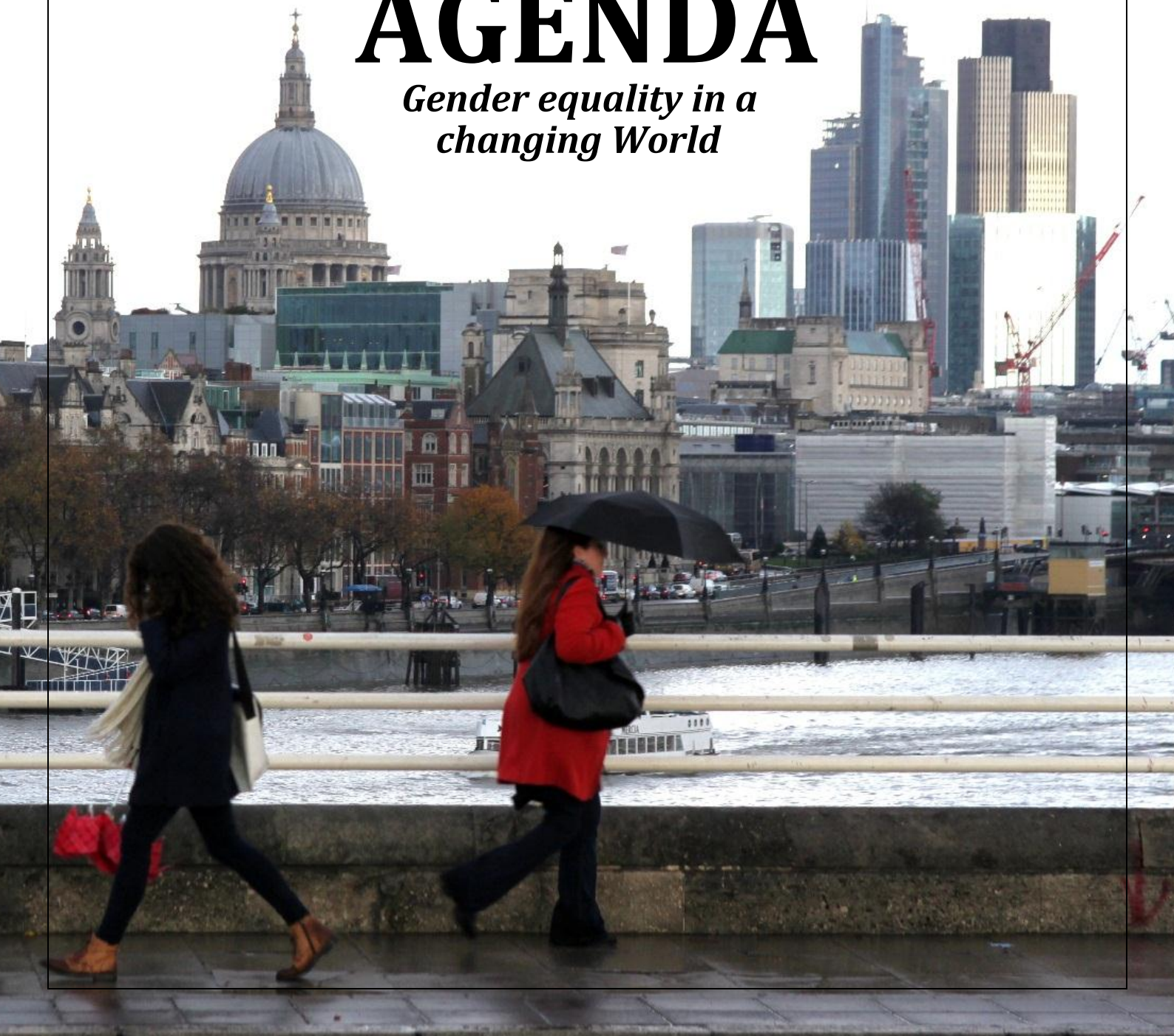
SPECIAL REPORT

POLITHEOR: EUROPEAN POLICY NETWORK, NOVEMBER 2016

THE GENDER AGENDA

Gender equality in a changing World



Politheor: European Policy Network

SPECIAL REPORT

The Gender Agenda

Editor: Irene Zugasti

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November 2016

INTRODUCTION

Dear reader,

WHY DO WE NEED A GENDER AGENDA?

For some people this question may be pretty obvious. We need a political, legal and social agenda to achieve equality as a matter of human rights and dignity. Unfortunately, for many others, a Gender Agenda is not a priority, with gender equality seemingly not that important anymore: we already have Hillary, don't we? And Emma Watson speaking in the UN. We even have the President of Canada claiming to be a feminist… and of course, we have Beyoncé. So, why are we still being so picky with all these gender-equality claims?

Let me answer: Because of Lucia.

Lucia Perez, a 16-year-old girl from Mar de la Plata, Argentina, was recently raped and impaled on spike. She died of a heart attack as a result of the inhuman pain she had suffered. This did not happen in a Game of Thrones episode or in a gory scene in a film, but just two months ago in Argentina, one of the most developed countries in Latin America. Let me continue: in August this year, five men –healthy, young and wealthy- brutally raped a girl during a summer fair in northern Spain and recorded it with their smartphones to share it on social networks. Only a couple of days ago, Erdogan's party put forward a bill that would pardon up to 3,000 child rapists if the perpetrator married

his victim. This is happening in Turkey, an ally of Europe and a prospective member of the Union. To top it off, more than 60 million Americans voted as the next president of the United States a man who has was recorded as saying he felt free to grab women's genitals when he wants too.

This is why a Gender Agenda is crucial, because inequality remains a major barrier to human development, and no further steps can be made if we leave half the world behind. On the occasion of the 25th of November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, we, the Politheor Team, want to stand up for equality and Human Rights by presenting this Special Report. The authors of the different pieces in this Report are young experts, women and men from different academic backgrounds and origins: from Kazakhstan to the UK, from Italy to the US, who represent the melting pot of cultures of our present and future Europe. Let's give them voice and room to speak.

Throughout these pages, the reader will find how the challenge of equality persists in different regions of the world, addressing the different faces of discrimination against women. Hot topics such as Brexit, the "Refugee Crisis" or Climate Change are discussed from the often neglected perspective of gender, essential to any comprehensive understanding as well to any meaningful solutions. That is why our authors also tackle key issues, such as Women's Leadership, Gender Mainstreaming, Quotas or the EU Policies to combat gender-based violence. As is often the case, it is not always about the glass ceiling, but the greasy ladder. Our contributors also bring here the testimonies and images of women experts on cooperation and the experience of those who struggle against human trafficking. From Tunisia and Lebanon to the Post-Soviet region, our report aims to untie multiple voices around a single claim: that we are all important and necessary in the achievement of equality.

As the proud editor of this Report, I would like to thank all of the authors and the rest of the Politheor Team for their help, commitment and enthusiasm. And of course, I would like to thank you, **the reader**, because your feedback and interest makes our work worthwhile.

Whenever someone claims that feminism is redundant, that equality has already been achieved, we must be clear: No way! This is not a radical statement, but rather a reality recognized by The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights confirmation that: today that no country to date has achieved full equality between the sexes. We hope that this Report represents one of many small contributions being made towards achieving that end. For you, for me, and for the future. For Lucia's sake.

Irene Zugasti
Editor of the Special Report
November 2016
Politheor.net

THE GENDER AGENDA: GENDER EQUALITY IN A CHANGING WORLD

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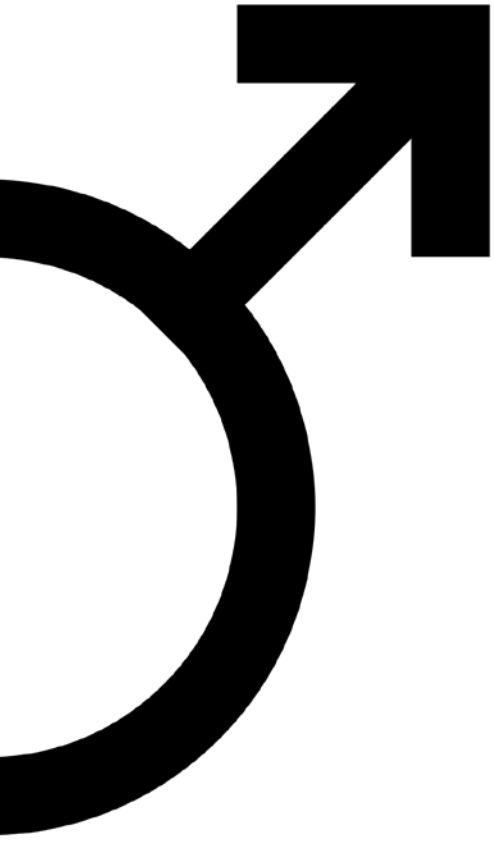


Section 1

EUROPE

Why "gender-based" and not "domestic"?

How do the discourses around Gender Based Violence differ? This article provides a summary of main definitions and concepts and their trajectories over time.

Authors: Irene Zugasti and Adrian Gonçalves

There exists presently no consensus around how best to tackle Gender Based Violence (GBV), neither conceptually, nor legislatively speaking. The different stances on the issue have emerged in the public arena alongside processes of (re) framing and (re) naming. The evolution of, and differences between, different definitions of GBV reflect changes in understanding and the insertion of new concepts. A glance at key pieces of international and national legislation highlights on-going definitional challenges.

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in 1993 - ratified at the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) - was the first international instrument that explicitly addressed Violence Against Women (VAW), establishing a framework for national and international action. It defines violence against women as *"any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".*

The Council of Europe defines VAW as "*all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life",* this definition has been also used by European Union guidelines on the issue.

The Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, the so-called Istanbul Convention (considered currently to be the most comprehensive international instrument on violence against women) states that *"violence against women is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life".*

In the Spanish framework, the Organic Act 1/2004 on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender Violence was the first law in Europe that includes a comprehensive response to violence against women within intimate relationships. It states that GBV *is not a problem confined to the private sphere. On the contrary, it stands as the most brutal symbol of the inequality persisting in our society. It is violence directed against women for the mere fact of being women; considered, by their aggressors, as lacking the most basic rights of freedom, respect and power of decision.*

Beyond institutional discourses, there exists an even greater range of definitions. These definitions depict different interpretive frameworks on GBV and ultimately attempt to delineate the spectrum of *violences* to be addressed. Potential problems arise when we recognize that the definition of the concept often itself carries with it presuppositions around what is considered to be the main cause or origin of VAW. Measures taken to prevent VAW are thus intimately linked with the original definition being offered.

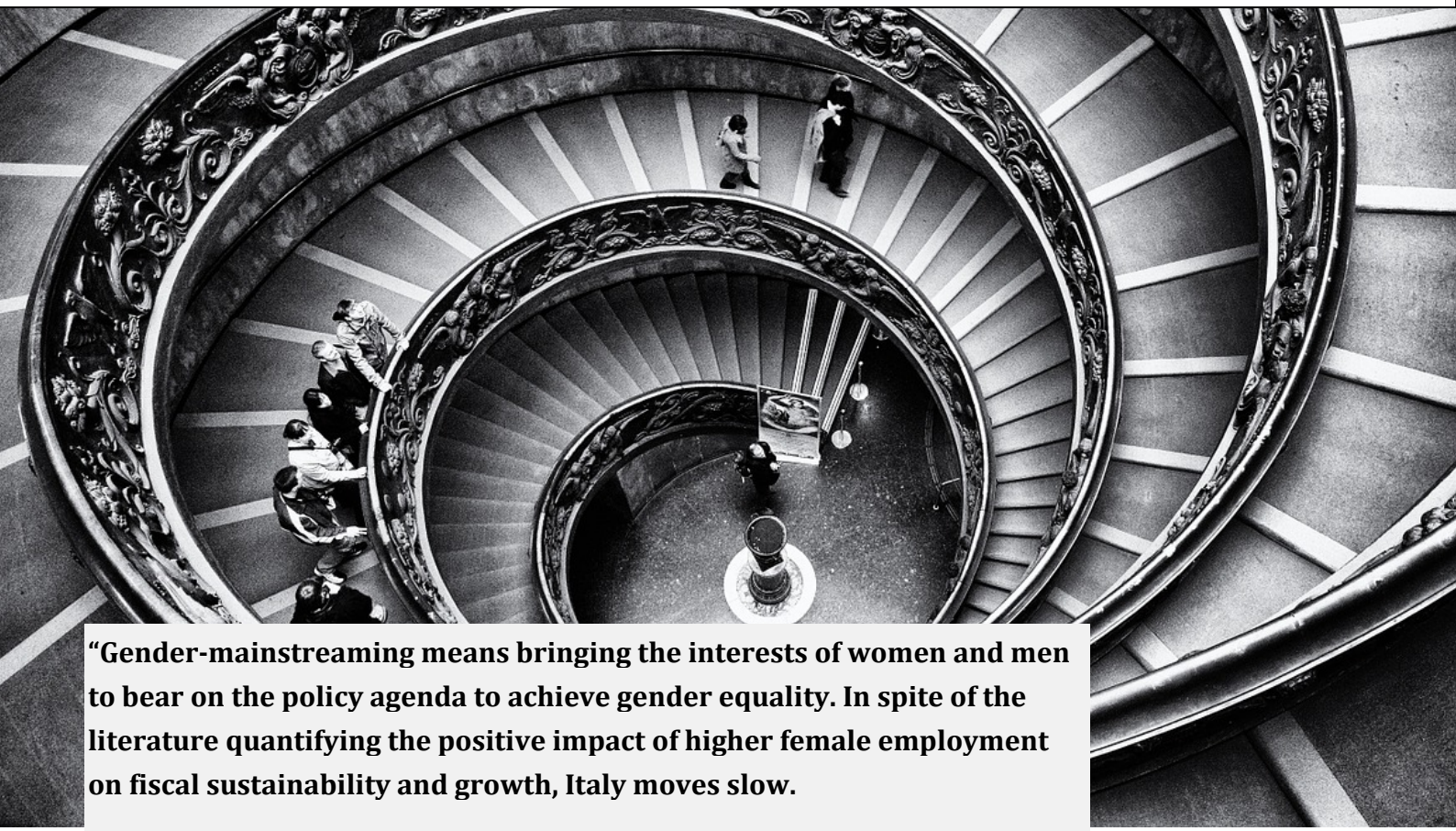
Bustelo, Lopez and Platero have attempted to analyse the ways in which different definitions of GBV have interpreted its causes. Working with a number of different documents dealing with, and referencing VAW in Spain (including official policies, laws, newspaper articles and parliamentary debates), their work identifies three major interpretive frameworks through which various definitions might be classified. The first is the **Frame of "Domestic violence as genderless**". In this context, victims and perpetrators are not identified by their sex or gender. The aggressor is presented as violent and dangerous, and the victim as dependent and anyone can occupy each of the roles, so that "*the problem is presented in neutral terms regarding gender".* This framework places the origin of the problem in family breakdown, often masking gendered patterns of violence. Neither violence itself nor gender inequality is central to the understanding of GBV but rather, the decline of the traditional family is in focus.

Secondly, the **Frame of "Domestic violence with emphasis on women as the main victim group"** Although women are described as the main victims and men as the main aggressors in this context, it does not point to a problem between men and women: everyone can be a victim or perpetrator. This discourse ignores the structural nature of gender violence and continues to conceal the responsibility of the aggressors, because the man who assaults is invisible, focusing the problem on women.

The last Frame is the one of "**Gender Equality"** This framework defines GBV as *"a form of gender discrimination, and sees the phenomenon as a reflection of the unequal power relations within the family and more widely in society*". So in this context, violence is interpreted as a product of gender inequality in all societies, considering the problem as universal. This context is understood as a re-negotiation of meanings around this problem, noting the role played, as López highlights, of key political and social actors.

Words are not innocent. The importance of ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating VAW (Istanbul Convention) is a key milestone to understand the extent and the nature of GBV. Much has been achieved, but much remains to be done.

Gender-mainstreaming in Italy: When assets are considered liabilities



"Gender-mainstreaming means bringing the interests of women and men to bear on the policy agenda to achieve gender equality. In spite of the literature quantifying the positive impact of higher female employment on fiscal sustainability and growth, Italy moves slow.

Author: Francesca Coppola

The pervasiveness of the male-breadwinner model has long characterized the Italian welfare system. It reflects an ideal of the family in which men earn a wage and provide, while women do domestic labor and care for family members.

The Italian labor market has always presented an uncomfortably wide gender gap. Women were incentivized to free jobs up for men, based on a female labor-shedding strategy through which, arguably, the employment and "family wage" of the male worker could be secured. At the same time, barriers were created to policies aiming at the reduction of the work-family trade-off and the consequent enhancement, on the one side, of female labor market participation and, on the other side, child- and elderly care programs.

Initially, the European Employment Strategy underlined the importance of gender-mainstreaming. However, Italian legislation fell short. Then, after the crisis started in 2008 and austerity policies were imposed, «the European Economic Recovery Plan made no mention of 'gender', 'women' or 'equality'». The focus of Italian policy-making shifted from gendering and recalibration to labor cheapening. This meant first and foremost a reorganization of paid work in favor of flexibility with the sponsoring of part-time, temporary and fixed-term contracts – all specifically targeted to increase employment across the new social risk cohorts, like the young and women, though not job quality and security; but also considerable cuts to an already low social care expenditure.

Data pointing at the stability and, even, the modest increase in female employment (0.1%)

registered during the crisis (2008-2014) – versus a contraction by 6.9% of male employment over the same period – are then misleading. They were due to temporary circumstances that do not represent a long-standing challenge to the structural framework where female employment is penalized, such as: the weight of female foreign workers; the increase in employment for women of 50 and more years of age following the higher retirement age; the forced entrance of women in the labor market in order to support family income in the face of their partner's job loss.

The "real" female employment rate remains discouragingly low, at around 47% of the female active population and almost 13 points below the EU average. Besides, Istat documents that the employment rate of women in childbearing age has fallen and, of the 1m women that unsuccessfully try to enter the labor market, almost half are mothers. This reflects a policy stance that still considers women, especially mothers, as liabilities – not by chance, the EU ranks Italy in Group 4 (the most underdeveloped) when it comes to family policies.

The predicament is the persistence of a "welfare without work" that undermines the fiscal sustainability of the Italian welfare model, because of the high (income) dependency on the breadwinner. Besides, due to the huge work-family trade-off, women's desire to enter the labor force translates into a drop in the fertility rate – which at 1.4 is one of the lowest in Europe.

Valuing women as assets would improve the situation. First, from a demographic perspective, higher female employment helps offset the negative impact of an ageing population. Combined with well-developed family policies – e.g. flexible parental leave shared by the father and the mother, family-friendly corporate policies – it also contributes to higher fertility rates.

Second, from an economic viewpoint, higher female employment translates into lower costs in terms of wasted human capital, especially given that women, on average, tend to be more qualified than men. It has even been estimated that in Italy gender gaps lower long-term total income by 21.2% (the biggest loss among OECD countries). Besides, the economy going digital with Industry 4.0 entails new occupations. Yet, the digital skills and employment gap will hardly be closed if higher female employment isn't incentivized (the EU Commission estimates up to 825,000 unfilled vacancies by 2020).

Finally, socially speaking, more women employed reduce poverty risks, in particular those linked to the fragmentation of families and the increase in single mothers.

More than ever, policies for the reduction of the work-family trade-off and the increase of female employment result fundamental for Italy's economic and social development, being the male breadwinner model culturally obsolete and fiscally unsustainable.

However, as Maurizio Ferrera notes, Italy is moving slow. In its Stability Plan, most "social" resources have been redirected towards pensions, while family policies have remained the invisible Cinderella of welfare. Another opportunity wasted.

The gender in Brexit

Regardless of the outcome of the upcoming Brexit negotiations between the UK and the EU, women will lose from the deal. But it is not too late yet to turn crisis into opportunity.

Author: Maerike Müller

In 1975 the United Kingdom held its first referendum about leaving the European Economic Community – the European Union's predecessor – and decided to remain. Many things were different back then, including the role women played in the debate. Not only were women addressed by politicians – who seized the opportunity to mobilize voters – but also they actively campaigned to 'vote yes!'.

41 years later instead, women's issues were little discussed in the debates running up to the referendum on June 23rd. What was different this time?

One of the main reasons is to be found in information, or the lack thereof. The economic integration process promoted by the EU has not only contributed to growth, but also to reducing gender gaps, especially on the labour market. Indeed, over the past four decades, EU policies and legislations have brought about a significant improvement of working conditions, particularly for pregnant women and mothers, and stipulated basic rights, like paid holidays or the possibilities for couples to take time off for their kids. For instance, in 1984, the UK government was forced to ensure equal pay for work of equal value after being taken to court by the European Commission.

Although these achievements were at stake in this summer's referendum, few, if any, informed the public. We saw political campaigns and debates by men, for men and about men. Only 16 per cent of TV appearances on the topic featured women, and not a single woman was among the ten individuals receiving the most press coverage on the topic. Sporadic articles and unions' attempts to point out the gender in Brexit were drowned out by a noisy debate dominated by the right.

It is therefore not surprising that women did not vote significantly differently from men, yet, they were much less decisive. An indecisive crowd just before an election or referendum is typically a gift for politicians and campaigners. Had the Remain campaign targeted women more skilfully, the vote could have been turned around – we are talking about more of half of the UK's population after all. Simply putting the blame on those women who voted 'leave' does not do the trick: democracy is not only about decisions, but also about the information they are based them on.

Anyway, the decision has been made, and although many UK citizens would have liked to change it – let us not forget those seven per cent 'bregretting' their votes the morning after – they will have to deal with the consequences. What are the consequences for women then?

The answer depends largely on the upcoming negotiations between the UK and the European Union. In the best-case scenario, the UK and the EU manage to tailor a deal that would make the UK better off economically than it is now, and things could stay the same for women.

In the worst case, the 'hard' Brexit scenario would throw the UK back to trade rules per WTO framework. The real outcome of negotiations is likely to lie somewhere between these two scenarios, but in any case, the UK will probably end up with more protectionist trade policies, and access to the Single Market will be restricted, increasing costs for UK-based firms. The economic downturn that would follow – and rarely have economists agreed so widely as on the damage that Brexit will wreak on the UK's economy – would bear more costs on women than men, as they are in more vulnerable working and social positions more frequently. This is costly: already now, the UK economy's long-run total income loss due to gender gaps is estimated at 14 per cent.

Besides the economic consequences, UK citizens will also experience a change in internal policies and legislation. Chances are high that the government, promising less regulatory burden for businesses, will not leave workers' rights intact, including laws protecting from sexual discrimination in the workplace or offering paid maternal leave and pregnancy benefits. Currently, trade unions are negotiating better future deals for women within the EU – sadly, the UK will not profit from those anymore.

However, it is not too late yet to make women's voices heard in the debate over the modalities of Brexit: the negotiations have not started yet, the UK's strategy remains unknown, and hence open to certain inputs. Some of the cards women and their advocates could have played out remain, and as gender equality fosters economic growth, the win-set is considerable. Otherwise, we will experience a manifestation of what French philosopher Elisabeth Badinter predicts in her latest book – the *de facto* loss of women's rights that we took for granted too easily.

The power of people: A victory for Polish women and human rights

Coming from a Catholic country where 7 out of 10 doctors are conscientious objectors, I followed the debate on abortion in Poland with passion, and hope. Hope for the protest of 30.000 people who went out onto the streets in early October, and managed to save Polish women from what felt like a medieval backlash.

Author: Rosella Lombardi

October 3rd, Black Monday. Thousands of Polish citizens gathered all over the country, boycotting their jobs and schools to send a strong sign to a government who seemed to have forgotten the simplest notions of human rights.

Following a citizens' initiative from the advocacy group "Ordo Iuris" and the coalition "Anti-abortion", the Polish government initially backed a law proposal entailing a near-total ban on abortion. As a quick reminder: a total ban on abortion is only contemplated in the jurisdiction of States such as the Vatican. In this article I argue that a near-total ban is nonetheless, just as dangerous and threatening to the principles of democracy.

Historically, abortion was widely liberalised under the Soviet regime and remained legal after the fall of Communism. Why Poland was the only one of these post-Soviet countries to reverse the liberalisation of abortion laws has largely to do with the deeply rooted presence of the church - reaching its apex with the papacy of Wojtyla, John Paul II - who is known for being conservative, especially on sexuality and women's issues.

The attempt to introduce the ban arrived at an already difficult time for Polish society. Since the political party Law and Order (Pis) obtained an absolute majority in the parliament, the country had started to veer towards the far right of the political spectrum. This led, for example, to a total refusal on the relocation of refugees.

Due to the interference of the church and this very conservative government, the current abortion situation in Poland is one of the most restrictive in the world. The termination of a

pregnancy is illegal except in three (extreme) cases: rape or incest, if the woman's life is at risk, or if the foetus is severely ill. If one of these conditions applies, a legal "check" has to follow, i.e. a physician must give consent for the latter two cases, and a prosecutor for the first one. I can only imagine how long and agonising this process could be. Added to this is the not unlikely possibility of encountering a doctor who refuses to perform abortions. It is then no wonder that women choose illegal and often dangerous alternatives abroad, according to what they can afford.

The new ban would have eliminated two of those conditions – rape/incest and foetus' illness – allowing abortion only in extreme cases endangering the pregnant woman's life. Doctors would then only be entitled to intervene when the health risk becomes potentially fatal; there would be no exemptions foreseen to allow a doctor to take preventative action to save her). If these rules are not respected, both the woman and the doctor could then be prosecuted and face a prison sentence of up to 5 years.

Leaving aside pro and counter arguments for abortion, I argue that such a proposal goes against two fundamental rights, overtly recognised since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the right to privacy and the right to equality. A woman, as any individual, should be entitled to decide for her own body, life and will. Only then it is possible to talk about equality and the absence of discrimination on the grounds of choices an individual makes about their own self.

As anticipated, the government and the Church were initially in favour of this rather absurd proposal. It is only thanks to the courage and participation of the people in Black Monday that they were forced to retreat.

October 5th. Due to the chaotic situation, generated especially by Polish women, an MPs committee recommended that the Parliament vote down the proposal.

October 6th, democracy wins a significant battle. The lower house of parliament rejects the new legislation, with only one fraction in favour. The leader of the Pis, Kaczyński, back-pedalled the government's position with the excuse that such a ban "could lead to opposite reactions in the future". His party members followed these controversial instructions, whilst others saw it as a betrayal of conservative values. The future is still unsure and the law nonetheless restrictive. However, the abortion ban would have been a betrayal of the rights of women and their will - and these values won today.

Counter radicalization policies in the UK: Counterproductive for gender equality

Despite the fact that the various reasons leading to radicalisation of men and women are cited as the same, the approaches to counter radicalisation do little but enforce gender stereotypes and disempower women. Instead, policies should consider the wider factors that lead to the social isolation of women such as racial hatred and gender-based discrimination resulting in community isolation.

Author: Katherine Atkinson

Sixteen-year-old British girl Kadiza Sultana travelled to Syria to join Dae'sh with two friends in 2015. This, and her subsequent supposed death in an airstrike captured the nation's attention to the issue of radicalised women. The media not once used the word 'terrorist' to describe Sultana. 'Young, impressionable' Sultana had been groomed, and mindlessly 'lured' into the grasp of Da'esh to become a dutiful 'jihadi bride'. In a double prejudice, much of the rhetoric around Muslim women focuses on their passiveness by comparison with their criminal male counterparts, and counter radicalisation adopts the same assumption.

Just six months after cutting funding for ESOL tuition by £45m, David Cameron introduced a £20m fund to provide English language lessons to Muslim women. He cited this as a tool for preventing extremism giving them greater emancipation from their "traditionally submissive" roles. Cameron's reasoning is first and foremost flawed since most Syrians travelling to Briton have in fact perfect English. Language learning is undoubtedly vital for enabling immigrants of all genders and backgrounds to access employment and understand their civil rights with greater ease, but the conflation of extremism with language ability is incredibly misguided.

Moreover - his assumption that Muslim women are vulnerable to radicalisation because of their unique 'submissiveness' suggests that all Muslim women are disempowered in some way, and that emancipation and equality is unreservedly available to non-Muslims -

despite the fact that Middlesbrough, a city that is 88% white, was cited as the 'worst place to be a girl in the UK'. Cameron is not the only one to point out this 'submissiveness'. Donald Trump equally did so when he criticised Ghazala Khan for staying silent while her husband spoke about their deceased son during the Democratic National Convention this year. Assuming that Muslim women are submissive enforces the notion presented by the media that they are victimised, unlike men, and therefore denies them the equal status that they seek and deserve.

The 'submissive' stereotype of a Muslim woman is reinforced by the assumption that she possesses inherently motherly or wifely characteristics that mediate her criminality. The analysis of radicalisation and the suggestions for counter radicalisation fail to break away from such stereotypes. Politicians and the media speculated that Sultana and other women join Da'esh to become a wife and (presumably) a mother that can contribute to the Islamic State by ensuring its continuation. Any notion of a political motivation to actively participate in the organisation's activities is denied. In response, the government has created initiatives that focus on women's roles as mothers – including a video by MET police featuring mothers who have returned from Syria to deter others from joining Da'esh. The UK's oldest counter radicalisation think tank has proposed hotlines or support groups for women who fear that their children are at risk of radicalisation. The international organisation Women Without Borders has established 'mother schools' in multiple countries for this same purpose. Yes, motherhood can unite women worldwide, but so can politics, a sense of community, or shared values. Such policy narratives create the assumption that women must make a choice between being a good mother or a good bride. It confines women to gender roles as opposed to empowering them as political actors, community members or even citizens.

Current policies fail to address that radicalisation is most commonly linked to alienation and isolation from society. This can stem from discrimination and the lack of a social purpose. The UK needs to invest in organisations that offer support groups for women of *all* ages and backgrounds who experience hate crime or gender-based violence. Such issues should not be confined to the Muslim community. Certain NGOs do this already, including the Warwickshire Race Equality Partnership and the JAN Trust - but they face dire shortages in funding. Hotlines should not only be aimed at mothers, but fathers, wider family and friends too. Most importantly, the government and media should seek to empower all women as agents of action and change through community networks where they are given the opportunity to integrate and engage in local issues. If the government fails to acknowledge the role of Muslim women beyond motherhood, as change makers and active participants in society, then counter radicalisation policies will isolate them further.

Section 2

TESTIMONIALS

Women trafficking and the US's worrisome silence

"Trafficking? Here? In the United States?" **I fear this would summarize the majority's response. While human trafficking is well-known around the world, the United States is falling behind in awareness and lacks a unified approach towards its prevention. Strong commitments do exist at the community level, but these tend to function independently or have little financial support –a reflection of missing systematic plans to stop human trafficking within US borders altogether.**

Author: Angela Redd Clavijo

According to a 2012 ILO report, an estimated 20.9 million people globally are victims of forced labor. Of these, 55% are female and 45% male. This 10% difference is attributed to women and girls' involvement in sex trafficking, as men and boys are predominantly involved in other types of forced labor. Data is limited for reasons described below, but in 2016 more than 4,000 cases of sex trafficking have been reported in the US according to the National Human Trafficking Hotline. In Atlanta, Georgia alone, an estimated 300,000USD in annual profits are generated from this practice, as stated in a memorandum written by Dr. Robert Christensen to local legislature. Yet, still, the issue is largely dismissed as a foreign one and the victims remain silent.

Sex trafficking victims in many cases don't realize they've been trafficked. Many are young and succumb to false promises. Others, ironically, keep silence for fear of law enforcement. Just as laws treat minors as criminals if caught drinking before the legal age, for example, human trafficking victims under 18 are treated as criminals if they're caught prostituting. This means victims are not accessing services they need for recovery, such as being admitted in to a counseling facility or given temporary shelter. These girls, often from middle-income families, are instead sent to juvenile prison or bailed out by their pimps, taking home a criminal record as well.

This silence certainly has made data gathering and analysis challenging. Matt Friedman of the Mekong Club, an organization devoted to end

modern-day slavery, recently toured the United States to encourage people to get involved. The data he observed was available shed light on the following challenges: 1) Raw data appeared to have been collected in different formats 2) There is no central repository for analysis or dissemination 3) Some organizations were resistant to share their data fearing it would give others a funding advantage 4) Many groups didn't know the value of applying good data to their work. Friedman explains these challenges were missed opportunities as they would only improve awareness efforts. Similarly, it is difficult to show trends or monitor change when information hasn't been previously available or measured.

Another reason sex trafficking awareness is low is simple: denial. *"This only happens abroad!" "Our children are protected here!"* For many Americans, the idea this could happen to a friend or a neighbor has not been accepted. This mentality needs to change.

This is why people like Matt Friedman (picture above), an activist for more than 25 years, and trusted organizations like The Mekong Club are important. Friedman, alongside his wife Sylvia Yu, Hong Kong-based journalist and winner of the 2013 International Human Rights Press Award, talked about forced labor at 112 presentations across 17 states to corporations, government offices, schools, NGOs, faith-based groups, Rotarian Clubs and general audiences. Some of the solutions they propose to drive awareness and preventative efforts include an inventory and revision of all US anti-human trafficking laws, updated training to law enforcement and civil service officials, a commitment by existing local institutions to work together, and a call for the government to come up with a master plan, much like those created to eliminate poverty or HIV/AIDS.

The State of Georgia could be an example of a way forward. "Georgia represented an exception," Friedman states, "the counter-trafficking response there was coordinated from the State level down to the community level with many systems and procedures in place." In the December 2015 memorandum to Georgia legislature, the following solutions were proposed to fight sex trafficking: 1) create stricter laws and punishments 2) decriminalize prostitution and 3) legalize prostitution. Each solution has important arguments worth understanding.

The argument for stricter laws recalls other nations' efforts. Sweden in 1998, for example, became the first country to criminalize anyone that purchased a sex service. This allegedly cut street prostitution in half, as L. J. Lederer states in 2010. Other European countries followed but with unclear results, and South Korea in 2004 took a more comprehensive approach. This country's laws prohibit all forms of prostitution and provides victim with assistance.

The decriminalization of sex-trafficking would involve removing, or reducing, all criminal penalties, but keeping prostitution subject to certain laws. It could even mean keeping laws in their current state, but not enforcing them, as R. Weitzer states in 2012. New Zealand is claimed to follow this approach as do a few US states that are forming laws focusing more on identifying victims rather than arresting prostitutes, as R. Beitsch describes in 2015.

Legalization may not be as effective as envisioned. This is more common internationally but also practiced in one US state –in the rural counties of Nevada (but not

in major cities like Reno and Las Vegas). Legalization would involve government regulation, such as the registration of women in sex venues, locations of brothels, health monitoring and taxation, as R. G. Raymond describes in 2013. While some claim legalization has kept rural brothels in Nevada free of human trafficking, Raymond argues this hasn't been the case for the Netherlands. Despite prostitution considered a legal profession there, "forced prostitution, abuse by pimps and the presence of organized crime remain problematic."

Friedman also pointed to the pros and cons of legalization. "In Amsterdam you have about as much trafficking now as prior to legalization. It's not about whether a woman chooses to get into this and is regulated, but more that they are forced and tricked into it because money can be made by these people."

On Election Day November 8th, 2016 with over three million votes, Georgia passed the Safe Harbor Amendment 2 Child Sex Trafficking Fund, which will cover the costs for child victims' recovery services, such as safe housing, trauma counseling and medical treatment. This State-managed fund is made possible through fines given to sex-trafficking criminals and new fees imposed on the adult entertainment industry, especially establishments offering alcohol and nudity.

Amendments like this one bring hope, but the fact that such a pervasive problem goes almost unnoticed by a country is frightening. "While it was never our intention to carry out an analysis of the state of the human trafficking response in the USA, within the first 20 days it became clear that there were many observations and lessons worth documenting," writes Friedman in his trip report, available here. When I interviewed him for this article, it was also not my intention to carry this message forward, but it's the only one if we're to drive awareness and action in the US. We can begin today, right now, by educating each other, uniting and lending our voices, and deciding to take this issue seriously.

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Author's note: *This article focuses on the female gender because it honors an international call to end violence against women, and because women are the majority involved and have historically been more disadvantaged than men (pay, education, opportunities). This article does not pretend, however, to disregard that men are victims too. Men and boys are forced into labor also and should be included in all abolition movements and conversations. A special thank you is extended to Matt Friedman and The Mekong Club for their time, expertise and inspiration.*

The added value of cooperation
An interview with Lara Garcia

The field of cooperation has traditionally being gender-biased, and roles of women as "caregivers" and men as "developers" have largely determined the work of cooperators around the world. How are young women changing the face of cooperation? Lara García Delgado is a Telecommunication engineer working in the developing field who collaborated with Ongawa, a Spain-based NGO that focuses on appropriate technology for human development. Lara is now immersed in a project that will help detect infant tuberculosis through image processing tools applied to lung radiographies. Through her testimony, this young engineer will give us her view on women and cooperation based on her personal experience in the field.

Author: Javier Fernandez Quevedo

JFQ: You come from engineering, a traditionally masculine field. Was it a change, going into cooperation?

LG: Yes, it was a change from the beginning. In my Bachelor, there was a great majority of men. However, in one subject that I took about Telecommunications Engineering Applied to Development we were curiously more women than men.

At the end of my Bachelor I worked on a project with an NGO in which a lot of engineers work as employees and as volunteers. Both in the headquarters and in the field, I worked with many women and I saw that the quantity of women and men was fairly balanced, with several women having responsibility positions.

Would you say cooperation is eminently a women's world? Why do you think so?

From my personal experience, I would say that cooperation is a field where, at least, gender equality is accounted for. As I mentioned before, it is interesting how the percentages of men and women are turned around in the world of engineering when we deal with engineers interested in applying their knowledge to development, where there seem to be more women interested.

The reason why women with technical profiles can be more interested than men with the same profile in development cooperation can be explained by several causes. There is a social component that might make it more attractive

for us women than the pure technical aspects that appear in a standard engineering company. Likewise, there is no cooperation without empathy and communication, which are traditionally more associated to women.

Also, cooperation has a component of care and it is known that there is a majority of women in all professions that involve care -medicine, nursing or teaching- nowadays. There is a tendency for women to get these positions that can be explained by either the fact that "we do it better" or because we lean more towards this type of job. Although in this case, do we have this natural predisposition or is it something that society teaches us from the moment we are born?

What are the values that cooperation and feminism have in common?

I believe that feminism is an ideology that intends to not exclude anyone in society. Its motto is that women and men must have the same opportunities and that nobody should be excluded, including those people who belong to minorities such as the LGBT group.

The fact that no one is left behind is also one of the main principles of development cooperation. When a new technology is introduced, we always have to think about what will happen to the people that were doing the work that the new technology will cover. We need to make sure that it is not going to affect societal patterns that will have a negative impact on the community as well.

Is this why cooperation is less important in Foreign Affairs than, let's say, the Army, which is a much more masculine methodology of intervention?

It is true that it could be one of the reasons, but there are many more that have a stronger significance in my opinion. I think we are in a historical moment in which there is fear of precariousness, terrorism and as a result fear of the unknown, the different. This has terrible consequences, as we have witnessed. There is a belief that those fears, embodied in immigration, are going to lead us to a worse situation, and we consequently invest in defense, walls… But we might be forgetting that if we invested more in improving the conditions of the countries where immigration is originated; there would not be a need to invest in those walls.

How can cooperation help change gender discrimination patterns?

I think that cooperation helps directly to ease inequalities. Firstly, it shows us many gender differences when it comes to education and health in countries where women's rights are still a secondary issue. Afterwards we can allocate funds to alleviate those differences. Secondly and in a more interesting way, it illustrates inequality situations in a very clear way, which helps us remember how our society was very similar not so long ago -and that there might still be traces left-.

Do you think cooperating women help eradicate gender-based violence in countries like Mozambique?

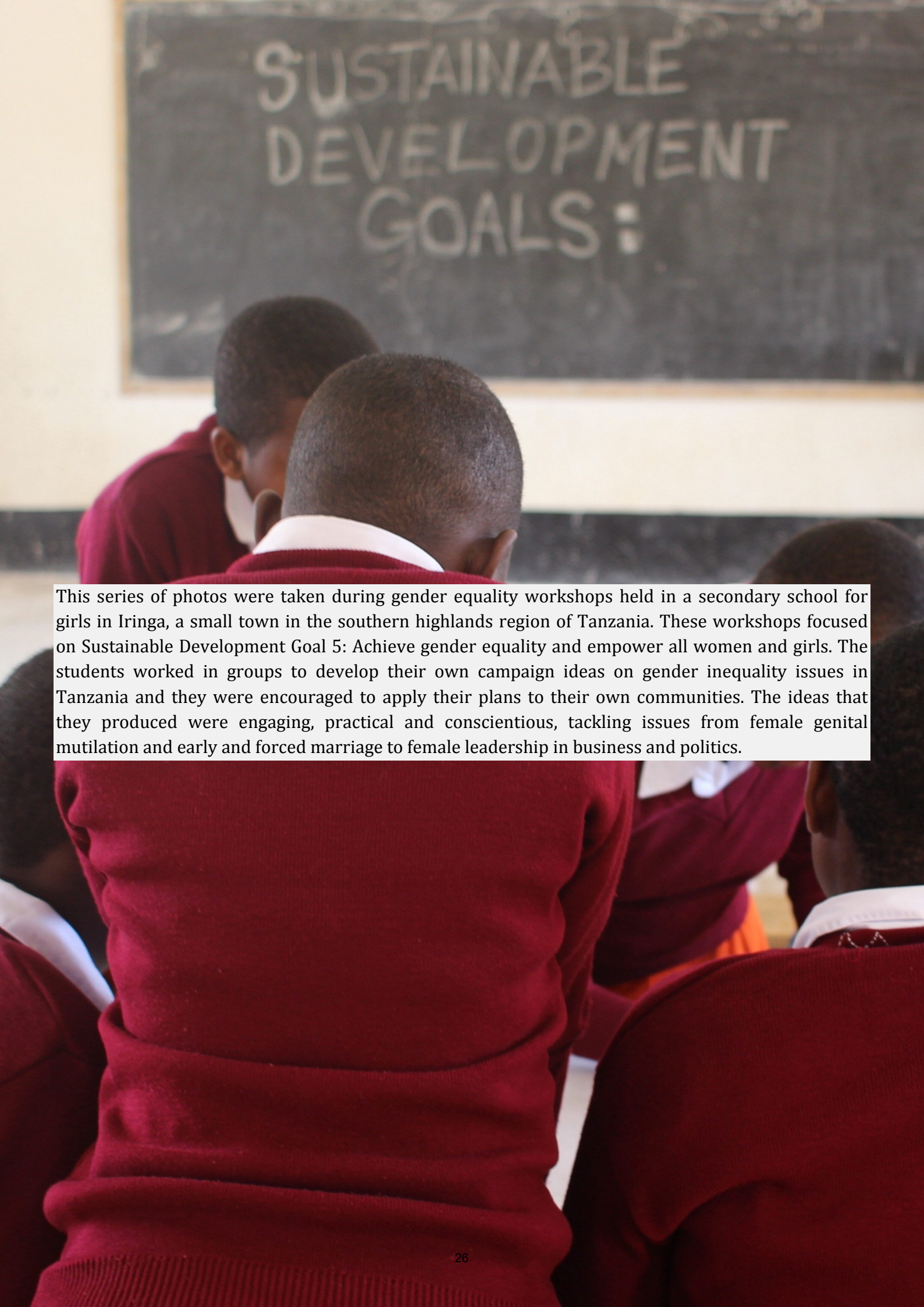
Yes, of course. There are several aspects in which women that work in cooperation can help reduce inequality. Women in these places are always going to feel more comfortable sharing with other women, and this can help getting to the bottom of some problems.

What's more, it would be ideal if cooperating women were local women because they would not encounter the cultural barriers that we face and woman of the community would be getting responsibility positions. The fact that communities see local or foreign women in decision-making jobs and that they do well contributes to a slow decrease of inequalities.

Gender equality workshops in Tanzania: When we give girls space to express themselves, they shine

Fiona McLaughlan has recently returned from Tanzania, where she worked for a youth charity on an education and livelihoods programme. She brings us a photo-story from one of the gender equality workshops held in a small town in the southern highlands region of Tanzania.

When we hear about issues of gender inequality in sub-Saharan Africa, the focus is often on what women and girls are lacking; a discourse of "women as victims" vs "men as patriarchs". There is no doubt that significant and severe inequalities exist and they must be tackled as a matter of urgency, but there is a distinct lack of focus in mainstream media of what girls CAN achieve and the positive potential and skills that they already possess. It's time we heard more success stories about girls and young women. There are so many more Malalas out there, ready for their stories to be told and inspire action in others.



This series of photos were taken during gender equality workshops held in a secondary school for girls in Iringa, a small town in the southern highlands region of Tanzania. These workshops focused on Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The students worked in groups to develop their own campaign ideas on gender inequality issues in Tanzania and they were encouraged to apply their plans to their own communities. The ideas that they produced were engaging, practical and conscientious, tackling issues from female genital mutilation and early and forced marriage to female leadership in business and politics.

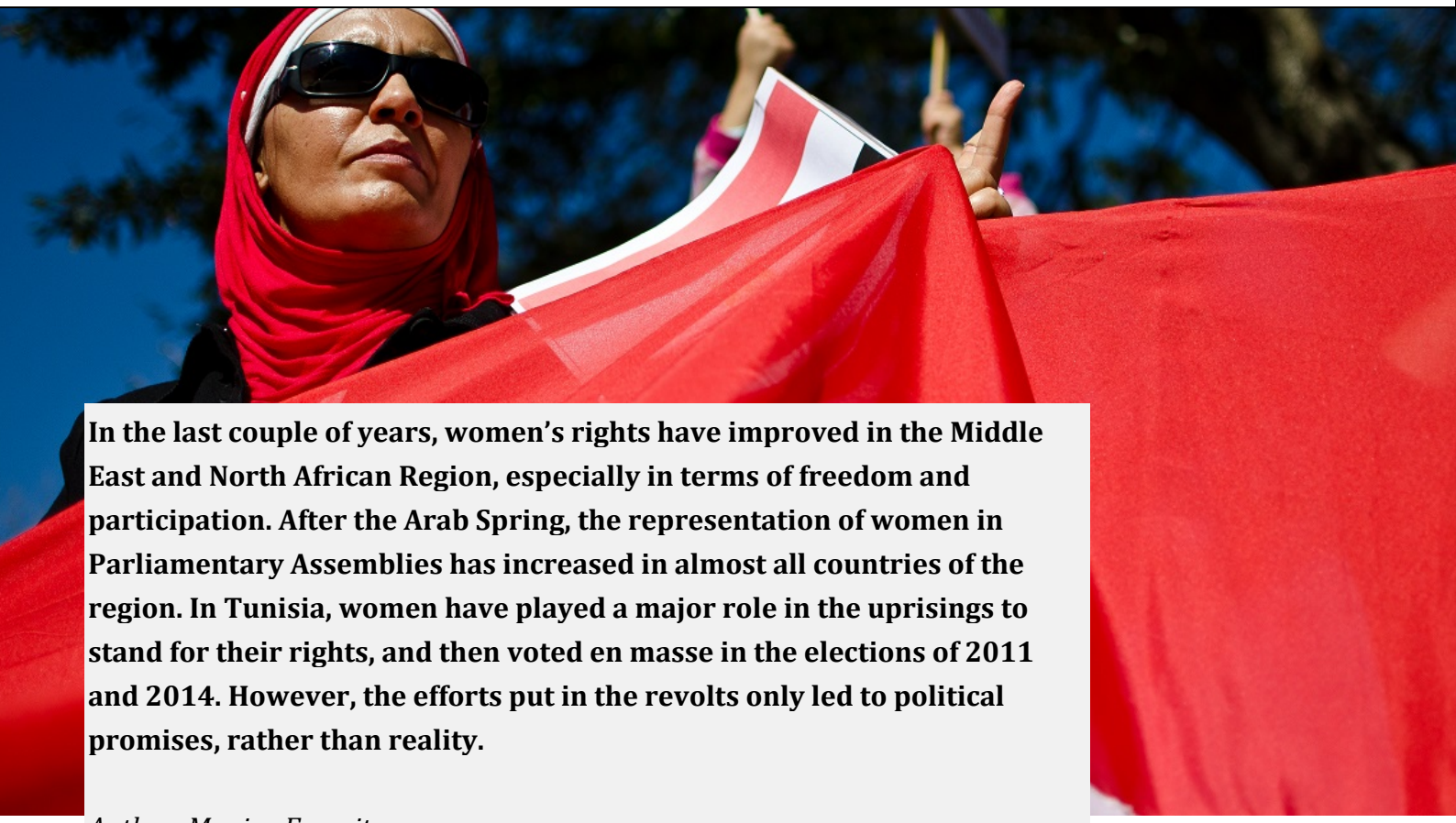
What was so inspiring about working with this group of young women was how expressive, confident and motivated they became when they were given the opportunity to strategise and work on issues that were important to them and their communities. This is why we must ensure that girls and young women are given safe and secure places to voice their opinions and to air their concerns about subjects they care about.

When girls and young women are given the space to express themselves, they shine, and their potential is infinite. So, on International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women 2016 it is vital to highlight that if we want to tackle gender inequality, then we need to give ALL girls and young women the safe space to campaign and share their own thoughts on how to solve the problems they face. They know their reality better than anyone else, so let's put their voices first and achieve gender equality for all.

Section 3

ALL AROUND THE WORLD

Women in Tunisia: Democratic façade or civil society's struggle?



In the last couple of years, women's rights have improved in the Middle East and North African Region, especially in terms of freedom and participation. After the Arab Spring, the representation of women in Parliamentary Assemblies has increased in almost all countries of the region. In Tunisia, women have played a major role in the uprisings to stand for their rights, and then voted en masse in the elections of 2011 and 2014. However, the efforts put in the revolts only led to political promises, rather than reality.

Author: Monica Esposito

During the election in 2014 in Tunisia, women outnumbered men among registered voters. Women were greatly encouraged to vote because their rights were not only considered, but there was also a wish to enhance them. Political parties, well aware of this trend, proposed female candidates to gather votes from the female electorate: among 13,000 parliamentary candidates, 47% were women. Nowadays, after the 2014 elections, women represent 31.3 % of the Parliament and 19% of the government. According to one of the most important Tunisian feminist activists, Khadija Cherif, the percentage demonstrates the unwillingness of putting in practice the Article 46 of the Constitution, which calls for "*the parity between men and women in elected assemblies*". The real struggle for women in power, but also for men who believe in gender equality and representation, is to enforce laws in line with the principles of the Constitution. This is a very hard task in the absence of a Constitutional Court. Political parties use women's rights as a façade in their search for consensus, which is a very disappointing conclusion. It worked, considering that the actual Tunisian President Essebsi has won the election in 2014 thanks to the female votes. Women of the Ennahda party have played a decisive role in advocating for their rights inside the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) on Rights and Freedom, but we cannot neglect the work of civil associations.

The Tunisia revolution allowed women to build strong networks among themselves. However, feminism in Tunisia is going through an identity crisis. A gap has risen, in recent years, between two different interpretations of women's rights. One the one side, the model of the westernized and well-educated women at power, such as the Ministry of Tourism, Mrs.

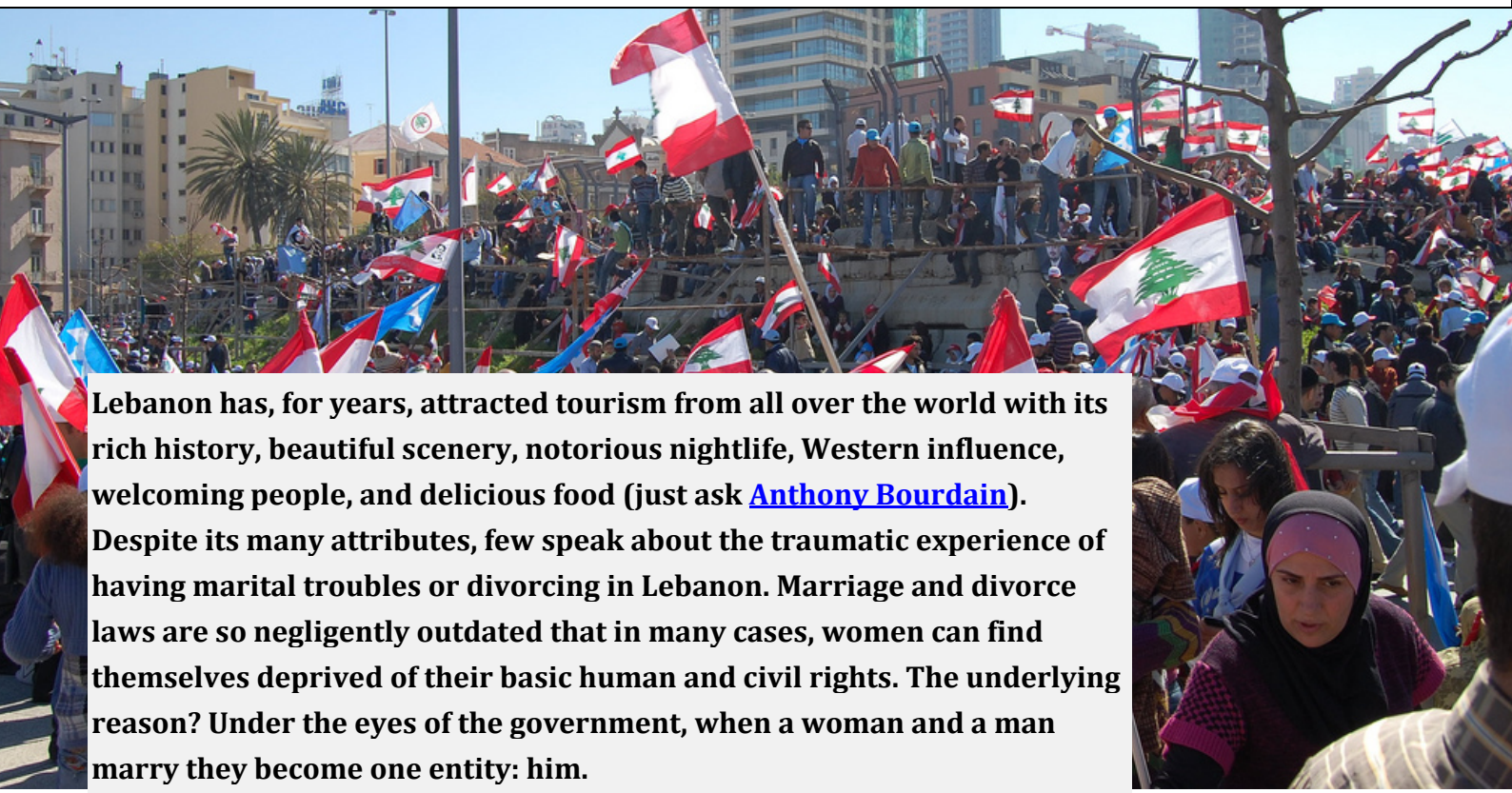
Amel Karboul or Mehrezia Labidi, Vice-President of the National Constitutional Assembly; on the other side, a more conservative and religious interpretation of women emerged. Advocating for women's rights does not mean necessarily to ensure a progressive and laic point of view. A vision that the President of the major party in Tunisia, Ennahda, must seriously consider, after all, he decided to separate religion and democracy through a secularist interpretation of "Democracy of Muslims". Considering all these perceptions in women rights' discourses is as good as including in the feminist struggle people from all over the country.

Tunisia has a lot of interregional disparities in terms of education and development. The level of illiteracy not only influences the political vote; it also severely impacts the sociological environment in which a family is built. The lack of education impacts the way women interpret their role inside the family. The *Tunisian Association of Democratic Women* is an excellent example of feminist group that tackles the status of women in different parts of the country, by raising awareness of their rights. Its objectives could be awarded only if integrated with government's efforts: a plan of economic development across whole Tunisia is fundamental for guaranteeing the respect of human rights.

Despite the efforts, women in Tunisia have a long road ahead, and some strategic mistakes are making this road quite difficult to pursue. First, interpreting the empowerment of women in just a feminist perspective, as some organisations do, could result dangerous and ineffective. From the government's side, abusing the feminist manifesto for electoral purposes demonstrates how the mindset of gender equality must be changed. In fact, advocating for women rights means, above all, ensuring access to education and protection of freedom for all Tunisian women, no matter what region they came from and what social background they have. In addition to that, a dialogue between civil society and government, and among all the organisations at the civil society level, must be enhanced.

Even if today the percentage of women at the Tunisia Parliament is around 31%, not far from the percentage registered in Europe, the Article 46 of the Constitution calling for gender equality has not yet been implemented. The fact that female voices can be heard and can be expressed does not assure that their objectives became concrete, and that they are inserted in the political agenda, but is should be. A commitment to a more inclusive political agenda is fundamental for an everlasting and peaceful transition.

A Lebanese women's (legal) guide to 'happily ever after'



Lebanon has, for years, attracted tourism from all over the world with its rich history, beautiful scenery, notorious nightlife, Western influence, welcoming people, and delicious food (just ask Anthony Bourdain). Despite its many attributes, few speak about the traumatic experience of having marital troubles or divorcing in Lebanon. Marriage and divorce laws are so negligently outdated that in many cases, women can find themselves deprived of their basic human and civil rights. The underlying reason? Under the eyes of the government, when a woman and a man marry they become one entity: him.

Author: Sandra Bahous

Every year, thousands of couples in Lebanon are joined in holy matrimony. Lavish ceremonies, haute-couture designer dresses, and Instagram pictures commemorating the evening party highlight the day two people have chosen to marry. It is safe to state that the majority of women choosing to enter the institution of marriage are hopeful for a promising future with their spouse. That, along with the cultural norm of being pressured and nagged to marry before they are "too old to be desired" and the odds stacked against them (1 man for every 6 women), drives Lebanese women to jump right into marriage bliss before they miss the train.

Lebanon's one-of-a-kind personal status laws are governed in such a way that each religious sect (18 of which are recognized by the government) follows a distinct set of laws when it comes to family-related issues. This leads to clear disparity when it comes to family affairs resulting in women of different religions being treated differently in matters of marriage and divorce. Matters are further complicated in interfaith marriages which often result in a conflict of laws[1]. The one similarity shared across all sects: blatant discrimination against women.

A prime example of such discrimination is disallowing women who marry men of a different nationality to pass on their Lebanese nationality to their children, while men face no such restriction. Women are also not permitted to open a join bank account for them and their children without their husband's written approval. If accused of adultery, both men and women face criminal charges; however, a woman must catch her husband in the act

[1] This subject is beyond the scope of this article. Click here for more information

inside their shared home while the woman's location is not relevant when the man accuses her of adultery. Needless to say, women serve longer jail sentences than men do in such cases.

When separation is inevitable, it is difficult for Christian men and women to seek divorce; the Catholic church, for example, simply doesn't allow it. On the other hand, the Greek Orthodox church will grant a divorce to the husband if he can prove that his wife was not a virgin when he married her. Christian men and women who are unsuccessful in dissolving their marriage can convert to a religion that is less stringent about divorce (e.g. sects of Orthodoxism). However, only men have the option to turn to polygamy by converting to Islam thereby eliminating the need to divorce, leaving their ex-wives unable to divorce or remarry. For Muslims (both Sunnis and Shiites), the laws grant men the absolute right to unilaterally divorce without assigning any cause while women can only do so under a pre-specified set of circumstances or if they are given the right to do so outright by their husbands at the inception of their marriage ('Isma'). Without the Isma, a woman can only seek a dissolution of her marriage by proving either of the following: that her husband does not provide financial assistance to her and the children, that he is sexually impotent, that he has disappeared, or that he is in prison to name a few.

Women are rarely entitled to adequate spousal support after having divorced. The Lebanese legal system does not recognize the concept of joint marital property. This often leaves both working women, as well as women who have chosen to be caretakers for their husbands and children, deprived of any substantial form of financial compensation. When maintenance is awarded, it barely covers basic living costs and rarely exceeds $400 a month regardless of the husband's financial status. Women also risk losing their marital home and other properties not registered in their name. This financial subjugation is the reason why many women today choose to stay with their husbands and endure living in desolation.

Women who divorce or separate from their husbands in Lebanon will also face child custody issues. Religious courts do not grant joint custody of children. Instead, they grant the mother custody until a certain age after which custody remains with the father, even if in some cases, it proves to be against the child's best interest[2]. Additionally, women of Shiite or Christian denominations risk losing custody of their children if they choose to remarry; this does not apply to a man who keeps custody of his children regardless of his marital status. A divorced woman is also not allowed to travel with her children (minors) without her husband's permission.

The aforementioned examples are but a glimpse of discriminatory laws entrenched into the legal system of Lebanon. Progress was visible in 2014 when Law 293 was enacted to protect women and children in custody against physical violence and threats of violence in the home; the law, however, was widely criticized for not criminalizing marital rape.

Nevertheless, Lebanon should remain hopeful because of organizations such as KAFA, Collective for Research and Training on Development Action(CRTD.A) and Nasawiya that have continuously fought for women by leading protests, initiating conversations with law makers and providing help to vulnerable women, making women's rights an ongoing conversation. Their goal? Legal reform. Now that Lebanon has (finally) elected a president, women's rights related to marriage should be at the forefront of the political agenda. A civil code pertaining to personal status laws should be passed providing for equality amongst women and men on all fronts thereby abiding by the Lebanese Constitution's initial call "for social justice and equality of rights and duties among all citizens without discrimination".

[2] This has improved over the last few years with more judges prioritizing the child's best interest

Women, facing a harsher climate

There is no such thing as climate justice without gender justice. A world that protects our planet and the people in it will never be a reality if women continue to be part of the sidelines, when they are most at risk from global warming.

Author: Charlote McLaughlin

2016 will likely be the hottest year since records began and 2017 might even be hotter. We are now at a global temperature of 1.2°C above pre-industrial levels, and this has had implications on our ability to feed ourselves. Drought and bizarre weather patterns will continue to put a strain on communities. For women, this is not a bright future. They are more exposed to malaria and dengue, which they get through water collection and food harvesting and are transmitted through floods and rising humidity – the consequence of rising temperatures, – than men.

Feeding yourself will be more difficult in the future **for women especially** – as agriculture is very gender divided. The UN estimates that up to 80% of the food in Africa is produced by women. However, women usually have small farms that are only enough to feed the household and in contrast with men are often not formally paid for this work. Men also own most of the land as well. Climate Change impacts on agriculture are fairly well documented and they usually effect small holders of land the most, as they do not benefit from excess revenue to mitigate crop failures. Women, as the holder of small plots that they do not own and are not paid a formal wage for, are the most vulnerable to changes in temperature and weather that cause drought and floods – destroying crops. Migrating away from crops and land that has failed is also more difficult for women than for men.

Indeed, climate change has had a strong effect on Syria. Since 1998, even before the Syrian war erupted, there was very little rainfall and it is only getting worse. Climate scientists estimate Syria is now experiencing the worst draught in 900 years - increasing tensions and competition. It has exasperated the conflict that has devastated Syria and contributed to the political upheaval of the last five years. There are around 4. 8m Syrian refugees, 50.5% are women, and of those who attempt to migrate away from the conflict and drought to Europe, very few are women. It is no secret why: the journey is often too hazardous and with limited chance of success.

Biofuels: Making a problem worse

Biofuels offer a clean alternative to fossil fuels but they come at a terrible humanitarian cost to women and their ability to grow food. Back in 2008, world food prices soared mainly due to heavy investments in Biofuels – pushing many women in developing countries further into poverty. Biofuels need high quantities of land and this often involves buying up land and pushing those that have insecure property rights, i.e. women and indigenous people off of it. This issue reminds us of another key fact: the special vulnerability of indigenous women in places that have been dramatically affected by climate change and human impact. Unfortunately, the switch to biofuels like palm oil has only grown. Oxfam says millions of people have been displaced due to these land deals, and the EU is now amongst the top importers of palm oil.

Don't ignore women

A key reason for this problem is that women are not actively involved in the decision making process. As of January 2015, only 17% of government ministers globally were women, with the majority overseeing social sectors, such as education and the family. If we consider environmental ministries **the situation is even worse**: Out of 881 environmental sector ministries from 193 countries, 12% of the ministers are women.

In the science community, only 28% of researchers globally are women. Even in the European Union, women make up 20% of the energy industry and largely in non-technical fields like public relations. We are effectively excluding those who directly suffer at the hands of climate change and half the world's population from policy, industry and science.

On the bright side, there has been a push to make women part of the agenda thanks to the Paris Agreement statement 'committed to promoting gender equality obligations when addressing climate change'. In fact, the recent COP22 in Marrakesh held a special session on Women and the Climate.

Furthermore, groups like the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and the Women's Environmental Council have created a lot interesting projects providing women with loans to combat the climates worse effects and to monitor the situation.

However, a commitment by the UN and projects spread throughout the globe will not change the whole situation. It is all well and good to commit to promoting gender equality or helping women out on the local level but what are governments and companies specifically being asked to do?

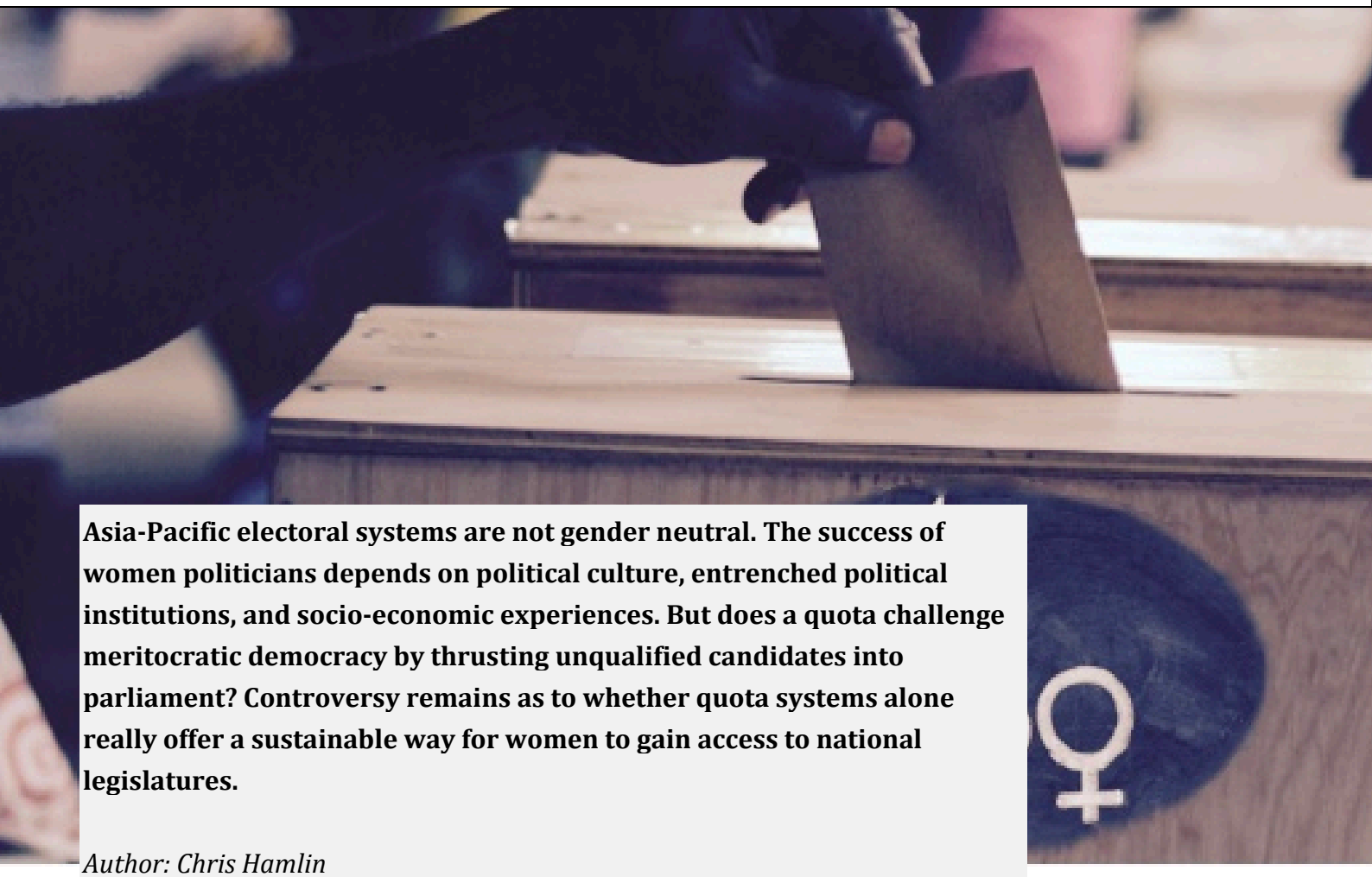
Very little so far

COP22 promises there will be more commitments but women are still not involved in many of the actual decisions being made. Women do not make close to half of the participants at the official meeting of COP. UN Women has called for a quota to be introduced to make women 30% of the official session of future COP's, which are made up of states and interested parties like UN bodies.

If the EU, states and the UN are serious about climate change this has to change. The UN needs to put pressure on world actors and legislators to safeguard land use for at risk populations – who are mainly made up of women. The EU needs to reassess where its imported products like biofuel are coming from and make sure we are not having an adverse effect on already hard pressed populations – putting tariffs on companies that displace populations is a start. We also need to encourage women into science, so we can start engineering a fairer tomorrow.

Lest we forget, we have to be gender balanced in our response to climate change: this means putting the humanitarian needs of our global female population **first.**

Gender quotas: The beginning or the end of democratic elections?



Asia-Pacific electoral systems are not gender neutral. The success of women politicians depends on political culture, entrenched political institutions, and socio-economic experiences. But does a quota challenge meritocratic democracy by thrusting unqualified candidates into parliament? Controversy remains as to whether quota systems alone really offer a sustainable way for women to gain access to national legislatures.

Author: Chris Hamlin

This year has witnessed renewed protests across Europe over traditional women's rights issues. From Poland to Ireland to France, women took to the streets to voice discontent with anti-women legislation. Inherent to these controversies is the fact that less than 30% of the parliamentarians considering the legislation in each of these countries are women. Yet, Europe has over one and a half times the number of women in parliament as the Asia-Pacific, which holds the lowest regional average. Consequently, it is also home to some of the most draconian anti-woman civil laws. This is not surprising given that female parliamentary representation in the Asia-Pacific region falls well below the world average of 22.9%.

One of the most widespread responses to address these inequalities has been to impose gender quotas, "mandatory or targeted percentages of women candidates for public elections," which are implemented constitutionally, through electoral laws, or through internal political party statutes. Three types of quotas are generally used: legislated candidate quotas, wherein the spots on the electoral lists are reserved for women candidates, voluntary political party quotas, wherein political parties set internal targets for a certain percentage of female candidates, and reserved seats, wherein the government reserves a specific number of parliamentary offices. These are all designed to manipulate the rates of female participation to advance towards the "critical mass" of 30%, theorized as necessary to begin exerting influence on

parliamentary policy outcomes. Yet, this approach has understandably been met with opposition. Some in the Asia-Pacific region perceive it as challenging the dominant and traditional norms of political power without having much effect on women's parliamentary impact. But if artificially propping up female political appointments does not have an effect on positive outcomes for women-facing national policy making, is there reason to break traditionally gendered constructs of political power?

Electoral systems are not gender neutral. The success of women politicians in a largely male dominated political system depends on political culture, entrenched political institutions, and socio-economic experiences - all of which work against that success in a region where there is historically low female political representation. As a result, the barriers to political entry are high for women in these countries. Accordingly, while Asia-Pacific nations with codified gender quotas have consistently higher female parliamentarians than before the quota was integrated and steady representation increases over the past decade. What's more, the upwards trending participation rates occur across countries implementing any of the three quota types. The same cannot be said for all nations without quotas. And while no-quota-nations such as Vietnam and Laos have high female parliamentary participation rates, these rates have steadily declined over the past decade. Therefore, there is significant merit to the use of gender quotas across diverse country contexts.

However, not all quotas are created equal. The reserved seat system is especially challenging to justify because it raises the fundamental question: is the goal of the quota system simply to help women gain access to national legislatures or to empower those women to use their power effectively? This has been a critical problem in South Asia. When Bangladesh's temporary reserved seat system expired in 2000, female elected representation dropped 8% over the next election. This points to the need to maintain codified quotas until the barriers to entry have indeed disappeared. Gender quotas can open the door to women candidates, but little headway is made when the quota is the only variable propping up the parliamentary statistics election after election. To some extent Pakistan solved this problem. While a reserved seat quota provided pressure from the top, the government also emphasized basic skills training and grassroots female mobilization. This socio-political infrastructure provided legitimacy and foundational support on which the political culture could gradually change, and in which a greater number of qualified women candidates were being effectively trained for the national positions. India has followed a similar bottom up approach. They imposed a quota at the sub-national level instead of the national level, yet female representation has steadily increased in the national parliament as well. This demonstrates the requisite function of grassroots skills training as a complement to preferential female parliamentary reservations in creating lasting institutional change within the political system.

What type of gender quotas have the best outcomes on effective female impact in the legislative process? Country context is important. If a country has little or no history of women political empowerment and participation, simply requiring female inclusion within a party or on the ballot is bound to have little effect. A more sustained period of a preferential reserved seat quota system is then necessary to combat the calcified barriers to women's political mobilization. However, in some cases, utilizing party and legislated candidate quotas may offer more legitimacy to the political power of the women brought into office by offering greater democratic freedom of choice to the voter. This may help overcome the perception that unqualified female parliamentarians are simply ensured elected office by their gender alone, leading to female

dis-empowerment among their male peers. As was the case in Bangladesh, if elected women gain their position through top-down pressure alone instead of in combination with bottom up support, they may lack the skills needed to have an impact at the national level, *and* be unable to sustain gender-neutral electoral gains without the perpetual existence of the quota. This defeats the very purpose, which is to open the door until that point when pro-women grassroots mobilization and skills training break down the remaining electoral barriers to gender neutrality.

A gender quota alone might not do the trick. They often prop up gender statistics without affecting long term change of the traditional barriers to entry. Something more is needed. Female political empowerment not only requires Asia-Pacific governments to help create female visibility in parliament, but also to promote skills training and a sustainable grassroots civil society. These are the traits that foster a sturdy socio-political foundation on which inclusive democracy is built.