SDG's), which are supposed to replace the Millenium Development Goals in 2015. This is a good time to discuss and conceptualize what sustainable development actually means in the current context of crises on many fronts (economic crises, climate change, rising inequalities, poverty etc.). This glossary shall serve as a first step, highlighting the various issues a sustainable development agenda should address, as well as some concepts and ideas that have been put forward by different actors as solutions for some of the challenges facing the world community. It also shall serve to emphasize the gender relations underlying all different fields of action.

For a direct link:

<http://www.rightingfinance.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Download-full-Glossary.pdf>

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