Gender Equality: 
Voices from the Global South
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Gender Equality: Voices from the Global South

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Gender Equality: Voices from the Global South Conference 2016

The Hubert Humphrey Fellowship Program, the American University Washington College of Law and the University of Minnesota Law School invite you to take part in this innovative conference that will bring together professionals, advocates, academics, public policy makers and practitioners working on women’s rights in the Global South. The conference will provide the Humphrey Fellows from the Global South a space to share their experiences and challenges in ending gender based discrimination in their countries, as well as their successful stories, proposals and visions to end gender based discrimination in their regions.

The Global South is a new terminology suggested by scholars from the academy referring to developing countries. This broad concept, which includes nations of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Middle East, is a starting point to reflect on common challenges and identify common goals in the area of gender equality, that could promote collaboration and cooperation among the Global South as well as with their colleagues from the Global North.

The conference will be followed by a workshop that will be held on the second day to discuss the common features of the Global South, as well as to formalize the creation of a Humphrey Alumni Network for Gender Equality for collaboration and future partnerships to promote democracy, human and women’s rights values.

The goal of the conference and workshop is to exchange knowledge, expertise and good practices among the Global South, to identify opportunities for cooperation and to establish the basis of an international network of Humphrey Alumni, advocates and experts in the field of gender equality, to operate within the Humphrey Program platform and other US-based and international frameworks.
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Conference and Panelists
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Panel 1 Women and human capabilities
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Thandiwe Matthews, South Africa

Ms. Matthews is an attorney with experience in the private and public legal sectors in South Africa. She is a Senior Legal Officer at the South African Human Rights Commission, focusing on the progressive realization of socio-economic rights by various state and non-state actors. Her interests lie in analyzing the relationship between human rights, governance and society. She comments frequently in various media publications and panel discussions on issues affecting South Africa’s youth, with a particular emphasis on social transformation and its intersection with race and gender.

Thandiwe holds a Masters in Development Studies from the International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University based at The Hague (Netherlands); a Bachelor of Laws from the University of the Witwatersrand and a Bachelor of Social Sciences from the University of Cape Town. In 2015 she was selected by the US State Department as a Fulbright / Hubert Humphrey Fellow and based at the University of Minnesota Law School, United States.
Women and the fight for socio-economic equality

From the United States to South Africa, women have been at the forefront of movements in the fight for socio-economic equality. Black women and women of colour, in particular, bare the brunt of poverty and often have to endure systemic human rights violations as a consequence of under-resourced environments. Women who are poor risk enduring gender based violence because of the lack of access to reasonable water and sanitation in their communities. They endure domestic violence, in many cases as a result of the men in their lives being excluded from economic opportunities because of the disparity in education provided to poorer communities. Cases of domestic violence often remain unresolved by law enforcement officials due to the limited number of resources assigned to poorer communities, or because women who are poor are not prioritized by law enforcement officials due to their class status, and/or race. Women who are poor also endure the social cost of poverty, often having to care for sick children and elderly people who endure health issues as a result of being exposed to unhealthy and polluted environments; yet they are unable to access adequate health care. They are also living in communities most vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change.

However, the issues raised by women are often considered to be women’s issues alone. As a result of women being predominantly excluded from the political economy of the communities and countries in which they reside, they are excluded from the decision-making processes of the structures that govern their societies. They therefore endure the negative outcomes of their socio-economic realities, but are not provided the opportunity to effectively participate in the creation of durable and sustainable solutions. This is despite the existence of international and legal norms guaranteeing the right to gender equality.

This presentation will focus on the role that women have played in shaping political and economic processes in various contexts, beyond raising traditional issues discussed as “women’s issues” alone, such as gender based violence or gender discrimination. It will conclude by arguing that gender equality is only possible, not only when women are able to have safe spaces to discuss issues that are of concern with them between themselves; but also when these issues are raised in spaces traditionally occupied by men, predominantly within the realm of politics and economics. In order for substantive gender equality to be achieved beyond quota representations, it is essential that women are included in all aspects of social structures that govern their lives.
Ms. Mumba has worked in public service for 17 years in Zambia. She is Principal Education Standards Officer for the Ministry of Education and also serves as the Executive Director for the Forum of African Women Educationalists in Zambia (FAWEZA). Her other roles have included serving as principal at numerous girls schools where she focused on promoting equity in education for girls and women. Agness has five years of experience working in special education. In 1999, without government funding or financial support, she mobilized community members in Chongwe District of Lusaka Province to establish a secondary school for girls educating over 450 girls each year. Agness believes that education for girls is the most effective vehicle to improve the lives of families and to foster economic empowerment in developing countries. She holds a Master of Science in Public Health (health promotion) from Leeds Metropolitan University and a Master of Science in Equity Studies from the University of Dublin-Ireland.
Grand challenges in the implementation of the re-admission policy of pregnant and teen mothers in schools

The rise in adolescent girls’ unintended pregnancies amidst affirmative gender policies, remains a global grand challenge. In the discourse of CEDAW, CRC and the 1995 Beijing Conference, women’s rights activists recommended, inter alia, that girls who had dropped out of the schooling system due to pregnancy should be re-entered. This was coined with the aim of implementing measures that help prevent the retention of teen mothers from continuing with their education. The re-admission of teen mother’s policy was popularized in Sub-Saharan Africa due to the recognition that education is a basic human right of all individuals, and it shoulders special importance for girls and women within the current global context, which is still branded by gender inequality. Forum for African Women Educationalists- Zambia Chapter (FAWE-Zambia), decided to add its voice to the call for the re-entry of teen mother into the schooling system by taking advantage of the 1995 Beijing momentum leading to Government launching the Re-admission policy in Zambia on 13th September, 1997. This was seen by women’s movement as the first government articulated landmark for promoting girls education in Zambia.

Despite the above affirmative international commitments to promoting women’s rights, gender intersects with many interlocked social categories including culture and plural legal systems which limit adolescent girls’ from reclaiming their school places. The period 2010-2014 recorded 77,448 school girls’ pregnancies with less than 50% reclaiming their school places after giving birth, despite 19 years of policy declaration.

This paper interrogates the legal, institutional and social-cultural factors still impacting upon the effective implementation of the re-admission policy in Zambia. The paper focuses on examining how gender intersect with cultural norms and gendered structured social institution to shape the implementation practices of the 1997 re-admission policy of teen mothers into the schooling system.
Dr. Mariana Azcárraga earned her medical degree from the National Autonomous University of Mexico in 2012, and she is currently finishing a psychiatry residency at the National Institute of Neurology and Neurosurgery in Mexico City. As a resident, she provides a full range of psychiatric services to patients with mental health and substance use disorders, including cognitive behavioral therapy. Mariana also teaches medical students and has research experience in biological psychiatry. She is a member of the Experimental Psychiatry Laboratory which employs neuroimaging and neurophysiological methods for studying the basis of disease in the brain. For her Humphrey fellowship, Mariana seeks primarily to expand her knowledge in the origins, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment of addiction. She also wants to learn more about epidemiology and drug policy to help address drug abuse problems in vulnerable populations such as adolescents, pregnant women, and persons with psychiatric illnesses. In addition, Mariana hopes to become involved in drug abuse research and to form partnerships with organizations and drug abuse experts in the U.S.
Dr. Jessica Beltrán obtained her medical degree from the Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia in 2007 and a master’s degree in epidemiological research from Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia in 2013. She also has received advanced training at the University of Amsterdam in international drug policy. Jessica is a researcher at the Peruvian National Institute of Health, conducting primary and secondary public health research. Her expertise includes qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies as well as rapid, systematic literature reviews. She and her colleagues provide information for government stakeholders to help them make evidence-based public health decisions for Peru. Jessica has been collaborating in the introduction of screening, brief interventions and referral to treatment in Peruvian health care settings, specifically with vulnerable populations such as people living with HIV/AIDS and female sex workers. Her work was recently presented at the College on Problems of Drug Dependence annual meeting. During her Humphrey fellowship, Jessica would like to improve her research skills so that she can conduct studies that would create a better understanding of substance abuse problems, and ultimately inform the development of more effective prevention and treatment policies and programs.
Dr. Ilker Kayı graduated from Istanbul University Faculty of Medicine in 2005, and after working as a practitioner for two years, he enrolled in specialty training in public health at the same university. Ilker has worked for the Turkish Ministry of Health and he was the chief of the primary health care unit in a Syrian Refugee Camp in the Adıyaman Province for one year. He also has played an active role in carrying out the health education modules for the Health Promotion Project for seasonal migrant agricultural workers and their families. Currently, Ilker is working in Koç University School of Medicine, and his main interests are health policy, health administration, health promotion, health education, global health, social determinants of health, community mental health and epidemiology. Throughout his Humphrey fellowship year, Ilker intends to focus on the role of collaboration in health policy and health administration by evaluating the mental health and tobacco control policies of Turkey. Ilker would also like to improve his skills in qualitative research methods in order to conduct studies that identify the personal and institutional barriers for collaboration in policy making and implementation.
Collective action for the right to mental health for the women of the Global South

Women from Mexico and Peru, two upper-middle income countries, experience a common apparently paradoxical situation regarding mental health. National statistics show women use mental health services two times more than men. Consequently, it translates into an expectation of better mental health outcomes among women. Nevertheless, the actual situation is far from that. In Mexico and Peru and as it is the case globally, among women prevalence of depression and anxiety is higher compared to men. Depression is one of the leading causes of burden of disease among women, which produces disability as it is recurrent, reduces productivity, and has enormous economic and social costs. Besides there are stark differences between global south and the rest of the world for both prevalence and the increase rates in time. All around the world women have similar risk factors for depression such as being a “women” or gender-based factors (being the head of household, experienced intimate partner violence, maternal mortality, teenage pregnancy, etc.) and social and political inequalities (poverty and income inequality, access to education, unemployment or underemployment, underpaid jobs or unpaid work, stigma for mental health illness etc.). These factors all arise from existing and regenerated power imbalances embedded in the sociocultural and economic organization of the communities locally and globally. Patriarchy when combined with economic globalization that peaked the inequalities in the last 30 years in both high and low-middle income countries –with greater impact on the latter through trade agreements and structural adjustment programs– are the root causes of ill health as well as women’s mental disorders. Therefore even women’s increased access to health care cannot solve this problem unless there is a collective effort to struggle against these root causes. Mental wellbeing or wellbeing in a broader sense can only be achieved in a healthy living and working environment.
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Panel 2 Gender and the law
Ms. Mendoza spent the first seven years of her career as a human rights lawyer for a legal non-profit organization in the Philippines, that is working for the legal empowerment of the basic and marginalized sectors in the country. Amelia was the Program Coordinator of the Women and Children’s Unit of the organization. She was actively and directly involved in national policy work for the passage of important national legislation advancing women’s and children’s rights such as the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act, the Anti-Human Trafficking Law, and the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act. These pieces of legislation were considered landmark and progressive legislation in the Philippines that were the result of a long struggle for legal empowerment of women and children. In addition, Amelia handled test cases before the courts that questioned discriminatory laws against women, such as those involving prostitution, and adultery and concubinage, as well as those cases that defended women suffering from the battered woman syndrome for crimes committed by them. Amelia continued her human rights involvement and her gender advocacy as she transitioned from being a human rights lawyer to becoming a prosecutor, and eventually, as a judge. Amelia was appointed to the bench in January 2011. In her work at the bench, Amelia has faced the same discriminatory laws against women and has so far managed to render innovative decisions based on international human rights laws to go around these discriminatory national laws.
Lady Justice without the blindfold: Overcoming gender inequality before the law in the Philippines

Gender discrimination in the Philippines is a manifestation of a very patriarchal society that relegates women as subservient to men. Patriarchy allows for a systemic and culturally-accepted discrimination of women, which has its roots to colonization of the country under 330 years of Spanish occupation and almost 50 years of American rule. From a historical standpoint, it is also under a regime of patriarchy that laws were enacted by a predominantly male Congress and by which the end result were laws that are reflective of the prevailing cultural norms. It is of no surprise then that Congress has enacted certain discriminatory laws against women, which laws merely reflect society’s unequal treatment of men and women. Hence, instead of having laws as tools for empowerment, the law in itself has become both a source of gender inequality and the by-product of gender-based discrimination.

The presentation shall examine some of the discriminatory laws that still exist to this day in the Philippines, with particular emphasis on laws that the presenter had experience with in challenging these before the courts as a human rights advocate and in dealing with these same laws as a judge. The presentation will put forward specific case studies that the presenter has handled both as an activist and as a judge that involve the application and/or interpretation of these discriminatory laws to actual cases of women who suffered from legal inequality. Each case study will highlight both the challenges and the creative ways in which these challenges were met, and more importantly, how the lessons learned from these case studies can be the basis of legal policy reform or judicial reform.

The underlying theme of the presentation is that the dispensation of gender justice does not always require a neutral lens that will seek to strictly interpret laws according to the ordinary meaning of its letters and words. Rather, the attainment of genuine justice before the courts requires a gendered lens, that is, the ability to look at the law with all its flaws and imperfections and to balance the scales of justice accordingly so that those affected by the law’s imperfections will still be able to stand on equitable grounds before the courts.
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Shirin Batshon, Palestine/Israel

Ms. Batshon is a Palestinian lawyer and a feminist activist. Presently she is participating in the Fulbright Program as Hubert Humphrey Fellow and is studying at the Washington College of Law American University in Washington, DC, specializing in Law and Gender.

She holds bachelor's of law degree from Tel Aviv University and masters of law in public and international law from Tel Aviv University and Northwestern University. In Israel, Shirin worked as the head of the family law clinic at the College of Law and Business in Ramat Gan and was a co-founder of a women's law office in Haifa, which represents cases of domestic violence, family law, labor law, and rights of victims of crimes. Previously, Shirin was the head of the Legal Department of a feminist Palestinian organization in Haifa, during which she represented Palestinian women in hundreds of cases in the field of family law. Her work helped set important precedents concerning Palestinian women's rights at the High Court of Justice in Israel. Shirin writes articles on the issue of family law and women's rights in her region leading important discussions on the advancement of women in her country.
Religious family laws: violations of women’s rights by state laws and CEDAW. The example of Israel–Palestine

In the Middle East and North Africa region, family laws are controlled by religious laws and courts and major violations of women’s rights take place under the jurisdiction of these laws. Voices of women are not taken into consideration in policy debates or in legal reforms, male judges and figures dominate and women lack the power to influence change.

Israel as an example: adopted the Millet system of the Ottoman Empire and consists of 13 religious courts of the recognized religious communities in it, along with Family Courts that were established in 1995. The religious courts have exclusive jurisdiction over matters of marriage and divorce and as a result, women are subject to major violations of their right to equality and are exposed to being disadvantaged and vulnerable in fighting for their rights to custody on their children, to marry and dissolve their marriage, to get equal economic rights and in fighting for their right to dignity. For example, women in this region are exposed to obedience petitions, where husbands are entitled to ask the court to order women to return to marital house and fulfil “marital duties”. Some of these states have ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) with major reservations in the domain of family law.

In my presentation I am going to present the examples of women’s rights violations in Israel as a result of the jurisdiction of religious family laws. I will discuss the main powers that are standing in the way to fight discrimination against women by state laws, as well as proposals for change, especially under states’ obligation to gender equality in the international level.
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Panel 3 Women and Power
Ms. Ben Said is a women’s rights advocate and Founder of “Aswat Nissa” (Voices of Women), a Tunisian nonprofit promoting women’s active participation in the political and policy-making spheres while fighting against all forms of discriminations and violence against women. Her latest initiative “Women's Political Academy” was awarded the 2014 Madeline Albright Award. The Academy boosts leadership skills of women candidates from all political fronts and enhances their capacities in running electoral campaigns.

Ikram has a Bachelor’s degree in Marketing from the Higher School of Economic Science and Commerce in Tunis. She is now a Fulbright Fellow at Humphrey School of Public Affairs at Minnesota University. Through this fellowship, Ikram affirms her skills in areas pertaining to policy analysis on good governance and democracy, as well as gender equality.

Ikram is a former Senior Program Manager at Search for Common Ground (SFCG), a leading international nonprofit for peace building and conflict resolution. She was involved in different projects such as leading youth leadership development program that aims to empower over 400 youth leaders by increasing their community engagement and strengthening their citizenship skills. Ikram also served as the team leader of the dialogue department within SFCG in Tunisia, designing and co-facilitating two complex dialogue processes in Tunisia. She is an experienced dialogue facilitator, capable of moderating through complex and polarized situations. Her skills also include strong project management, from design to implementation and evaluation.

Ikram was featured as the Next Generation Leader, first edition in Time Magazine. She was also chosen as a Female Role Model 2014 by The Pixel Project”16 For 16” Campaign. Ikram is an experienced public speaker at different conferences in the MENA region, Europe and the United States. In 2011, she was a fellow at the US State Department’s International Visitors Program. In 2012, she joined the Women in Public Service Project at the Seven Sisters and Wellesley Universities in the United States, a women leadership initiative by former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. She was also featured as “an influential voice and stalwart champion for the rights and opportunities of women and girls” at the Clinton Foundation’s No Ceiling Event in New York in 2015.
Tunisian Women’s Political Participation: Give a voice to the voiceless

The participation of women in Tunisian politics has always been limited, despite attempts by various regimes to demonstrate that Tunisia has progressive attitudes and legislation toward women’s participation. According to the UNDP, in 2000 women held only 11.5% of seats in the Tunisian legislature. In 2008, the number rose to 20%, however the role of parliament was limited, with MPs simply approving any law which came from the president or government with no genuine oversight. Between 2000 and 2010, 13 women, and at different times, have been in government, functioning as state secretaries and rarely as ministers. While these figures suggest reasonable representation, the reality of reflected more the will of former regimes to have women and ‘window dressing,’ rather than the actual emancipation of Tunisian women and legitimate involvement in the management of affairs of the country.

Following Tunisia’s revolution in 2011, the presence of women in politics is again a matter of debate. In an attempt to ensure women’s participation in the National Constituent Assembly elections in 2011, the introduction of a parity article in the election law required a ‘zipper’ system on all electoral lists. According to the ISIE (Instance Supérieure pour l’Indépendance des Elections), who oversaw the elections, only seven percent of the head of lists were women, which denotes the very small space dedicated to women in political parties. This limitation is more pronounced with the establishment of the new national government with only three women occupying posts in a cabinet with 43 ministerial posts. Moreover during the elections of 2014, only 12 % of the head of lists were women and despite the parity law only 30% of the parliament is women. And once again in the government only 3 women ministers.

Tunisian women have not found their way to realize their ambition in political action since the revolution. The rate of female representation is even lower in municipal councils, which have not been elected since 2008. In the meantime, appointments have been made to the councils to fill vacant seats – all of which have been men. Tunisian women remain underrepresented in political life, both in the parliament and at the governmental level. Their absence in decision-making circles means there is little political influence by women. At the same time, male decision-makers give limited attention to the daily reality of women. Promoting and defending women’s rights is confined almost exclusively to the level of civil society with very few effective mediators in politics. During this period of political transition, the absence of women’s voices is noticeable. At the same time, women most often express a fear of engaging in politics, and prefer to focus on their local communities and families.

From December 2014 until October 2015, the Tunisian Parliament voted in favor of only one bill allowing mothers to get a passport, or any other travel documents for their children, without a permit from the father. Only one bill passed and no other bills were proposed by Parliament regarding gender equality. The presentation will examine why women political participation is so important specially in a new democracy, what are the main challenges facing the Tunisian women and what policies/solutions that should be implemented to get rid of the practices that are still used to enforce the lower status of women.
Ms. Bhonsle is an award-winning journalist and author. She has wide ranging experience working on issues of politics, gender, conflict and development. In recent years Anubha has reported extensively from areas of strife focusing on the intersection of civil society movements, gender, human rights and political protests. Her documentaries have been recognized nationally and internationally. She won some of India’s most prestigious journalism awards including the Ramnath Goenka Award for Politics, the Red Ink Award and more recently the Outstanding Woman Media Person Award for her body of work in 2014. The Jury at the New York Film Festival has commended her reporting from Manipur, on the impact of the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act. She is a founding member of CNN-IBN. In her role as Executive Editor, Anubha has led the station’s coverage of major news events reporting from the ground. She anchored several flagship news and documentary shows. She also leads a team that produces the much-acclaimed Citizen Journalist Show. Her first book, *Mother, Where’s my Country*, will be released in December 2015. During her Humphrey year, Anubha will explore the intersection of democracy, dissent and technology.
Women: conflict’s blind spot. A story of violence, denial of justice and memory from Manipur, India

In a corner of India, it’s northeast, is the state of Manipur, a land of plenty, its beautiful landscape hides within itself decades of insurgency and counter-insurgency. Manipur is a land of guns. It’s where men with guns fight other men with guns. It’s a land where people are often categorized as “Families of Victims of Forced Disappearances, or the Gun Survivors Network”. It’s a land where women driven commerce is sanctified, a land where women have fought two wars, against the British, a land where women come out at night and stand guard and beat poles to prevent security forces from taking away their men or young boys on suspicion of being an insurgent. It’s a land where women bared themselves and carried banners saying ‘Indian Army Rape Us’ when a young woman, her body bearing signs of brutal assault was found dead in a field. It’s a land where one woman has been on a hunger strike for the last 16 years to protest against a draconian law, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). She is force-fed through a nasal tube and kept under judicial custody. It’s a land where women are the face and bear the aftermath of a simmering conflict that has gone on for years.

In my paper I want to contrast the above—a part of Manipur where it’s women lead its everyday life, it’s ethos, it’s struggles to the part where peacemaking is a man’s job, where when the Prime Minister signed a framework of agreement with one of the biggest insurgent groups no women were part of the negotiations or the photo-op, a part where justice has been forgotten in the name of progress, a part where political representation of women is measly, a part where in spite of being so organized, women have failed to make a mark in some of the most important decisions of the state.
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**Elshaday Woldeyesus, Ethiopia**

Ms. Woldeyesus was the head of the Centre for Human Rights (Centre) at Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia for the past three years. In this capacity, she oversaw the Centre’s postgraduate degree program in interdisciplinary human rights studies, the research on human rights related issues, and the Centre’s Access to Justice Project which is the largest legal aid service provider in the country. Before joining the Centre, Elshaday worked in different nongovernmental organizations and was a researcher on the political participation of women at the Africa Programme of the UN mandated University for Peace (UPEACE). Elshaday studied sociology and specialized in gender and peace building studies. As an academic actively interested in promoting the rights of women, during her fellowship Elshaday hopes to strengthen her skills to promote social change and strengthen the capacity of grassroots movements for rights and equality.
Mobilizing Women in Ethiopia: Reflections on the Relevance of Historical Experiences in Understanding and Shaping the Future

Ethiopia has a relatively long history of political mass mobilization of women both by the state and insurgent movements that opposed it. The Ethiopian Peoples’ Revolutionary Democratic Movement (EPRDF), the current ruling party, was particularly noted for its political and armed mobilization of women during the time of its insurgency. The participation of a large number of women, comprising a third of the fighters and their contribution to the armed struggle against the military regime was legendary. After assuming state power in 1991, EPRDF employed a similar approach to mobilization to tackle the challenges of poverty and building the legitimacy of its rule. Such mobilization of women has resulted in measurable achievements in different socio-economic endeavors. To name a few, Girls’ access to primary education has significantly increased, the GER for girls went up from 40.7% in 1999/2000 to 92.4% in 2012/13. Child mortality has gone down to 55/1000 in 2013 from 166/1000 in 2000 and Maternal mortality has gone down to 420/100,000 in 2013 from 673/100,000 in 2005. As the sustainability of structures and success depends on degree of ownership by women, the presentation will examine women’s sense of ownership of the structures and processes of their mobilization. Moreover, the presentation will draw from historical experiences to examine if the success in mobilizing women will translate into autonomous forums for women’s democratic participation.
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Panel 4 Gender and Violence
Ms. Thabet is a Child Protection Officer at the Danish Refugee Council in Aden, Yemen, working in conflict-affected areas of Yemen, supporting children affected by armed conflicts, child recruitment, sexual harassment, and exploitation. She worked with the government to sign the action plan with the UN Security Council to stop child recruitment in the military. Since 2014, she worked with UNICEF, to conduct emergency assessments during conflicts. Ms. Thabet holds her Bachelor’s degree in Computer Science Engineering from Aden University.

As a Humphrey Fellow, she plans to focus on the legal aspect of human rights – particularly the rights of children – with the aim of increasing her knowledge of human rights capacity-building. She plans to use these skills to work toward universal access to birth certificates, raising Yemen’s minimum age of marriage to 18, and addressing child protection needs.
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Fadia Thabet, Yemen

National Action Plan to stop Child Marriage in Yemen: “Traditions are made by people – we can change them”

Child Marriage is one of many human right violations against children and has impact on both girls and boys, but primarily affects severely on girls. It is a complex issue driven by many factors, especially in Yemen, such as religion, traditional norms, lack of birth certificate system, practice, inequality, gender roles in society, security, swap marriage, lack and unawareness of Family Planning System and poverty. In a culture such as Yemen, girls don’t have the same opportunities and rights as boys from the moment of their birth, boys are more privileged to continue education, and girls don’t even have the right to inherit from their families and parents after death in some governorates in Yemen. Child marriage is a strong reflection of inequality and cultural practice in a society like Yemen. Child marriage is preventing girls from enjoying their childhood, having education and jeopardizes their lives and health when being exposed to diseases or death during pregnancy.

Yemen took very important steps towards ending child marriage in the draft of the new Constitution, aiming to fully implement the Child Rights’ Convention (CRC). The reform of child age was one of outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference (NDC), which was a transitional dialogue that took a place for more than 10 months in Sana’a, Yemen on January 24, 2014.

In rural areas, girls aged 10 to 16 face difficulties and challenges to deliver their own voices. They believe it’s their responsibility to help and save their families from poverty by marrying someone and receiving a dowry in return, dowry which their families can get benefits from. Over the past 10 years, the UN estimates that from the period 2002-2011, one in three girls in Yemen is married before the age of 18, mostly to old men from the same family, other tribes or other old men from different countries, who are 3 times the girls’ ages.

The project is designing a National Action Plan to stop Child Marriage in Yemen with a vision of changing the concept of tradition: Traditions are made by people – we can change them. This NAP addresses the root causes in Yemen for child marriage and includes examples of tactics and strategies from different countries around the world on how we can stop child Marriage in collaboration with the government in Yemen, civil society (women), international organizations and communities.
Ms. Akhtar was most recently the Commissioner of Income Tax in the Ministry of Finance, Government of India, where she handled tax dispute resolution for corporate taxpayers. She is interested in training policies for tax organizations to create professional expertise with explicit customer centric values so that the adversarial mindset of tax administrators is challenged. Her academic background combines Sociology, Law and Public Policy. She has a M.A. in Sociology from Aligarh Muslim University, an M. Phil in Sociology from Jawaharlal Nehru University, a Bachelor of Law from Utkal University and a Masters in Public Policy & Management from the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore. She is currently enrolled for PhD in public policy with the National Law School, Bangalore.
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Jahanzeb Akhtar, India

Denial of Birth: The Problem of Female Foeticide in India

The biologically normal Child Sex Ratio (CSR), being the number of females to 1000 males in the 0-6 years category, is around 950. In India the census figures highlight the alarming situation of the disappearing girl child in the CSR of 976 in 1961 which declined to 945 in 1991, to 927 in 2001 and thence to 918 in 2011. Up to the 1980s, the post birth discrimination between boys and girls in nutrition and health care had caused this imbalance. But in later years the strong son preference in a patriarchal society melded with widely accepted norms of a small family size and easily available diagnostic and sex selection technologies and has led to abortion of millions of female foetuses. The government strategy has been two pronged - influencing the demand for gender biased sex selection through campaigns for attitudinal change towards the girl child; and using the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostics Techniques (Prevention of Sex Selection) Act 1994 for statutory regulation of ultrasonography and pre-conception technology centers to arrest the supply of technologies that enable sex selection. Both have not worked, as the census figures indicate. The regulatory initiative is riddled with implementation holes. The campaigns to enhance the societal value of the girl child and to address the practice of dowry, which is one of the major factors leading to the foetal murder, have not dented the problem. Education and economic empowerment of women, ordinarily expected to have an inverse relation to sex selective abortion, has had the opposite effect as access to technologies for sex selection, including safe abortions, are more easily available to this class.

In the above background, the multi sectoral program of the government of India called “Beti Bachao Beti Padhao” (save the girl child, educate the girl child), introduced in January 2015 in 100 districts low in CSR, is the focus of administrative as well as civil society efforts. But changing the gendered attitudes that convert a womb into a tomb for the girl child will require sustained community mobilization to have any chance of success.
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Carolina Rudnick, Chile

Ms. Rudnick was most recently the executive coordinator of the intergovernmental Committee Against Trafficking in Persons of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Chile. Under her leadership, Chile designed and implemented the first national plan of action against human trafficking and advanced Chile’s qualification from Tier 2 to Tier 1 in the TIP Report 2014. This award-winning lawyer, lecturer, litigator, and artist, holds a bachelor’s degree in law, postgraduate studies in Ethics from the Universidad de Concepción in Chile, and a Master in Science in Criminal Justice policy from the London School of Economics and Political Science, in the United Kingdom. She is particularly interested in human trafficking root causes and in creating effective preventive strategies to combat modern slavery in all its forms. She hopes that the knowledge and skills gained during the Humphrey fellowship will strengthen her ability to lead and advocate for policies, programs, and services to advance Chile and underdeveloped countries’ well-being.
The political and legal implications of female trafficking as slavery

A current discussion in international law among the anti human trafficking community is the question about the connection between trafficking and slavery. By the time of the creation of the Palermo Protocol, slavery, the legal institution prohibited under ius cogens norms, was one of the possible exploitative purposes of the recruitment, transfer and trafficking of people -actus reus of human trafficking-. Currently, and trigger mainly by the shift of U.S. policy on the matter, slavery is understood as the overarching category, where trafficking in persons is one of its manifestations. All human trafficking is slavery. Human trafficking is a species of the slavery genre. The other view, endorsed by academics and experts on the field, affirms that slavery is one -and the harshest one- of the possible manifestations of exploitation in the concept of trafficking. In other words, that there are other forms of exploitation present in the crime’s legal description that do not amount for slavery. In addition, the slavery – trafficking connection has made it harder to convict, by increasing the threshold for conviction in cases of human trafficking that show a certain degree of physical agency in the victims.

Article 1 of the League of Nations Slavery Convention defines slavery as “the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised”. Human trafficking will be slavery if and only if we can trace a link between the legal definition in the Palermo Protocol and the hypothesis of exercising the powers of ownership on a human being. What will be suggested is that this link exists, and now more than ever needs to be raised and claimed. Human trafficking is the effort of translating the authoritative original, slavery, into a new and different context. The problem seems to be, however, that slavery has been resignified in a such a way that now means nothing, except as the metaphor of ultimate harm. As slavery loses its authority in the universe of value, the crime of human trafficking becomes nothing but a technical device to manage the excesses in the migration flows, the international markets and organized crime.
Gender Equality: Voices from the Global South

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