



International Women's Day in Karachi: Pakistani students demonstrate against violence against women

## **GENDER POLITICS** **MAKES A DIFFERENCE**

EXPERIENCES OF THE  
HEINRICH BÖLL FOUNDATION  
ACROSS THE WORLD

Imprint

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Published by the Heinrich Böll Foundation

Text: Renate Wilke-Launer

(assisted by the Heinrich Böll Foundation offices worldwide)

Cover photo: Asif Hassan /AFP/Getty Images

Photos: Heinrich Böll Foundation archives and Axel Harneit-Sievers (14), Cyril Koky (16), Damon Lynch (17), TLO (18, 20), WCLRF (19, 21), Ursula Meissner/laif (24), Amos Schliack/laif (27 upper), Debbie Hill/UPI/laif (27 lower), Marcos Aragão (34 upper), Paula de Andrade (34 upper), CRIOLA (35), KRONA (36), Equipo Consultor Desarrollo y Género (38), Liz Frank (41), REA/laif (54), Michael Wolf/laif (55), Michael Ende (56), dpa (63), and Jonkmann/laif (64).

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Design: blotto, Berlin

Printed by: agit-Druck, Berlin

Editing: Barbara Unmüßig, Claudia Rolf,

Susanne Ditttrich, Bernd Rheinberg, Robert Furlong

English translation: Kate Sturge

Information correct at: December, 2009

Copies of this report are available free of charge from

Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung

Schumannstraße 8, 10117 Berlin

**[www.boell.de](http://www.boell.de)**

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## **Foreword**

# “WOMEN EXPERIENCE PARTICULAR DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE WORLDWIDE.”

Gender policy, feminist analyses, and feminist discourses have held a firm place in the Heinrich Böll Foundation since its very beginning. Along with ecology and democracy, they are a key focus of our work in Germany and abroad, and a guiding principle for both the Foundation’s promotion of research and its own organizational structure.

Even more than our work within Germany, our work abroad is guided by the need to address a diversity of ways of life and forms of work, and a plurality of political cultures and strategies. It is rare, though, that we present our work outside Germany in such a concise form as in this booklet. The booklet aims to illustrate this diversity and show how the Heinrich Böll Foundation, with the help of its partners and networks, works toward the goal of a gender-equitable world. It is a very special feature that in every one of the Foundation’s 28 offices worldwide, we address the theme of gender policy. Yet that “we” means very different things in the different locations (see the section headed “28 offices—and 28 responses,” p. 7). The reports and analyses in this publication indicate which policy areas are currently being prioritized. Across all regions, our aim in terms of gender issues is to promote and support the critique of patriarchal and violent structures of power and domination and—especially—the struggle against those structures. We focus on all levels, whether social relationships, politics and economics, culture, or the public sphere.

Women experience particular discrimination and violence worldwide. The same is true for all those who do not fit the heterosexual norm. Lesbians, gay men, transgender and bisexual people—in most countries they are ostracized, in many they are brutally persecuted and killed.

Women and men across the world are standing their ground against social and political exclusion, against making their lives precarious, against the over exploitation of the environment, against oppression and violence. Sexual minorities are seeking allies in their own countries, while also creating coalitions and networks and publicizing their situation on a transnational scale. This is the point of departure for the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s commitment: the Foundation depends on gaining allies and partners.

In this publication, we present some of our experiences, both setbacks and successes. It is just a small sample of our work all over the world. Many of our partners and their projects have been supported not only by the Heinrich Böll Foundation but also by other funding sources and from other political contexts. If we highlight our own role here, we are very much aware that our political and financial contributions are often only part of a larger network; yet our work does make a difference—for more gender justice.

The texts in this booklet were researched and written by Renate Wilke-Launer. She brought together the many individual sources of information, corresponded with our offices worldwide, contacted our partner organizations, and talked to many people. Synthesizing all that was a task that demanded great editing skill, sensitivity, and gender-political experience. The end result is a combination of analysis, reflection, reportage, and storytelling, reflecting the issues that move our colleagues in the offices worldwide. My special thanks go to Renate, along with sincere thanks to the colleagues in the other offices.

Within the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the planning and organization of this overview were, unusually enough, conducted in my office, the office of the Executive Board. Researcher Claudia Rolf kept an overview and coordinated the project in all its facets. I thank her for her advice, competence, and patience. ■

Berlin, June 2009

**Barbara Unmüßig**

President, Heinrich Böll Foundation

## Mission statement

# THE HEINRICH BÖLL FOUNDATION'S GENDER-DEMOCRAT- IC PRINCIPLES

The gender-democratic principles of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, resolved when the Foundation was reestablished, are as relevant as ever.

The Foundation's goals are as follows:

- for a diversity of principles and life aspirations to be recognized and respected equally;
- or access to social status, employment, income, and power to be independent of gender;
- for patriarchal structures and power relations to be overcome in both the private and the public sphere;
- for the diversity of gender identities, forms of gender expression, and sexual orientations to be recognized in law and in society.

These tenets should be understood as both a social-policy vision and an organizational principle. Gender democracy is a normative concept that postulates equal rights, equal opportunities, and equal access by men and women to economic resources and political power. Such participation is the precondition for change and for the transformation of unjust and gender-inequitable conditions.

A gender-democratic and feminist politics aims to interrogate and redefine all political domains in terms of their impact on gender relations. Its goal is nothing less than the transformation of all those societal structures that reproduce the inequalities and stereotyped relations between the genders. As a result, giving substance and reality to gender democracy is a shared task that must be tackled by all the members of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

## Introduction

# GENDER POLITICS MAKES A DIFFERENCE

by Barbara Unmüßig

Worldwide, gender relations are in flux. Radical economic and cultural change are giving rise to ever new ways of living and working. The situation could hardly be more complex and confusing: gender relations, gender politics, and forms of feminism are in a state of constant transformation. Politics, public discourse, and the economy are always influencing and altering the relations between the sexes—in all societies. Whether that is for the better or not depends very much on the region concerned.

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### GENDER POLITICS IS AS RELEVANT AS EVER

Economic and cultural upheavals, especially those of the second half of the twentieth century, have drawn women out of the home and into the economy and public life. At present, 40% of all people in paid employment worldwide are women; even thirty years ago, the percentage was just half that. Significantly more girls are gaining access to education and, in comparison with boys, they achieve very good results. Women are still rare in senior positions, but the world has become accustomed to the idea that women can be company directors, members of the cabinet, and heads of government.

The United Nations' World Conferences on Women (1975, 1980, 1985, 1995) have played an important role in increasing gender justice. Over the past three decades, international resolutions and agreements have set global standards. On the nation-state level, "women's policy" has reacted with a rush of laws, ordinances, and promotion measures. The Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing, brought together the energy of feminist initiative and state reform to create a "platform for action" that is regarded as a milestone. The platform took the category "gender" into international politics for the first time, acknowledging that the roles of women and men are determined by society and therefore capable of being changed. The dynamics of gender relations brought masculine identities into focus as well.

Galvanized by the Beijing platform for action, a surge of political initiatives arose in many countries of the world, improving the legal framework for women's struggle to attain equal rights. The institutionalization of women's and gender policy, which had long formed the core of the political demands of international women's movements and networks, gained momentum through the platform for action, which demanded that the world's governments provide the institutional, financial, and human resources needed for women to implement gender mainstreaming. In the radical form that feminists call for, gender mainstreaming would cast a searching light on all political and economic decision-making processes from a gender perspective. However, in many countries the practical steps toward that objective have been simply

forgotten, deliberately ignored, or emptied of political substance by an exclusive focus on technocratic formalities.

Certainly, compared with the situation of women 100 years ago, great progress can be recorded. But the new dynamics of gender has also mobilized counterforces that defend the old roles and privileges, which often cite tradition and religion. Little has changed in the sexual division of labor: women still spend twice as much time as men on unpaid caring and reproductive labor in households and communities. Women are disproportionately affected by violence: in 95% of cases of domestic violence worldwide it is women and girls who are the victims. The German section of Amnesty International makes a stark assessment: "Murders of women in Mexico, genital mutilation in Africa, rape in women's own living rooms—all over the world, women are victims of male violence. [...] Human rights violations against women rest on a power imbalance between the sexes, on a tradition that refuses women the same rights as men and that regards them as men's property."<sup>1</sup>

For this reason, feminist and gender politics is as relevant and necessary as it has ever been. However, it can no longer base itself on a simple, binary division into powerful men and powerless women. New models must be developed to take account of a range of distinctions in society, for the asymmetries of power between and within the gender groups have multiplied and fractured. Acknowledging this, and acknowledging the diversity of political cultures and strategies, does not mean having to abandon values and priorities in gender policy: the guiding principle of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's gender-political work in Germany and abroad is the critique of power structures on all levels, whether in social relations, in politics and the economy, or in culture and public discourse.

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### GENDER POLITICS REQUIRES GENDER KNOWLEDGE

Strategies and policies for gender democracy and gender justice must, on the one hand, constantly reestablish the complex connection of gender relations with state, economy, and society. On the other hand, it is no longer the case that gender relations can be understood and policies developed solely on the basis of "identity" and supposedly unified interests. An emancipatory feminist and gender politics means going beyond gender binaries and gender-based attributions. Despite many shared structural features (such as patriarchal oppression), distinctions like social or ethnic origin, religion, or sexual orientation have to be taken seriously in any gender-equitable and feminist politics of interests and identities. The fact that gender, and social and cultural diversity in general, interlock closely with other dimensions of society must feed into the process of building emancipatory political strategies in all sorts of political domains. That is a very ambitious starting point—one that we try to live up to in our work.

Enormous challenges are posed by our ambition to implement the principle of gender mainstreaming in economic and climate policy, in education and research, in foreign and security policy—and to bring a specific gender perspective to intervention in these domains. We lack the data and statistics that would make gender visible; models and methodologies taking account of gender relations are very rare indeed. This is where the gender-blindness of existing research blocks our way, as does the general

<sup>1</sup>

Amnesty International 2009: "Die Rechte von Frauen und Mädchen stärken!" [www.amnesty.de/themenbericht/die-rechte-von-frauen-und-maedchen-staerken](http://www.amnesty.de/themenbericht/die-rechte-von-frauen-und-maedchen-staerken) (16.06.2009)

lack of interest in a nuanced investigation of the gender-specific effects of political or economic decisions. The feminist call for gender-sensitive analysis is justified, and we support it. Research studies therefore play a significant role in the repertoire of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's gender-political activities. Such studies may address the underrepresentation of women in politics and business, or trace the failure to implement agreed policies, or analyze the impact of international trade policy on gender relations and on a country's labor market and social policy. With projects like this, the Foundation and its partners and networks are often entering uncharted methodological and political territory. The challenge is immense; the practical implementation is demanding and requires both patience and extensive resources. It is necessary to know and understand the field—for example, global trade or agricultural policy—very thoroughly, while at the same time grasping the gender-political dimensions, thinking them through, and deriving strategies from them. This is a double effort.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation is not a research institute, but a political foundation that aims to intervene in the politics of gender. However, intervention has a host of preconditions. It cannot succeed without knowledge of the social, economic, political, and cultural contexts and of the local actors. One example is our engagement in the areas of religion, politics, and gender. In many of the countries where we work, religion is a political factor that cannot be ignored. We are interested in the ways that religion, politics, and gender justice intersect. Those connections are investigated in a project covering eleven country studies, which provide us with important contextual information and pointers for our political and gender-political efforts on the ground.

A further, and highly topical, example of pioneering work is the gender dimension in climate policy. Despite huge official expenditures on research, there have so far been virtually no analyses of how climate change will impact on society and social policy—and thus also on gender policy. All over the world, new funding is being allocated to programs of adaptation to climate change in developing and emerging economies: there is a great demand for gender-sensitive knowledge, yet almost no supply. For this reason, the Heinrich Böll Foundation has commissioned studies in a range of countries with the aim of integrating gender perspectives into climate adaptation strategies. In June 2009, when this brochure was written, the results of those studies were not yet available. However, we already know this much: here, again, we are stepping into uncharted territory, facing a steep learning curve and many setbacks. But our experience shows that gender knowledge does make a difference.

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#### GENDER DEMOCRACY AS A KEY OBJECTIVE

It is part of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's mission to take a clear stance against exploitation, exclusion, and the abuse of power, intervening to challenge them publicly and politically. That is why, together with our partner organizations, we specifically support initiatives that benefit disadvantaged groups. This could mean anything from backing women in their own organizations to standing up publicly for the rights of homosexuals.

In its networks with partner individuals and organizations, the Heinrich Böll Foundation's reference points are the documents on gender equality passed by a United Nations consensus or signed and ratified by the member states, especially the Beijing platform for action and conventions like the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979), as well as the UN Security Council's Resolution 1325 (2000).

Gender policy is a central pillar of democracy and justice in the Foundation's work worldwide. All the offices address it, with different weighting and different approaches. Systematic planning processes ensure that work with partner organizations always includes women's and gender-political projects. To aid program planning and implementation, the Heinrich Böll Foundation has encapsulated its guidelines for gender-oriented project planning (GOPP) in a handbook. The handbook calls for indicators to measure political impact, includes means of monitoring of existing measures, and entails both self-appraisal and external evaluations. With the help of instruments like these, the Heinrich Böll Foundation's gender-political strategy is continually reappraised and tested for efficacy.

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#### GENDER POLITICS REQUIRES GENDER EXPERTISE

However, the Heinrich Böll Foundation sees gender democracy not only as a policy mission, but also as an organizational principle. Similarly to the case of gender mainstreaming, introducing gender democracy into an organization is a far-reaching process of change that may trigger anxieties and resistance among people at all the organization's levels. In a context like this, competent advice from gender experts can help to prevent conflicts and destructive situations. The Foundation's Gunda Werner Institute, in cooperation with the trainers' network, therefore supports the development of gender expertise by means of gender consultancy and gender training. The Institute's model has been deployed and constantly refined since 1997 through numerous gender training programs and consultancy sessions inside and outside Germany. The Heinrich Böll Foundation also offers regular staff development courses for its own employees on the topic of gender and diversity.

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#### TASKS AND ACTORS IN GENDER DEMOCRACY

Part of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's basic gender-political principles in its work at home and abroad is to pursue several approaches in parallel. Classic empowerment strategies are urgently required in all the countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East. Strengthening women and women's rights, combating traditional and patriarchal structures—that is, and will remain, imperative.

Occasionally, men can be persuaded to join in pursuing these aims. That may involve extremely difficult balancing acts, as can be seen from the Foundation's experiences in Afghanistan, where we have tried, to a modest extent, to work with tribal elders on women's rights. Certainly, though, we will need a very creative range of strategies and experiments if we are to make a contribution to enhancing gender equality in highly patriarchal societies. Our gender-democratic starting point explicitly aims to bring both genders into the spotlight of political thinking on gender relations in different fields. There is much left to be done in this respect.

In parallel to the empowerment approach, we pursue gender policy as a cross-sectoral issue. I have already noted that acquiring the knowledge necessary for this approach is a difficult task. Whenever gender policy is understood as a cross-sectoral task, running through all areas of an organization's work, it becomes far more difficult to put a realistic figure on the resources deployed and to monitor their use. How much money has flowed into a program's gender component? Did it genuinely augment the women's side of the balance of gender power? Are the partner organizations applying gender mainstreaming? There is a real

concern that the benefits of gender mainstreaming will be counteracted by a corresponding reduction in support and funding for women's political initiatives. To be effective, gender mainstreaming thus demands close monitoring and regular evaluation. Here, too, the Foundation is always developing and learning more—despite or because of its gender-oriented project planning.

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#### NETWORKS ARE ESSENTIAL

Partner organizations are crucial for effective work on gender democracy in Germany and, even more so, worldwide. The Foundation does not see itself as a "donor" but as a partner and political peer. In many countries, the Foundation organizes platforms for gender-political debates, publishing its own books and research studies. But at the heart of its efforts is support for and cooperation with partners from civil society, scholarship, and politics. For this reason, our strategies and programs are often discussed and developed jointly with partners. The process is not without its tensions and conflicting points of view. But to work through those conflicts fairly is an important principle of the Foundation.

For many decades now, alliances and networks have been crossing national borders to an increasing extent. The Heinrich Böll Foundation tries especially hard to nurture the transnational exchange of strategies and experience, among other things in legal issues, globalization, or the connections between religion and women's rights. The intensive work we have shared with partners all over the world for so many years has fostered a large network of its own—a network for the common task of gender democracy.

not exclusively) by the resources allocated to it. This varies from office to office. It is easy enough to put a figure on the specialized funds dedicated to "classic" women's and gender programs. For example, in 2007, the regional office for South Asia (Pakistan/Afghanistan) invested 53% of its dedicated funds in the women's and gender program—the highest rate of all the offices. The Moscow office put 33% and the Ramallah office 14% of its project funding into women's and gender-political projects. Taking all the offices outside Germany together, the average rate in 2007 was 29%.

However, when gender is embedded cross-sectorally, and structural costs such as infrastructure and personnel have to be calculated in, it becomes more difficult to arrive at precise figures. The Heinrich Böll Foundation is still working on a reliable procedure for gathering this data, but initial observations suggest that the offices worldwide used around 19% of their expenditures, including structural expenditures, for gender-political work as a whole. While in Africa the total spending lay at around 35%, in Asia the proportion was around 13%. In many countries, the Heinrich Böll Foundation promotes initiatives on gender budgeting, yet within the Foundation itself this principle has not yet been fully embedded. That is an outstanding task we must take in hand.

So far there have not been any binding provisions on levels of gender spending, though the Foundation aims for at least 30% of resources to flow into international gender-political efforts—whether for gender as a cross-sectoral issue or as explicitly women-based projects, whether as dedicated funding or as structural expenditures.

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#### 28 offices—28 responses.

##### **How gender democracy can be promoted internationally.**

Each of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's offices worldwide is charged with implementing gender democracy as a common task. That is unique among the German political foundations, and is a trademark of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. How the management of the various offices fulfill this responsibility differs, reflecting their very different political, social, and cultural contexts and regional priorities.

Gender policy requires dialogue partners and networkers in our own organization who can drive the issues forward. Sixteen of the twenty-eight offices of the Heinrich Böll Foundation outside Germany employ a total of sixteen people as gender coordinators. Five of these coordinators work on gender full-time, while another eleven usually spend between 50% and 60% of their time on gender and women's policy issues. They take the lead on implementing plans and programs, cultivate contacts with the partner organizations, and also carry out projects of their own.

Another way of dealing with gender democracy is primarily as a cross-sectoral issue, without a specialist "slot." In twelve of the offices, gender policy is embedded in this way, carried out equally by all the program coordinators and normally accounting for around 25–30% of the working week. In the Southern African regional office, for example, the proportion of working time the staff spend on issues of gender democracy varies from 20% in the program area "dialogue and international politics" up to 60% in the area "political rights and human rights."

Gender politics has to be funded. The importance given to an issue within an organization is indicated (if

"THERE IS NO AGE WHEN WOMEN  
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AVAILABLE TO HELP THEM RE-  
ENTER THEIR PROFESSION. AND  
FROM THE AGE OF FIFTY, THEY ARE  
OFFERED EARLY RETIREMENT."

## Ludmila Kabanova



When she speaks, she is a whirl of movement. Her dark eyes force you to look at her, her hands gesticulate. Ludmila Kabanova always exudes an intense sympathy—but when she describes the situation of women in Russia today, her voice acquires a note of angry indignation.

In early 1990s Moscow, Kabanova, who had trained as a speech therapist for children, founded an association that tried to help unemployed women make a new start in their professional lives. Despite the severe economic crisis, the association was by no means unsuccessful: forty-eight of the eighty women who followed the year-long course found new jobs. The association fulfilled its remit so well that, after two years, the Moscow city government gave it permission to run a specially established section within the city's employment office, entitled "Social Rehabilitation for Women." But working within the office turned out to involve endless bureaucratic hurdles, mainly created by men, and Ludmila decided the cost in terms of time and energy was greater than the potential benefits.

At the beginning of the political transition in 1990, Ludmila was expecting her second child and stayed at home. Milk could only be obtained by standing in line, while rice and flour required a ration card. For three years, Ludmila disappeared into the troubles of everyday life, observing firsthand how the country was falling apart and how women were the first to be thrown out of their jobs. "There is no age when women are really in demand. If they have children, they're considered unreliable employees. If they take up their maternity leave, there's no qualification available to help them re-enter their profession. And from the age of fifty, they are offered early retirement." Yet it is Russia's women who continue to shoulder most of the burdens created by the country's everyday chaos.

Kabanova is not a feminist. Of course she has read literature on women's politics. But her desire for equal rights does not arise from that reading: it is simply part of the need she feels for "justice and freedom of action."

Since 2001, Kabanova has worked in the Heinrich Böll Foundation's country office for Russia as the program coordinator for women's policy and gender democracy. She has drawn the previously fragmented projects together to create a program that attracts wide recognition, combining the few and disparate forces of woman-oriented politics, women politicians, feminist debates, and women's self-help groups. She is convinced that these Russian women will only get closer to their goal if they work together. That goal being to have people recognize that in Russia as elsewhere, "women's issues are political issues, as tough as any others." ■

## Chapter I

# GAINING POWER

Throughout history, the idea that human beings have rights that nobody may take away from them has gone hand in hand with the experience of those very rights being taken away. Following the end of the brutal Nazi regime, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948. People from all continents had worked on the Declaration, contributing their different legal cultures. A key part in working out the Declaration was played by one formidable woman: Eleanor Roosevelt, the Chair of the UN's Commission on Human Rights.

Article 2 expressly stipulates that no one may be discriminated against, whether because of their origin, the color of their skin, or their gender. For the first time, women had attained equality on the level of international law. Women must be listened to, and they must participate in planning and decision-making on how their country will develop.

In 1948, women were a very rare sight in the parliaments of the world—too traditional was the allocation of gender roles that saw women staying home with the children, too entrenched the assumption that men would claim the public sphere virtually for themselves. A few impressive women pioneers were the exception to the rule.

It was only with the social upheavals of 1968 and the second wave of feminism that, in the industrialized nations, doubt began to be cast on the status quo. Feminists were no longer interested in decorative tokenism (“we need one woman”), and refused to accept their restriction to the female ghetto of “social issues” within political parties. They campaigned for the right to shape their own lives, while an equal role in shaping the public sphere was far from reality.

The United Nations took up the feminist challenge, declaring 1975 International Women's Year and sending out invitations to an international conference in Mexico City. Plenty of men responded with a weary smile, and occasionally made the patronizing comment that attention to women's issues was a luxury reserved for rich countries. From the Third World, parts of it in a revolutionary mood, came the corresponding response that the struggle against colonialism and imperialism must take priority. And from the Eastern bloc, the official representatives—the only ones allowed to travel to Mexico—simply pointed to their “socialist achievements.”

Today, feminist voices are heard all over the world, and women from all political standpoints are taking up their place in parliaments. Worldwide, for all chambers, the average is 18.3%. Compared to 1995, the year of the most recent World Conference on Women, that is a growth of 60%. But progress is neither lin-

ear nor uniform: in 40% of elections over the past five years, the number of women elected stagnated or even fell, for example in Georgia.

If, on average, almost every fifth parliamentarian is a woman, that average conceals a great diversity between different regions. There are some spectacular developments—Rwanda with 56% tops the list worldwide, while 37% of the representatives elected in Angola's first post-conflict poll were women—but in Asian countries progress is slow. The Arab states lag far behind, and bringing up the rear are the Pacific nations.

Qualified women quite fairly assume that their capabilities and commitment will be enough to get them elected. But the experience of women's movements around the globe shows that without quotas, the process does not work or will take even longer. In 2008, countries that were using targeted measures to promote the political representation of women had reached a proportion of 24%, the others only 18%.

It is quotas that make the difference—whether anchored in the constitution, set down in electoral law, or pursued by the parties on a more or less voluntary basis. However, as our partner organizations across the world know all too well, those quotas have to be fought for. Among the tools available are political campaigns, lobbying, training courses, and networking. Support from abroad, too, can be helpful in the process. ■

I.1

# BUILDING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Whether in Somaliland, Turkey, or Cambodia—behind every successful woman there is generally not a strong man, but a women’s network. Or else a targeted campaign to make women electable and encourage them to run for office, as in Pakistan. These campaigns are driven by creative and courageous organizations and movements that motivate women both to vote and to run for election. They need solidarity and support.

Quotas ensure a certain presence for women, but do not in themselves assure a politics that promotes gender justice. Too few women are still actively involved in politics, while men and male alliances have learned to put forward token women who they know will not cause any disruption. Often women reject collaboration across party boundaries. Other women decide of their own accord to represent particularistic positions or a conservative family policy.

Yet numbers do count. If things are really going to change, a critical mass must be reached. The World Conference on Women held in Beijing named 30% as a minimum for this. By 1998 that had only been achieved in Europe, but since then the overall picture has become significantly more diverse, and 15% of all parliaments worldwide have now reached this important benchmark.

Certainly, none of this in itself guarantees gender justice in the political sphere: gender justice is not just a matter of aspiration, but has to be actively brought to life through organization. Activists need to know the rules, use them, and change them to the benefit of women. That works best when electoral law is made in such a way that it does not disadvantage women and, additionally, when there is a binding quota.

There is another thing that needs to be specifically sought and applied: to make progress toward gender justice, politicians both male and female must work together with civil society. Only by making use of civil society’s expertise and enabling the participation of grassroots movements can we create really lasting change.

For this reason, the Heinrich Böll Foundation works in a wide variety of ways toward the goal of improving women’s political participation. Of course, the choice of who to work with, which instruments to use, and where to begin all depend on the political and legal framework and the scope for political action on the ground. In some societies, the area of gender policy is a particularly sensitive one, so that even more tact and care may be required than in other aspects of the promotion of democracy.

That is because changes in gender dynamics are mobilizing forces that fight, sometimes tooth and nail, to defend the old roles and privileges. They like to call on tradition and religion, and those calls are often successful, especially (but not only) among anxious and unsettled populations. ■

## KENYA

### Political participation in a patriarchal culture

In a continent full of patriarchal societies, Kenya is no exception. Economically the strongest in East Africa, the country likes to see itself as the region’s leader and boasts modern, internationally networked institutions, yet Kenyan politics remains dominated by men—and especially by old men. In election campaigns they mobilize local or ethnic loyalties, forging networks and political alliances to secure power. Once they enter government posts, they make use of their control over state institutions and decision-making to enrich themselves and strengthen their position even further. They have frequently managed to block initiatives to improve women’s legal situation, such as a modernization of Kenya’s colonial-era family law.

Neither the end of the dominance of the former state party KANU (Kenya African National Union) and the accession to power of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) in late 2002, nor the splits that arose from the crisis after the presidential and parliamentary elections of December 27, 2007, have changed this political culture to any significant extent. The “grand coalition” formed in April 2008 under President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga ended the escalating violence, but since then—after several corruption scandals and countless internal squabbles—many wananchi, “ordinary Kenyans,” have lost confidence in the capacity of the political class to manage the necessary reforms.



Wangari Maathai

The dominance of patriarchal structures in Kenya’s politics and society is highlighted by the small proportion of women in the Kenyan Parliament. In 2002, only 8 of the 210 elected members were women; a further ten were nominated by the parties. Among those elected were strong, internationally recognized personalities, the best known of them being Wangari Maathai, founder of the Green Belt Movement (GBM) and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for 2004. However, the overall picture shows a country falling way behind the standards of its neighbors, which have around 30% female participation in their parliaments—quite apart from Rwanda, where women actually make up the majority of parliamentary members today.

“The very low number of women in Kenya’s parliament—low in regional comparison as well—is a particularly harsh indication of the persistence of patriarchal power relations in this society,” says Axel Harneit-Sievers, who heads the Nairobi-based regional office for East Africa and the Horn of Africa. And yet, he stresses,

there are many forces in Kenya working to counter that situation, especially the strongly organized women's rights groups and other civil society organizations. "Over the past few years, women's rights activists in Kenya have achieved considerable successes in heightening public awareness of gender issues, and Kenyan politics has begun to take seriously the demand for gender justice, at least on paper. The goal now must be to transform progress on what has so far been a rhetorical level into an actual increase in political power: through increased female representation in the institutions and through a stronger embedding of gender perspectives within political decision-making processes."

Monthly discussion events organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation combine debates on burning issues with longer-standing themes to promote awareness of the gender dimension in all areas of society. In 2007, these "gender forums" were dominated by the imminent elections, and concentrated on the specific problems that confront women entering politics: not only gender stereotyping and lack of resources for their election campaigns, but even threats of violence.

The commitment shown by many organizations bore only limited fruit in the 2007 elections: fifteen women were elected to parliament (out of a total of 210 elected representatives). A further six were nominated by the parties (out of a total of twelve nominations), so that the proportion of women in the Kenyan Parliament is now 9.5%.



Gender forum on July 25, 2006, in Nairobi



Jacintha Muteshi of Kenya's National Gender Commission

In order to improve the legal situation of women in Kenya, then, tenacious pressure from civil society and specifically from the women's organizations will continue to be necessary. A series of legislative reform projects has been under discussion for years, but so far only the Sexual Offences Act of 2006 has been passed, giving women more protection and, above all, a better legal position in the case of assaults. The Heinrich Böll Foundation has promoted measures to sensitize and train police and prosecutors so that they can implement the new law more effectively.

This aim is also pursued by two partner organizations: the African Women's Development and Communication Network

(FEMNET) and the Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW) offer help to the survivors of gender-based violence and campaign for improved legal and practical protection. During the post-election unrest in December 2007, many violent attacks on women occurred, from sexual assaults up to gang rapes. FEMNET and COVAW, along with other partners of the Foundation, eloquently presented this situation to the Waki Commission of Inquiry on the violence. In response, the Commission's report dedicated a separate chapter to the problem: this aspect of political confrontations, which used to be swept under the carpet in most cases, is now being publicly debated.

In parallel to this development, the Foundation has begun to focus its gender work in Kenya more strongly on individual state actors and government institutions, ones that show openness to the integration of gender perspectives into their work. For example, the Nairobi office commissioned a study presenting options for strategic changes to the Constituency Development Fund (a decentralized institution funding local development on the constituency level), with the aim of incorporating greater consideration to the concerns of women and disadvantaged groups. At the same time, studies and advisory activities were initiated around consideration for the gender dimension in the allocation of public funds ("gender budgeting") in specific sectors, such as water, and in planning processes. In today's Kenya, a modern gender politics is also finding allies within the government apparatus—but those allies need the support of civil society if they are to achieve progress in an institutional environment marked by patriarchy and bureaucracy.

"IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH: MY TRAUMA, MY EXPERIENCE. VOICES OF KENYAN WOMEN FROM POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE," Nairobi 2008

[www.hbfha.com/downloads/In\\_the\\_Shadow\\_of\\_Death.pdf](http://www.hbfha.com/downloads/In_the_Shadow_of_Death.pdf)

[www.hbfha.com/web/105-175.html](http://www.hbfha.com/web/105-175.html)

[www.femnet.or.ke](http://www.femnet.or.ke)

[www.covaw.or.ke](http://www.covaw.or.ke)

#### SOMALIA

#### **With a little bit of cunning toward the quota**

"Somalia has been at war since 1991. In the last seventeen years, there have been fourteen peace agreements, all of which failed. No surprise that Somalia is called a failed state. But I do not believe that this is the final word for my country." Asha Hagi, a member of the Somali Transitional Parliament, put it that way in September 2008. Half a year later it looked as if she was right. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia, stated to the UN Security Council in New York in March 2009 that the country "is back from the brink." The fifteenth peace agreement, negotiated in Djibouti, has been successful so far, and there is a new government in Mogadishu.

Asha Hagi has fought for this peace agreement. When, in December 2008, she received the Right Livelihood Award (often called the "alternative Nobel prize"), the UN Special Representative lauded her indefatigable engagement for peace and stability: "She has put all her energy into this exercise."

And she has been doing it for years. In 1992, together with other women, she founded Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC). Like herself, her fellow combatants were well-educated, but many of them sat between two chairs because they had married husbands from other clans. In the heyday of hostilities, this was an extremely inconvenient position, because the family of origin would regard her now as belonging to the enemy, while the in-

laws of the husband's family wouldn't fully trust her either. Asha Hagi freely acknowledges how much she suffered from this. But then, she remembered that the only identity nobody could deny her was that of a woman.

Based on this, she turned a female deficit—the lack of a belonging to a specific clan—into an advantage: the option of becoming an “ambassador” between different clans. Later on, the idea of a “sixth clan” emerged from this: the clan of Somali women. And this clan demanded inclusion in the peace negotiations. Ninety-two Somali women assembled on May 2, 2000, in front of a large military tent in Arta, Djibouti. “We knew that peace in our country would come from cross-clan reconciliation, not official negotiations among warlords and faction leaders,” one delegate said later.



Asha Hagi

The women demanded a quota, but for many men it was simply unimaginable to be represented by a woman. After much wrangling, the women finally pushed through a minimum number of twenty-five women in the Transitional National Parliament, with its total number of 245 representatives. The “sixth clan” does not see itself merely as representing women, but as a representation of common Somali interests and as mediator between the hostile, men-dominated groups.

During the next round of the peace negotiations, Asha Hagi belonged to the agreement's signatories, as a representative of the “sixth clan.” The Transitional Constitution of 2004 provided for a minimum of 12% of parliamentarians being women. In reality, in August 2008, the figure was only 8%. Asha Hagi saw that some women allowed themselves to be used by men. “It is not only about quantity, but about quality as well”—once again she has drawn a strategic lesson.

The regional office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Nairobi has had long-standing contacts with Asha Hagi and has supported her work since 2002. It also supports her battle against female genital mutilation, still widespread in Somalia. SSWC is one of the most important nongovernmental organizations in Somalia and works since years under difficult – and sometimes extreme – conditions. SSWC provides humanitarian relief as well as support for education: the organization established a computer-training center in order to empower Somali women to use the latest technology.

Most importantly, however, SSWC in recent years has laid foundations to enable women to participate in the political debate if—as happened in February 2009—parliament and govern-

ment return to Mogadishu. In late July 2006, SSWC created the “Women's Political Caucus” as an instrument to defuse conflicts and give women a voice. Among its members are a number of prominent Somali women, and the Caucus was recognized as a representation of interests of women, and as a voice on national issues in South-Central Somalia. Since then, the Caucus has met virtually every month; except in April 2007, at the height of fighting in Mogadishu, when its meeting had to be cancelled for security reasons.

In addition, there is a Gender Forum every two months or even monthly, attended by an average of forty men and women. At the third Gender Forum from November 27–28, 2006—in a phase of relative peace—the conference room in the “Hotel Peace” in Mogadishu was filled to the last seat, with 120 participants. This time, SSWC had invited Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, the chairman of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), his deputy, and several members of the Transitional Parliament. “We are not confrontational, we know well how to do this,” Asha Hagi says. While the women argued skillfully and politely, some of the men of the UIC complained afterwards that the women had been too pushy. From her base in Nairobi, where, for security reasons, she has had to live for some time, Asha Hagi has kept in touch with Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, who became Somalia's president in early 2009.



An SSWC event

The Women's Political Caucus improved the overall understanding of gender and transitional issues”, wrote Abdulkadir Hassan Shirwa in an evaluation of SSWC's work in 2008. “Looking back into the extremely difficult circumstances in which SSWC operated in the last two years and listening to the life-threatening experience that some of its staff and many members of the Women's Political Caucus went through, one really remains puzzled how this project went ahead.”

#### SOMALILAND

##### **From zero to two**

“We have come to live in peace, after a long time of deprivation and difficulties”—this is how the Somali word “NAGAAD” can be translated. And it describes exactly what the women of NAGAAD Umbrella Organization in Somaliland want to achieve.

The territory that used to be British-Somaliland until 1960 has not been internationally recognized since it declared its independence from crisis-ridden Somalia in 1991. Even its own history has not always been peaceful.

When its leaders assembled in 1996–7 for the second major peace conference in Somaliland's capital, Hargeisa, a number of women also wanted to speak and decide—especially so because

this conference was designed to decide upon who should become the president and the Members of Parliament. Finally, fifteen women were allowed to listen—and had to hear that no seats and votes in the parliament or in the government could go to women, simply because those positions would be filled on the basis of clan representation. But which clan does a woman represent: that of her origin, or that of her husband?



Neighborhood committee organized by NAGAAD

Shortly after the conference, however, an institution of female representation emerged nonetheless. Thirty women's groups and other nongovernmental organizations in Hargeisa combined to found NAGAAD Umbrella Organization. The Heinrich Böll Foundation has supported this cooperation from its very beginnings and provided decisive contributions to NAGAAD's organizational infrastructure. With forty-six member organizations, the umbrella organization today is the most important women's organization in Somaliland.

The very first project was an information and meeting center for rural women. NAGAAD also organizes training programs of various kinds—such as a gender workshop for men and meetings with clan elders, sultans, and religious leaders in 2008, where the difficulties resulting from the clan structure for the political participation of women were discussed. Furthermore, in 2002 NAGAAD began to hold public Gender Forums. Themes vary widely: debates were held about women in the media, about early marriage, about the role of women in politics or about the impact of khat, a drug in widespread use primarily by men, but also some women. The Forum events are usually well-attended. When, in 2008, the discussion focused on the complementary efforts of women and men in improving living conditions in the immediate environment, about seventy-five people attended regularly.

NAGAAD also supports women to become candidates for political offices and works toward increasing the number of women in government institutions. The organization played a substantial role in the development of the national Gender Policy, done by the Ministry of Family Affairs in cooperation with civil society organizations. The cabinet passed the Policy in late 2008, but discussion about it in the parliament (House of Representatives) and the Guurti (House of Elders) is still pending.

An attempt to include, into the electoral law, a women's quota for local-level elections was agreed to by the House of Representatives, but failed in the Guurti. Thus, for the time being, there will be no quota.

Without such a minimum requirement, however, progress is very slow when it comes to the political representation of women in Somaliland. When NAGAAD held its tenth anniversary conference in December 2007 with 110 participants, it was made clear that the transition to democratic elections had not yet fulfilled the expectations. After the 2002 local elections, only 2 among 320 people elected were women, and during the parliamentary elec-

tions in September 2005, only two out of seven female candidates were successful. While some are happy about the increase from zero to two in the House of Representatives with its eighty-two members, others deplore the lack of solidarity among women during voting.

However, in 2009, a woman wants to become mayor. Khadija Hassan Hussein, working at the Ministry of Local Development and a member of the governing party UDUB and of NAGAAD, wants to run for a mandate. "I tell the people that, as a woman, I do not belong to any clan. So I'm not seeking to perpetuate the needs of certain people to the detriment of others."

#### Further reading:

"SOMALIA. CURRENT CONFLICTS AND NEW CHANCES FOR STATE BUILDING"

Published by the Heinrich Böll Foundation

Berlin, July 2008, photos, 128 pages

This publication tries to shed some light on the history and present reality of prolonged state collapse in Somalia with a specific focus on the possible reasons for the failures of the many attempts to rebuild the state so far.

[www.nagaad.org](http://www.nagaad.org)

#### TURKEY

#### Do you have to be a man to get into parliament?

There was a time when Turkey was far ahead of the game in terms of the proportion of women in parliament. That was 1935, one year after Mustafa Kemal, the founder of modern Turkey, had given women the right to stand for election. In the first Turkish Parliament, 4.6% of the delegates were female, a proportion not done only by Finland at the time. Yet the percentage has barely risen since then, and now Turkey is at the bottom of the league table in Europe. Between 1935 and 2007, 8,294 men sat in parliament, but only 186 women. In 2007 just 24 of the 550 parliamentary mandates were held by women—a mere 4.4%. On the local government level, things look even bleaker: not even every hundredth Turkish mayor is a woman.

"We have a 'male democracy' in Turkey; we want a real democracy," demand the women of ka-der. To underline their point, the energetic ladies of this "union for the support and training of female candidates" have established a political training facility. They have supported 20,000 women over the past ten years—women from all parties, for ka-der is a non-partisan organization. Even so, the internal conflicts of Turkish society do leave their mark on the women's movement. During the most recent campaign for a more representative politics, some women from the religious and conservative spectrum did not want to join in the march because none of the banners featured a woman wearing a headscarf—despite the fact that they completely agreed with the campaign's objectives.

WE HAVE A "MALE DEMOCRACY" IN TURKEY; WE WANT A REAL DEMOCRACY.

With its 3,000 members, ka-der is making its presence felt throughout the whole country and has become a powerful voice in Turkish civil society. Opinion surveys show that the Turkish population wants to see more women in politics, yet the political parties are intent on blocking change. The parties, complains television journalist Semiha Öztürk, a member of ka-der, only

tolerate women as “mannequins.” The ka-der women know that things only begin to change when a “critical mass” of at least 30% women in parliament has been achieved. “If that 52% of the Turkish population were finally given political representation, the issues that directly affect them could be moved forward,” says Hülya Gülbahar, the chair of ka-der, and demands a women’s quota within parties.

For several years the Heinrich Böll Foundation has been in close contact with ka-der, supporting, among other things, its campaigns for more women in parliament. “Do you have to be a man to get into parliament?” was the question asked by a successful businesswoman, two attractive actresses, and a well-known female writer for the ka-der campaign. On the giant posters, their images were decorated with mustaches and flamboyant ties. Shaking things up, jolting awareness, stirring the pot—the women of ka-der succeeded in the goals they had set themselves with these provocative posters. They achieved a practical result, as well: in the elections of July 22, 2007, the proportion of women rose to 9.1%. That’s more than double the previous rate, but there is still a long way to go.

[www.ka-der.org.tr](http://www.ka-der.org.tr)

#### PAKISTAN

#### Giving shape and genuine impact to the quota



Islamabad, 2007: Pakistani/Afghan/Iranian dialogue between women

In the World Economic Forum’s 2008 Gender Gap Index, Pakistan does badly, in 127th place out of 130 countries. Only in the case of political participation do things look considerably better, because the country has been governed by a woman for periods of time and because a relatively high number of women sit in parliament: 76 of the 338 delegates are women. That is due to a quota system setting down that there must be 17% women on the national level and in the provinces, 33% on the regional level.

Although the quota rule plays a part in enabling women to intervene in politics, in gender-political terms it is only a limited success. Female politicians still have to overcome many barriers. Behind many women candidates there are influential or feudal families, or else parties pursuing their own interests. Especially in the rural and feudal areas, Pakistan suffers from the continued influence of patronage on politics, while individual capabilities and attitudes toward women’s issues are secondary. However, a counter-trend can also be observed. Emancipated women who

stand up for the rights and concerns of their female compatriots have found their way into politics. Many of them went into politics on their own initiative, registered to run for office, and were successfully elected.



Aurat Foundation educational events

The Aurat Foundation, one of Pakistan’s oldest and most respected women’s organizations, has a presence in all 110 districts of the country. It played a key part in the introduction of the quota for the 2001/2002 elections. Since then, Aurat has used its considerable energy and strategic skill to try and turn the 33% quota into genuinely effective participation by women. The obstacles are immense: in many areas women are not even allowed to leave the house and do not have the identity cards necessary to vote or run for office. In the end, 70,000 women ran for office, and 36,105 were elected. The Aurat Foundation helped many of those women to fill in the required paperwork, giving them information on fundamental rights and duties. The scale of the resistance they faced became clear in the by-elections of 2004: of the 4,869 reserved seats, only 2,866 could be filled.

The joy at the introduction of the quota was quickly followed by a certain disenchantment, as insufficient knowledge, lack of administrative support, cultural barriers, and patriarchal values made it difficult—sometimes impossible—for the women to take up their seats. In response to this problem, the Aurat Foundation gave local elected female politicians from a total of 50 governmental and nongovernmental institutions training on their tasks and options. Aurat went about this systematically, offering programs for men as well as women, and developing a radio drama and audio cassettes for non-literate women. And because training alone is not enough, the Foundation also set up centers to support the parliamentary representatives in seventy districts, along with five provincial-level centers.

Aurat Foundation can now point to some impressive achievements. It has brought together the success stories of many local female politicians from all the provinces, and published them in a series of six books so far, titled From Home to House—Experiences of Woman Councillors in Local Government. These stories were presented to other women politicians as “best practice” and

recommended as models for action. For the general elections in 2008, the Foundation worked out a set of benchmarks for analyzing and evaluating party manifestos from a women's policy point of view.

[www.af.org.pk](http://www.af.org.pk)

#### CZECH REPUBLIC

#### Becoming a UN High Commissioner or a mayor

How do you support Roma women who want to become politically active? They belong to a minority that is at home in Europe, yet is confronted daily with social exclusion and discrimination, and all too often with racist attacks.

In the context of the "Decade of Roma Inclusion" (2005–2015), the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Prague office has supported a training course to prepare nine women for work in various areas of politics. The course was designed and assisted by two Roma organizations: Athinganoi and Manushe, the women's organization of the NGO "Slovo 21."



Political participation by Roma women

Every second weekend between March and September 2006, the nine women pursued interactive studies, took up internships with administrative offices or parliamentary representatives, and made new contacts. Three of them put their knowledge to immediate practical use by standing for office in the local elections of 2006. One of these, Amálie Berkyová, was elected to local government for the SNK European Democrats, a small and relatively new party. Gabriela Hrahaňová today heads the office of the Czech Republic's Council for Roma Community Affairs. Lucie Horváthová was placed sixth on the Czech Green Party's list for the 2009 European Parliament elections.

All the women want to take their work further. Asked where she sees herself in ten years' time, Gabriela Hrahaňová says she will be UN High Commissioner for Human Rights or sitting in the European Parliament; Denisa Berousková, who was on the SNK European Democrats' party list, now aims to become a member of the Czech Parliament or at least run for election. And Amálie Berkyová plans to lead a citizens' center of her own or become the mayor of Hostomice, a small town in the north of the country, on the edge of the Ore Mountains.

To achieve these goals, they will need not only all their self-confidence, but also the political will of European governments to prioritize Roma inclusion. A first step was made in that direction when twelve European states resolved to support the Decade for Roma Inclusion, undertaking to fundamentally improve the situation of the Roma minority.

## I.2

# IMPLEMENTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Alongside political participation by women, the legal framework (such as family law, inheritance law, etc.) is a crucial factor in gender equality and equal access to participation. But as well as legal equality, women's movements almost all over the world are demanding equal opportunities in all areas of life (education, health, paid employment). Feminist theory has subjected the ruling—male-dominated—ways of thinking, hierarchies, and organizational structures to profound critique. The phenomenon is by no means limited to the "saturated" richer countries, and in other parts of the world it often has a radical intensity that has become rare in the West. In everyday life, new forms of living and working have emerged, whether with positive intent or out of necessity.

Over the last few decades, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, promulgated in 1948, has been supplemented by detailed conventions that establish global standards, mostly within the framework of the United Nations. The UN's international women's conferences (1975, 1980, 1985, 1995) have played an important role in this process. On December 18, 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted, and it came into force in 1981. The signatory states—now including almost all the nations of the world—undertake to pursue without delay and by all appropriate means a policy of combating discrimination against women. Knowing very well that even this kind of obligation would not be followed up immediately, the writers of the convention text included an agreed mechanism for monitoring compliance. Every four years, the signatory states have to report to a twenty-three-member expert committee, which meets twice a year, examines the present nations of the governments, and then states its conclusions, including recommendations for any urgent action to be taken.

For many women and women's groups worldwide, as the work of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's offices makes clear, the demands of the CEDAW Convention—as yet unfulfilled—are an important point of reference. These women supplement the representations of their governments, which tend to highlight only the positive and to gloss over ugly realities, with "shadow" reports. The CEDAW Committee takes both reports into account during its judgments, listening to governments and NGOs. On the margins of the hearing and before the committee, there are sometimes confrontations that governments prefer to sidestep at home. International conventions are an important constant, for again and again objections are voiced against individual stipulations. On a national level, conventions of this kind are usually ignored politically, and women who lay claim to their internationally codified rights frequently attract severe reprisals. The UN itself has no recourse, certainly not sanction mechanisms, if the conventions are violated. As a result, it is mainly left to the international public sphere to call governments to account for their infringements of CEDAW. Solidarity within networks and the supranational exchange of ideas are thus essential and must be supported. ■

## PAKISTAN

**Barbarity in the name of tradition**

"Of course she is humiliated. After all, she's paid the price for the murder of my son," says the Pakistani man without a sign of embarrassment. Samar Minallah interviewed him for her documentary about cases of swara marriage, a socially sanctioned crime in which a minor girl is delivered to the family of the victim as compensation in a dispute. Decisions about such cases are made by a "jirga" court made up of men. For them, this is the way to avoid revenge and thus further bloodshed. It is a deal made between men—the price of which is paid by a woman.



Samar Minallah

In her film, anthropologist Samah Minallah shows the suffering of the victims of such traditions. Minallah herself is a Pashtun and grew up in the Pakistani tribal areas. Her film, made in 2003, has contributed to a part of the Pakistani public refusing to keep ignoring swara marriage, denying it or shrugging it off, but instead viewing it as a human rights violation.

In the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), women keep to the domestic sphere while the public sphere belongs to men. From their point of view, what happens between their own four walls is nobody else's business. The norms set by men are stronger than the rules laid down by Islam, which do grant women certain rights.

In 2006 Ethnomedia, Samah Minallah's small media company, carried out a study that recorded sixty cases of swara over three months in the districts of Mardan and Swabi alone. But the Ethnomedia researchers also encountered women and men who were resisting swara, whether openly or covertly. In some cases, the researchers were able to intervene, and managed to have different forms of compensation agreed.

The girls—they are usually handed over when they reach puberty—are often not only forcibly married but also face additional humiliation: there is no marriage ceremony, and they are treated as enemies. This makes it clear that swara frequently serves revenge rather than a peaceful settlement of disputes.

The Pakistani government made this form of conflict settlement a criminal offence in January 2005. However, the new section 310-A of the penal code does not as yet apply in the federally or provincially administered tribal areas of NWFP. In October 2008, Samah Minallah, the Aurat Foundation, and several NGOs called on the authorities to introduce the law in these regions as well.

The attention that Samah Minallah has attracted is due not only to her 2003 film: she has also used music videos, research studies, and a weekly television show to campaign against swara. She even persuaded truck and rickshaw owners to write messages

on their vehicles that the custom is not only inhumane but also un-Islamic.

In 2006, she appeared with three small girls and their parents before the Supreme Court when it tried a case from Sindh province, where the custom, there known as sang chatti, is also widespread.

During the television show "Capital Talk" in November 2008, Samah Minallah confronted the education minister, Mir Hazar Khan Bijarani, a powerful man from the province of Sindh. In 2006 she had succeeded in getting the Supreme Court to order Bijarani's arrest for allegedly presiding over a jirga that had awarded five little girls as compensation to the clan of a murder victim. Another minister, Israrullah Zehri, had defended the murder of three girls and two women from the province of Balochistan. They had been shot at, then buried alive. Demands by the Women's Action Forum to recall the two ministers were ignored by President Zardari, the widower of Benazir Bhutto.

*THE GIRLS ARE OFTEN NOT  
ONLY FORCIBLY MARRIED  
BUT ALSO HUMILIATED:  
THERE IS NO MARRIAGE  
CEREMONY, AND THEY ARE  
TREATED AS ENEMIES.*

"It is a very clear message from the government that they don't care about these things," comments Samah Minallah. But for her, even more shocking than the induction of the ministers is the lack of protests by female parliamentarians. "By remaining silent, in practice they agreed to these appointments."

[www.ethnomedia.pk](http://www.ethnomedia.pk)

## PAKISTAN

**Women under Muslim law**

Since its office in Lahore opened, the Heinrich Böll Foundation has been working with the women's rights organization Shirkat Gah, which especially addresses laws that discriminate against women and campaigns to improve women's legal situation. That includes training for marriage registrars, because many women are robbed of fundamental rights when particular passages (such as the protection of the woman in the case of divorce) are struck out of the marriage contract. Shirkat Gah also trains legal advisors who can support women in everyday situations. The organization's extensive publications document discrimination, while a regular newsletter keeps readers up to date on developments in other countries and encourages networking. Shirkat Gah belongs to the international network Women Living Under Muslim Laws.

Shirkat Gah also spearheaded the creation of the second shadow report, presented in 2007 to supplement Pakistan's CE-DAW report to the UN; the Aurat Foundation contributed as well. The shadow report is entitled Talibanisation & Poor Governance, and describes in detail how, since signing up to the UN Convention, Pakistan has seen no progress but, if anything, has moved backward. Only occasionally and half-heartedly, notes the report, has the Pakistani government taken steps to benefit women, so that the gap between women's equality in law and their actual situation has become even greater. The report adds that even more

unsettling is the government's complete failure to counter the militant political and religious groups that are using religion as a pretext to impose their ideas on the population—what the report calls “talibanisation.” The shadow report asks probing questions, and it urges the CEDAW Committee in turn to ask probing questions of the Pakistani government.

[www.shirkatgah.org](http://www.shirkatgah.org)

The objective of the Tribal Women Welfare Association (TWWA) is the general improvement of life in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Geographically, the tribal areas are part of the North-West Frontier Province, but in administrative and legal terms they are ruled by the federal government. The population there lives according to its own traditional norms and laws; the national, secular law does not apply. Because of the very traditional and conservative way of life, feminist work in this region is very difficult, calling for a high degree of sensitivity.

TWWA supports primary schools in the area and trains women as midwives, allowing them to get out of the house and meet other women with whom they can exchange experiences and ideas. In the local elections of 2005 and the general election of 2008, TWWA encouraged and helped women to register to vote. Because of the worsening security situation, however, TWWA had to restrict its work more and more, and it now only reaches a small segment of the tribal areas.

Unlike the Aurat Foundation, TWWA, and Shirkat Gah, two further partners of the Heinrich Böll Foundation are not women's organizations: Takhleeq Foundation and Awaz Foundation. The well-established Takhleeq Foundation is active in the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan, and its educational events include discussions with the representatives of religious groupings on controversial topics such as honor killings, trafficking in women, and violence against women. This has allowed the organization to get Muslim spiritual leaders to take up women-related topics in, for example, their Friday sermons. Imams also celebrated International Women's Day together with women. The Awaz Foundation concentrates its activities on the badly neglected areas in the southern Punjab and parts of Balochistan and the North-West Frontier Province, what are called the “de-excluded areas.” Publishing the first study of this region, *The Socio-economic and Political Situation of PATA*, the Awaz Foundation carried out pioneering work, for the study addresses not only political, economic, and social aspects but also customs and traditions that discriminate against women. The Foundation has now published a further study with a stronger gender focus, *Bread for Survival: An Overview of Livelihood Patterns and Related Gender Issues in PATA Community of Southern Punjab*.

[www.awazcnds.org.pk](http://www.awazcnds.org.pk)

[www.takhleeqfoundation.org](http://www.takhleeqfoundation.org)

## AFGHANISTAN

### **Dared, but not yet won**

The people of Afghanistan want peace. They want security, and they want to enjoy at least the technological blessings of modernity—but do they also share the ideals of the international community regarding the future form of government and societal transformation?

The rebuilding of Afghanistan poses an enormous challenge for the whole international community. Right from the start it was clear that the existing structures in many domains did not coincide with Western ideals. Even so, the ambitious goal was set to liberate the country from Taliban domination, to turn it completely upside down, and at the same time to stabilize it. For

the Heinrich Böll Foundation, too, the question arose of how far our own ideals and values can be made compatible with the local circumstances, something that became particularly clear during the Foundation's work with The Liaison Office (TLO, formerly Tribal Liaison Office). This organization can point to impressive successes, especially in the domains of democratization and conflict resolution—which indirectly also means improvements to the situation of women in their areas of influence. However, we have come to realize that working with TLO will involve only slow and arduous progress toward the objective of gender democracy and equal rights.

Due to its conservatism, southeast Afghanistan is considered difficult to access; militants exploit its location on the border of Pakistan, and the central government has little say in the region. This area of the country is a powder keg, not only for Afghanistan but also for Pakistan—so it was excellent news when, in 2003, elders of the Ahmadzai and Mangal tribes from the southeastern province of Paktia started looking for ways to take part in the peace and reconstruction process. As early as December 2003, this search had resulted in the formation of TLO. Funded by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and Swisspeace, the pilot project quickly gathered pace. As well as the TLO headquarters in Kabul, in February 2004 offices were opened in Paktia, Paktika, and Khost; in 2008 they were joined by an office in Jalalabad. Since then, TLO has worked successfully as a sought-after mediator between the government and international organizations on the one hand, and traditional local structures on the other.

It was a leap into the dark for us to collaborate with actors whose values have so little in common with our own fundamental interests. Yet it was precisely for this reason that we thought it so important to gain access to these parts of society. Because of the profound influence such groups have on Afghan society, transformation can only be achieved with them, not against them. We were perfectly well-aware that it would be a tightrope act, and arranged in advance to have intensive professional support during our cooperation with TLO.



Pashtun tribal chief

In a country where, under some circumstances, a death penalty is imposed for breaking taboos or injuring male moral sensibilities, the path to emancipation must not risk leaving men behind. That is why one of TLO's strategies was to create incentives for men to accept greater participation by women—or to make clear to them how they could benefit from women's integration. For example, a clan's agreement to let girls attend school was rewarded by the building of more schools for that clan's area. In relation to the elections, too, TLO applied a pragmatic line



## “We use Islam as a weapon”

A conversation with Hangama Anwari, director of the Women and Children Legal Research Foundation (WCLRF), on lobbying, Western influence, and negotiations with the Taliban.

The most recent controversy over the Shiite marriage law has shown yet again how powerful Afghanistan's lobby against equal rights really is. The law gives men power of disposal over their spouses in sexual matters, and curbs married women's freedom of movement. What options do women's rights organizations like WCLRF have to intervene before a law like this is passed?

WCLRF joined with other organizations to form a committee that has been looking at family law for a year now. We have worked out a draft law of our own and have met several times with the parliamentary spokesman and with President Karzai. We called on them urgently not to endorse the law as it now stands. Unfortunately, the reactions were just as usual for cases like these: we are greeted politely and there is plenty of agreement during personal conversations; but as soon as the time comes for decision-making, we are simply ignored.

You also took part in the demonstration against the law, which was the first public protest march by women since the fall of the Taliban. A large number of counter-protesters pelted the women with stones and called them “slaves of the Christians.” It seems the radical conservative forces are trying to denigrate women's rights as an imported Western value. Are they succeeding?

Luckily, Afghanistan has changed a lot in the past few years, and so have ways

of thinking in our country. Many Afghan intellectuals are standing up for women's rights. At our demonstration we were accompanied by a good number of men. The government and parliament include numerous women and men who reject the new family law. On the initiative of Rangeen Dadfar Spanta, the Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs, five members of the cabinet, all of them men, called on the government to revise the law. Even so, we do have to face up to the reality that many people supported the existing draft. To some extent this can be put down to a lack of understanding of Islam. Some of the law's supporters are using the law mainly to pursue their own interests, or else they simply voted in line with their party allegiances.

How does the WCLRF deal with being slandered by the Mujahedin as “agents of the West”?

Our primary strategic aim is to make local people familiar with modern interpretations of Islam. At the same time, we want to enhance awareness of Afghanistan's international obligations as a member of the global community of states. Our work has always been most successful when we were able to show that international standards and human rights do not contradict the teachings of Islam. If others manipulate Islam to oppress women, that doesn't mean we women cannot use Islam as a weapon to defend our rights.

After the fall of the Taliban, women's rights were high on the agenda of the Western governments—at least on paper. At that time, international pressure helped the Afghan Parliament achieve one of the world's highest proportions of women deputies. But now there are voices saying this pressure was too strong and that it has provoked a backlash from the conservative camp—rather like the fall of the reforming king Amanullah Khan in 1929. What do you make of these arguments?

To be honest, I don't think much of them, because in reality the West never worked particularly hard for women's rights in Afghanistan or for our concerns as activists. We expect the international community to push much more strongly for the protection of universal values and rights that apply independently of people's membership of states and religions and that were denied us under Taliban rule. The Western governments should increase pressure and intervene more energetically

in the debates within Afghanistan. But of course it is also important that the Afghan stakeholders, especially the women's organizations, are consulted in far more depth than has been the case up to now, so that women don't end up caught in the firing line.

US President Obama has hinted that talks could be held with segments of the Taliban. The Afghan government is also putting its hopes in negotiation. Do you see a danger that this process will mean women's rights being used as a bargaining chip?

Yes, we are afraid this may happen if women are not able to participate in the negotiations on an equal footing as Afghan citizens and as an interest group of their own. More than that: equal rights between men and women must be high up on the agenda in all talks with the insurgents. That's the only way women's rights can be protected.

of argument, showing how including the votes of women would increase the strength of the constituency as a whole. After a campaign to this effect, and with the support of the elders, the Pash-tun southeast saw 40% of women voting in the elections, a success highlighted by Swisspeace in its report.

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Step by step, the Heinrich Böll Foundation is trying to increase the profile of gender components in TLO's work. Great tact is needed, however: tribal elders are only prepared to allow this to a limited extent. Innovations are welcome only as long as they do not restrict or undermine the power of the village elders. In the villages, too, participation by women is only possible when the issue affects them directly. In this context, promoting women's interests too outspokenly could result in the reverse of the intended effect, with women's rights coming to be regarded not as a universal value that is positive for Afghanistan like everywhere else, but as a contemptible Western construction.



Political education on elections

We need creative routes to put forward our interests here. In southeast Afghanistan, the core region of TLO's work, female colleagues will be able to achieve very little, and in fact attempting to deploy them may even damage the organization's standing. To prepare the ground, we will need continued work with men. If men begin to take a more open-minded approach to the topic, if we manage with TLO's help to achieve "mental democratization," then work on gender issues will become considerably easier. A further idea is to employ female Afghan experts in TLO's main office in Kabul, so that they can bring a more balanced gender perspective to the projects from behind the scenes.

However, this shows how narrowly the limits of emancipation are still drawn, even in the capital. An organization moving within a largely conservative environment and firmly in the hands of men has great difficulty in getting Afghan women to join its team—quite apart from the fact that even in the relatively progressive Kabul, most women value their family's consent to their activities, something that is much harder to obtain for a male-dominated organization with conservative connotations. These problems cannot be resolved by either pressure or incentives. The challenges are not diminishing in Afghanistan, and the tightrope walk continues. We still think it's worth it!

#### AFGHANISTAN **Raising awareness and achieving rights**

In 2001 at the Petersberg Hotel near Bonn, an agreement was reached on what the future Afghan government should look like: "gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative" and with a broad-based commitment to the Afghan nation. Since then, there have been some achievements in formal terms: the two chambers of parliament, taken together, include ninety-one women, more than ever before in the country's history. However, in the cabinet there is only one female minister—responsible for women's affairs—and the government can hardly be accused of being "gender-sensitive," as called for in the Petersberg Accord.

Although the Constitution passed in 2004 sets down that men and women have the same rights and duties, anyone campaigning for women's rights in Afghanistan is living dangerously. Whether women can make actual use of their formal rights, what they are expected to do and not to do—these are things that inflame public feelings more than in almost any other country. The extent to which women really enjoy rights will only emerge with the necessary reforms in criminal and civil law and in the regulation of divorce, custody, alimony, and inheritance law, and finally in the mechanisms to protect girls and women from forced marriage, wife-exchange, and domestic violence.

One of the organizations performing important preparatory work for that process is the Women and Children Legal Research Foundation (WCLRF), a group of women judges, lawyers, and activists (along with some male colleagues). Among the earliest activities of WCLRF, which was founded in 2003, was a documentation, later made into a film, on swara marriage, the practice of giving a girl from the family of a murderer to the family of the victim. This form of compensation, says WCLRF, is not only paid for by the young women themselves, but also puts a strain on both families and ultimately on society as a whole.

Hangama Anwari, the founder of WCLRF, is optimistic that once the social impact of such practices is discussed openly, many Afghans will increasingly come to understand that there are better ways to organize the atonement for a crime. She likes to describe how, after the presentation of the study, a man from Khost province stood up and admitted to having taken part in decisions of this kind at a shura, or village council. Now, though, his eyes were opened to how painful and harmful the practice was. And, adds Anwari, after his return some villages began to impose fines for such cases instead of bad. An important WCLRF goal is to ensure that civil and family courts do not continue to delegate cases of conflict back to the families and clans. Often the label on the file noting "amicable resolution" conceals an honor killing or a forced marriage.

WCLRF makes representations to parliamentarians and government officials when, for example, there are discussions on a law to register marriages. The foundation also makes very cre-

ative use of a range of media formats—radio drama, folksongs, films—to disseminate information and campaign for change. The bi-monthly legal and information magazine *Waqayat* (Reality) is popular, because it offers an attractive mixture of feminist and “housewifely” topics.



WCLRF survey in a hospital

Anyone putting their faith in education and consciousness-raising still, however, faces a difficult task in Afghanistan. The government is weak, and at the political poker table the rights of women count for nothing. On the contrary: having the power of disposal over women is an important bargaining chip. Women themselves are not asked for their opinion on that, nor are their voices listened to.

[www.wclrf.org](http://www.wclrf.org)

#### NIGERIA

##### Step by step to modern women's rights

Nigeria is a country where gender roles understood or rationalized as “traditional” hold considerable significance—even more so than in other African countries. The relatively high degree of economic autonomy among women (millions of women work as small traders and in other areas of the informal sector, and many in qualified jobs as well) has not brought about a genuine modernization of gender roles in society. Women in northern Nigeria, in particular, suffer under a traditionalist patriarchy, as is indicated by their lower level of education, high maternal mortality, reduced access to economic resources, and a high rate of domestic violence against women.

In Nigeria, progress in the situation of women is a laborious affair. The new government under President Yar'Adua has not shown any more interest than previous ones. Leading politicians from all areas of the country are combating every attempt to establish modern conditions for women's rights in Nigeria.

Yet those conditions are the goal of a range of very determined groups. Women's groups are among the best-organized in Nigerian civil society. The WARDC, or Women Advocates and Research Documentation Center, tries to increase women's participation in the federal state of Ogun. Women are prepared in three-day training courses for meetings with parliamentary delegates. In 2008 two of these “accountability forums,” held in the cities of Abeokuta and Ota, attracted a total of over 600 women,

who came to confront state-level and local politicians with their questions and problems. At these events, parliamentary delegates offer an insight into their planning and later have to account for themselves. In 2008, the deputy president of the Ogun Parliament made a grand promise to submit twenty-seven of the women's demands to the delegates who were not present, and to encourage them to work toward fulfilling those demands.

In Nigerian criminal law, there has so far been no provision to punish sexual harassment and violence. The Women's Aid Collective (WACOL) presented the draft of a “Policy on sexual harassment” and held a forum to discuss it. This led to a day of action against sexual harassment, as well as training for police and members of the legal profession to deal with cases of this kind. The National University Commission set up a rapid-reaction force designed to follow up individual cases. In the end, even the Justice Department took part in preparing the draft.

Because in Nigeria little progress can be made without money, new parliamentarians are introduced by the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) to the principles of gender budgeting. In 2008, this offer was taken up by twenty-seven people (two men and twenty-five women), twenty of whom were members of the federal parliament. As follow-up reading and for those who could not attend, a handbook was also published. Some of the parliamentarians and Treasury representatives who were trained in the federal states (forty men, twenty-one women) have already undertaken positive steps to introduce at least some elements of this method of budget allocation. In the state of Edo, all government departments have been instructed in writing to take account of gender in their budget lines.

#### Further reading:

“GENDER RESPONSIVE BUDGETING & PARLAMENT: A HANDBOOK FOR NIGERIAN LEGISLATOR,” CDD, 2008

“DRAFT SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY FOR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND CORPORATIONS IN NIGERIA,” WACOL, 2008

#### NIGERIA

##### CEDAW: Signed, sealed but not delivered

The title says it all: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, was supposed to put an end to the historically deep-rooted inequality between men and women once and for all: 130 countries voted in favor of the Convention, none against. Buoyed by the era's feminist mood of change, and spurred on by the Second World Conference on Women in Copenhagen (1980), the Convention had soon been signed by many states, and by 1981 it had been ratified by a sufficient number to come into force that same year. No human rights convention has ever been accepted so quickly.

Nigeria too was soon on board: the country signed the Convention in April 1984 and ratified it in 1985. Unlike many other states, Nigeria did not enter reservations against particular provisions. One of the commitments arising from accession to CEDAW is to submit a report to the United Nations every four years. This is discussed and evaluated by the CEDAW Committee, who add recommendations to the originating government. Nigeria has fulfilled this obligation, and in 2006 the sixth report was submitted. Because it always takes a while before a country reaches the front of the line, the report was only considered by the Committee in early July of 2008.

Governments always like to present their case with a certain rosy tint—which is why NGOs in many countries have tak-

en up the habit of compiling “shadow reports.” The name is apt, because those reports often enough cast a shadow on the governments concerned. For Nigeria, the first shadow report was submitted in 1998, and in 2008 the experienced Women’s Aid Collective (WACOL) coordinated work on a Nigerian shadow report that drew on the collaboration of 148 NGOs from all Nigeria’s federal states.

The results are sobering. “More than twenty years after Nigeria’s ratification of the Convention, its provisions are still just a paper tiger,” says Uju Obiora, the gender coordinator in the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s Lagos office. “They cannot be pursued in any Nigerian court, because Nigeria has failed to integrate them into national law, as required by Article 12 of the Nigerian Constitution.” During a parliamentary debate on this issue in 2007, delegates argued that the provisions on reproductive rights were not compatible with Nigerian culture. Oby Nwankwo, one of the country’s leading women’s rights activists and a project partner of ours for many years, has written many newspaper articles publicly condemning the failure to “domesticate” CEDAW. Her words attracted the ire of the Nigerian Senate’s president, David Mark, who claimed CEDAW was a “lying snake that must be killed before it crawls into the house.” Mark called on his compatriots not to allow African soil to be used by the neo-imperialists as a “dumping ground for all sorts of evil.”

“CEDAW IS A LYING SNAKE  
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SENATE PRESIDENT.

For the discussion of its report, Nigeria had sent a seventy-three-member government delegation to New York—the biggest ever to come to a CEDAW Committee session. The Minister for Women’s Affairs, Hajia Saudatu Usman Bungudu, had to face some very critical questions. Complete disbelief was the response, in particular, to the “Nudity Bill” introduced by one of the delegation members: a law intended to tell women what was the maximum of bare skin they could be allowed to show without risking sexual assault or rape. Jamaican representative Glenda Simms told the Nigerian women: “Dress codes are about power. Dressing a woman from head to toe is a form of rape.” Nigeria did not defend the bill in its reply.

The Committee had done its homework; in the days before the session it had also taken evidence from representatives of the Nigerian NGOs in attendance. Some of these had been enabled to participate by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, which supports CEDAW-related activities in other countries as well, and which has for many years accompanied the New York sessions through the Global Dialogue Program run by its Washington, DC, office. Appearing on an international stage is a nerve-racking experience and quick reactions are vital, so the women received preparation beforehand at a three-day seminar offered by International Women’s Rights Action Watch (IWRAP). After that they spent two days working out and rehearsing their speeches until everything was ready.

Of course, they had the shadow report in their baggage. It was officially presented in New York by WACOL and the Heinrich Böll Foundation at a special lunch. Seven Nigerian women made

their case clearly and answered the questions of the twenty Committee members present. When they sat down with IWRAP to take stock, the Nigerians received high praise. Back in Nigeria they reported back to their sister activists. The recommendations of the CEDAW Committee—ten UN pages of them—will feed into their continued work and their campaigns to domesticate CEDAW in Nigerian law. They hope that, twenty-five years after Nigeria’s accession to the Convention, a legal basis for the country’s women will finally result.

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## COMBATING SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people (LGBT) are subjected to particular discrimination almost everywhere: in more than eighty states homosexuality (often understood exclusively as same-sex orientation among men) is prohibited under criminal law, and in seven Islamic countries it may even be punishable by death. Often the very existence of homosexuality is denied, or it is defined as a disease that must be combated. But even in those areas, such as Europe, where legal discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation has been abolished, lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people do not receive equal treatment in all matters and are not accepted in all spheres of life.

In December 2008, a UN General Assembly debate—the first of its kind—showed how deeply divided the international community is. While sixty-six countries, mainly from Europe and Latin America, supported a declaration on the decriminalization of homosexuality, almost sixty others—the majority of them strongly influenced by Catholicism or Islam—backed a counter-declaration issued by the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

However, even in the countries where homosexuality is subject to prosecution and is aggressively rejected by the general public, LGBT activists are joining forces to educate the public and demand their rights. In many cases, that calls for great courage and a willingness to put themselves at personal risk. The Heinrich Böll Foundation stands shoulder to shoulder with the LGBT communities' campaigns in many countries—often we are the only foreign organization to support the activities and networks that challenge discrimination and persecution. ■

### SOUTH AFRICA

#### **Progressive constitution, conservative population**

The 1996 South African Constitution is praised across the world for its prohibition on all discrimination based on sexual orientation. In 2006, in the face of strong opposition, an additional law was passed that allows marriage between two men or two women. However, a study by the Human Sciences Research Council published in November 2008 shows that the great majority of South Africans still believe sex between women or between men is unacceptable and “un-African.” That results in hate crimes, even murders, against homosexual men and women. The women of the Coalition of African Lesbians, one of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's partner organizations, also report cases of so-called “corrective rape”—based on the idea that a woman can be “cured” of her “disease” by sex with a man.

OUT LGBT Well-being, an organization of and for LGBT communities, describes South African society as conservative, patriarchal, heteronormative, and prejudiced against homosexuals. That's why OUT runs a telephone hotline and a small clinic of its own to provide medical and psychological assistance in Tshwane (Pretoria). As well as this care for individuals, OUT sets up meeting points and supports community formation. The organi-

zation has also begun collaboration with the province's Department of Social Services, with the specific aim of mainstreaming LGBT interests as a cross-disciplinary theme throughout the social services, and especially in the area of psychosocial emergency services. Because academic research has also neglected LGBT concerns, OUT carries out its own research projects, some of them undertaken jointly with leading national and international organizations. The Heinrich Böll Foundation supports the “Advocacy and Mainstreaming Programme” run by OUT, which lobbies for further change in society and aims to lessen prejudices through information and training. OUT not only aims to organize the LGBT communities and help them exercise their rights; it also seeks to build new coalitions with other social movements and human rights organizations. To a great extent, says Antonie Nord, the director of the Foundation's office in Cape Town, feminist groups and LGBT groups are still working in isolation from each other.

Whereas OUT is mainly restricted to South Africa, the Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL), founded in 2003, brings together nineteen organizations from eleven African countries. CAL has a radical feminist philosophy, and has set itself the goal of changing Africa so that lesbian women can live their way of life publicly with equal rights in all areas. Fikile Vilakazi, CAL's director, wishes every woman the necessary “boldness, strength and courage to challenge, question and demand answers” on “prejudice, inequality, stigmatization, hate crimes and marginalization against sexual minorities.” The Heinrich Böll Foundation also supports CAL in its work to attain official observer status at the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR).



Parliamentary elections in South Africa, 2004

In view of the living conditions in many South African townships, where house is crowded against house, shack against shack, homosexual women and men have only limited opportunities for privacy. This is why the Heinrich Böll Foundation provides support for Cape Town's “Triangle Project,” which aims to create spaces of retreat. The organization runs a drop-in center in the Mowbray neighborhood. The urgent necessity of such projects is shown not only by the “corrective rapes” but by murders of lesbian women. In 2006 in Guguletu (Cape Town), nineteen-year-old Zoliswa Nkonana was stoned, then killed with a golf club. In July 2007, in Meadowlands, near Johannesburg, Sizakele Sigasa

and Salome Masooa were killed execution style; ten months later, the lesbian footballer Eudy Simelane was gang-raped, then murdered, in Kwathema.

Marlow Valentine of the Triangle Project points out that all the murdered women were black. "LGBT people who live in urban and better-off neighborhoods are closing their eyes to what's happening to us. Many reassure themselves with the fact that we have a great Constitution and laws. Class, privilege, status, skin color, gender—all of these factors influence what moves and affects us."

[www.cal.org.za](http://www.cal.org.za)

[www.out.org.za](http://www.out.org.za)

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### Homosexuality in Africa



In thirty-eight African countries, homosexuality is expressly forbidden; it is legal (or simply not mentioned in the legislation) in at least thirteen countries. In Mauritania, Sudan, and the northern federal states of Nigeria, homosexuality may be punished by death. In Uganda life sentences can be imposed, and in the Gambia, Kenya, and Tanzania, sentences can reach fourteen years. In Zimbabwe, even a public demonstration of affection between people of the same sex is a criminal offence. Only South Africa has a Constitution that explicitly prohibits discrimination against lesbians and gay men. It is the only country in Africa that allows marriage between people of the same sex.

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### THAILAND

#### **Pride and prejudice: queering gender justice**

Thailand is high up the list of destinations for lesbian, transgender, and gay travelers. It is one of the few countries where you can feel safe from physical or verbal attacks—at least from the Thai people; it is one of those countries where a woman can usually travel alone without problems. The diversity of genders and sexualities is more obvious in Thailand than other places. Here it is not just "hetero" and "homo," "women" and "men," but toms, dees, bisexuals, gays, gay kings, gay queens, kathoey (transsexual and transgender women), lesbians, and men or women who have sex with people of the same gender without defining themselves as different.

At first glance, from the outside, the "Land of the Free" seems to live up to its name, but unfortunately the reality of everyday life is often very different: more homophobic and transphobic. Thailand is not a paradise among human societies. "The first thing I stole in my life was a gay magazine," said twenty-six-year-old Jay in a Bangkok Post article about a Thai Queer Resource Center media project supported by the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

"I stole it out of curiosity, and out of fear that people would think I was gay if I simply walked up and bought it." Gay magazines are viewed with distrust by society and the authorities, and fall under a generalized suspicion of being pornography. Yet they play an important role in education about HIV/AIDS and in raising awareness that being "different" in terms of sex or gender does not mean you are alone.

This project arose out of discussion events with representatives of lesbian/gay/trans/queer movements that—for example in the debate on the new Constitution in 2007—were much more visible than the country's women's movement, at that time in a state of paralysis. In the complex reality covering vastly different lifestyles, private and societal spaces, and ambivalences, it is difficult to work out where to begin in addressing discrimination, stereotyping, homophobia, and transphobia.

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### Neither wrong nor alone

In Turkey, homosexuality has never been banned or criminalized. But neither have there been any laws that protect lesbians, gay men, transvestites, bisexuals, or transsexuals from discrimination and hostility—for example by mayors and governors who are eager to ban LGBT organizations or have them dissolved for the crime of "offending public decency." In January 2009, the latest ban, directed against Lambda in Istanbul, was pronounced unlawful by the Supreme Court. The four LGBT organizations and the Gay Pride parades held since 1994 have made homosexuals more visible—but, of course, also easier to attack. Police harassment and violence are everyday events. According to the Lambda study "Neither Wrong nor Alone," published in 2005, 87% of the 393 gay, lesbian, and bisexual respondents had experienced verbal attacks, marginalization, and isolation. In 2008 the murder of Ahmet Yildiz hit the headlines—a crime that was probably committed by the young man's family and was thus labeled the first honor killing of a gay man to come to public attention.

[www.lambdaistanbul.org](http://www.lambdaistanbul.org)

[www.kaosgl.org](http://www.kaosgl.org)

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### GEORGIA

#### **"Me" magazine and the "Inclusive" foundation**

Since fall 2007, the Heinrich Böll Foundation has been supporting Inclusive, the first NGO in Georgia to stand up explicitly for the rights of sexual minorities. The Inclusive foundation documents rights violations, researching, and publishing on the situation of sexual minorities in Georgia. It offers counseling to individuals and groups, and runs information events. In the first half of 2008 alone, it ran twenty events: discussions, film screenings, and the women's club. An average of around thirty people came along, 60% of them women. At the film screenings, numbers even reached forty or fifty.

By supporting the magazine *Me*, published by Inclusive, the Heinrich Böll Foundation aims to contribute to challenging traditional gender stereotypes in Georgia's public discourse and to counter the homophobia that is expressed—sometimes aggressively—in politics and much of the media. In a survey of values and attitudes, 80% of the respondents made it very clear that they did not want to have a homosexual as a neighbor.

The magazine, which has appeared bilingually in English and Georgian four times a year since 2008, has built up a very

good reputation in Tbilisi in just a short time. In 2008, more than 2,500 copies were downloaded.

[www.inclusive-foundation.org](http://www.inclusive-foundation.org)



Me—Georgia's first LGBT magazine

## LEBANON

### Courage against the majority

"What has happened to the days of homoeroticism when Arabia's cafés were full of male belly-dancers, and poets like Abu Nuwas wrote love poems to beautiful young men?" Lebanese Georges Azzi would like to reach a point where gay men are not simply silently tolerated, but positively accepted by society. That is his dream, and in its pursuit he, along with other members of Club Free, founded Helem, which is the Arabic word for "dream" and also the acronym for "Lebanese Protection for Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgenders."

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"The fact that Helem was formed in Beirut is hardly surprising," says Layla Al-Zubaidi, who runs the Middle East office. "The city has always been well-known for its relatively open atmosphere and the coexistence of different lifestyles." As well as the Helem Community Center in the inner-city neighborhood of Sanayeh, which welcomes 700 to 800 visitors a month, there are more than a dozen meeting-points for gay men, venues that are more or less obvious to the casual observer.

But these hesitant beginnings of tolerance are not shared by many Lebanese—whether Christians or Muslims—and it rests on a precarious balance. "There are two societies in Lebanon," say the activists at Helem, "the conservative one and the liberal one. Many politicians stand in the center and fear the reaction of the conservatives to a social hot potato like homosexuality. Yes, homosexuals exist, but let's treat that as a taboo and not talk about it." Again and again, too, there are attacks by passers-by and the police.

Helem's main objective is to abolish Article 534 of the Lebanese Penal Code, which penalizes "unnatural sexual intercourse." To gain more momentum and legitimacy for this goal, it is consciously seeking out alliances with other Lebanese civil society organizations, which are only accepting the topic with some reluctance. Helem works toward other social-policy objectives as well: in 2003 the organization took part in the movement of opposition to the Iraq War, and in 2006 it coordinated emergency assistance for refugees from the south, many of whom support Hezbollah. The crisis situation created points of contact that would otherwise have been unlikely to arise.

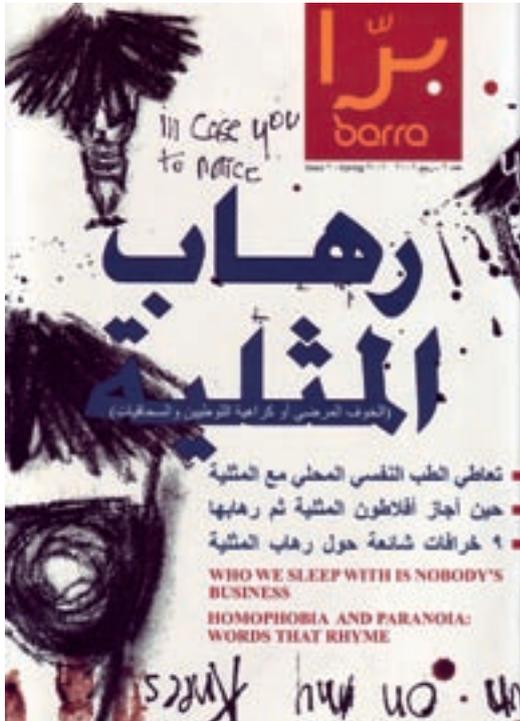


Lesbians and queer women write about their lives

Helem also acts on HIV/AIDS, offering free testing appointments via its office. When, in June 2006, the UN General Assembly held a special session on HIV/AIDS, Helem submitted a "shadow report" on behalf of the LGBT community in which it pointed out that the difficult position of homosexuals in Lebanese society contributes to the difficulty of negotiating safer sex. The 2005 meeting with the CEDAW Committee in New York was disappointing. The Committee could not bring itself to include a call for the abolition of Article 534 in its list of recommendations for the Lebanese government. But Helem, with its strong international networks, knocked at CEDAW's door again in 2008, this time with a shadow report on violence against lesbians.

Every year, the International Day Against Homophobia sees concerted action by Helem: flyers and posters are distributed, podium debates arranged, lectures held on the image of homosexuals in the media, and documentaries screened. Helem also publishes a newsletter, alternately in English and in Arabic, and a bilingual magazine, Barra. In 2006, with Heinrich Böll Foundation support, the first Arabic-language book on homophobia

appeared. Its varied contributions carried the clear message that it is not the homosexuals who are the problem, but the society that refuses them their fundamental rights. In 2009, the Foundation co-funded another publication, *Myths on Homosexuality*, which appeared not only in English and Arabic but, for the first time, also in Armenian, so as to reach Lebanon's Armenian minority. February 23, 2009, saw another milestone: the first sit-in against violence against minorities, held on Sodeco Square. For the 200 participants, it was a moment to celebrate when they held their banners high: "We shall no longer be afraid."



Barra magazine's special issue on homophobia

Helem fights for the recognition of all LGBT communities; in a society where women do not even have the right to make decisions on their own sexuality, however, commitment to lesbian issues has been primarily a feminist preserve. To fill the gap, in August 2007 four women established Meem (A Community of Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Questioning Women and Transgender Persons in Lebanon). Its aim was to create a "safe space" in Lebanon where non-heterosexual girls and women could meet, share their experiences, and discuss ideas. Meem now has almost 300 members, and its Womyn House provides that safe space. A very lively website with 6,000 visitors every month, a monthly newsletter, and the quarterly magazine *Bekhsos* show how attractive this group is and the great vitality of what is still a relatively new forum.

[www.meemgroup.org](http://www.meemgroup.org)  
[www.helem.net](http://www.helem.net)

## ISRAEL

### We exist!

Anyone searching the Internet for Israeli Arab women who love women will soon stumble on the homepage of ASWAT, and be welcomed with the words "We exist" before receiving detailed information material. To be an Arab woman in Israel and to be a lesbian means finding yourself on the receiving end of three forms of discrimination at once. If women with this orientation show themselves in public—as ASWAT did in March 2007 with the announcement of its conference—they may encounter hate-filled reactions. Press releases by the Islamic Movement referred to a "cancer" that must be prevented from spreading in Arab society and that "should be eliminated from the Arab culture."

The conference took place regardless, in the Cinematheque Auditorium in the Jewish section of Haifa. Outside the venue, there was a demonstration by Knesset member Abbas Zakour and two dozen women wearing headscarves and long, loose robes. Their message was: "God, we ask you to guide these lesbians to the true path." Inside, the fifth anniversary of ASWAT ("Voices") was celebrated and the first ASWAT book in Arabic ("Home and Exile in Queer Experience") was presented.

The ASWAT women disseminate information, and also offer empowerment courses to develop self-confidence, a phone support line, a crisis intervention fund for women, an email distribution list, and a library. They have built up good links with similar groups outside Israel. In 2008 they were the first recipients of the "Go Visible" prize donated by Ulrike Lunacek, a Green Party member of the Austrian National Assembly.

[www.aswatgroup.org](http://www.aswatgroup.org)



Jerusalem, June 26, 2008: Gay Pride parade with over 3,000 participants and heavy police protection



Beginnings of tolerance in Lebanon

"RECURRING POLITICAL  
CRISES, AND THE GROWING  
'TALIBANISATION' OF LARGE PARTS  
OF THE COUNTRY, MEAN  
RUKSHANDA NAZ LIVES UNDER  
CONSTANT THREAT."

## **Rukshanda Naz**



Rukshanda Naz is a lawyer, a women's rights activist, and a member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. She comes from a family of twelve children, and learned early on to get what she wanted: aged fifteen, she went on strike for the right to enter higher schooling.

After graduating in law, she worked as a lawyer specializing in family law in Peshawar, the capital of the particularly underdeveloped North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan. In a region where codified law has little validity, while women are banned from the public sphere and "honor killings" are still common, the dauntless Rukshanda Naz came to embody the hopes of women.

In 1990, she joined the Aurat Foundation, an NGO working right across Pakistan to provide political education and legal, psychological, and medical support for women and children. She also opened the North-West Frontier Province's first women's crisis center. It became a place of refuge for women suffering from domestic and state violence. And yet her family sees her as the very opposite of a role model: Look at her, she has a career, but no husband. When you ask Naz about her strength, she murmurs: "Strong, and alone."

Recurring political crises, and the growing "talibanization" of large parts of the country, mean Naz lives under constant threat. All the more admirable is her fearless manner and her tenacity—especially in spring this year when, without a struggle, the government gave up parts of her home province to the Taliban and their misogynist interpretations of Islam. ■

## Chapter II

# BUILDING A GENDER-EQUITABLE SOCIETY

At the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), the knowledge and experience gathered by women and women's movements across the world during the preceding two decades were brought together and turned into practical demands in the shape of a "platform for action." The platform was adopted by the United Nations by acclamation. Because changes are necessary in all areas of life, the platform for action proved to be a very long catalog. It embodies a historic moment of consensus, for never before—and never since—have there been such exhaustive discussions over gender issues, and never has such a far-reaching blueprint for gender equality and gender justice been agreed upon.

The platform for action introduced the category "gender" into international politics for the first time. The concept was anchored in the final document through the use of "gender mainstreaming" as a strategic starting point. Gender mainstreaming is an instrument that specifically targets the dynamics between men and women—aiming to change gender roles, and with them gender relations within society.

Dismantling inequality and undemocratic relations between the genders is, thus, not a task restricted to women: it is also a matter for men, and for the whole of society. ■

## II.1

## RESHAPING SOCIETY

At its core, gender mainstreaming is a radical idea. If taken seriously, it probes all political domains and political decisions in terms of their impact on gender relations. Yet this ideal of gender mainstreaming has not been achieved anywhere in the world.

Experiences of gender mainstreaming are remarkably similar worldwide. Everywhere, we see a systematic rift between official policy and its practical implementation: political and public debate and decision-making processes make it very clear that the impact of political actions on gender relations still remains a marginal topic. Gender mainstreaming as a cross-sectoral task has virtually never been tackled consistently, and often enough it has been completely ignored. Despite distinctions of detail, this diagnosis basically applies to north, south, east, and west.

The definitions and interpretations of gender as a category and gender mainstreaming as a strategy, method, and instrument vary immensely. The institutions' numerous handbooks, catalogs of criteria, and checklists, developed over many years, indicate that the gender-mainstreaming process has often become a technocratic formality. All too often, issues that should be pursued with gender-political will and energy in fact end up mired in bureaucracy.

Even so, there are some striking successes, as we see in the examples from Mexico and El Salvador—countries where, after all, macho attitudes are still all too present in everyday life. Gender budgeting, too, can help achieve transparency, then a new politics—especially when it is tied to participatory methods of setting priorities.

Innovative instruments like gender analyses and gender budgeting are contributing to new sociopolitical insights into the gendered consequences of policies, and are creating a new knowledge base for politics and administration. Forms of data collection that make gender visible, by including it alongside other social dimensions such as age, social status, religion, income, or disability, provide an essential foundation for more effective decision-making. Data of this kind is especially important in cases where a society does not want to accept that discrimination exists.

There are now practical examples of all these possibilities in a range of different countries. They enabled the Brazilian women's organization CRIOLA to give statistical visibility to the racism and sexism they experienced every day, and to use the new data in their publicity work. An Israeli organization, Kayan, showed that apparently it sometimes takes a feminist organization to give a state, and with it a public transportation company, the idea of starting a new bus route. Kayan's success meant women could take up a job outside the home and gain some freedom—at least freedom of movement. It is through work like this that small, yet important, steps are taken on the path to gender justice.

However, the story of gender mainstreaming has also had a downside. Under the banner of "gender mainstreaming"—which is sometimes just a euphemism for inaction—there has been an alarming reduction in funding for emancipation-oriented women's organizations, projects, and programs. Co-opted women's organizations, sometimes overfunded from abroad, are remodeled as social enterprises, more accountable to their funders than

to their grassroots supporters. Self-development and social justice then fall by the wayside. ■

## CAMBODIA

## Pioneering work

The Heinrich Böll Foundation asked Cambodian women from very different spheres of life how they evaluated the situation of women in their country. There was a surprising amount of agreement between the ladies of the urban middle classes, rural women struggling with harsh circumstances, and Cambodian women working in NGOs who are fully familiar with their foreign promoters' gender discourse. All of them evaluated the fundamental problems as being a lack of access to education and thus high illiteracy rates, economic dependency, domestic violence, and hierarchical gender relations founded on traditional role stereotypes. The latter problem contributes to excluding women from active participation in political processes. Even in those cases where women hold leading roles in local communities or organizations, they are heavily dependent on men in the process of laying claim to their rights.



Cambodian women working on the land

On the formal level, gender mainstreaming seems to have left its mark on Cambodia's government: the national strategic development plan and other government plans mention the significance of gender, the Department for Women has passed a second five-year plan, and many other departments have gender mainstreaming "action groups." Nevertheless, a wider political understanding is still absent in many cases. Most of the gender representatives at the local level content themselves with collecting health and hygiene statistics and working on improvements to sanitary facilities.

What is lacking is an open debate that could result in an accepted interpretation and detailed practical elaboration of the call for gender justice and gender democracy. The gender-political activities of more than 1,800 local and 500 international NGOs in Cambodia may be fueled by international pressure and influence rather than by a domestic "demand" for democracy. Cambodian NGOs and the government have simply taken over

the terminology of the foreign donor and research industry, so that “gender” is often used merely as a development policy slogan, empty of any professional or personal confrontation with the related ideas. There is no translation of the word into Khmer, and as a result gender is often narrowly equated with the empowerment of women or the campaign against domestic violence. Above all, “gender” is often misunderstood as an indictment of the behavior of men.

TO HIGHLIGHT THE FACT  
THAT WOMEN HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY AND ARE  
CAPABLE OF SUCCESS, THE  
FOUNDATION SUPPORTS  
NETWORKS THAT AIM FOR  
INCREASED POLITICAL  
PARTICIPATION BY WOMEN.

Despite the high profile of civil society groups such as local NGOs, it has so far proved impossible to develop a serious force capable of shaping opinion in society and mobilizing local publics to exert effective pressure on political processes. This failure is frustrating, and it has led to continued fragmentation within Cambodian civil society. It is relatively rare for groups to cooperate or pool their resources, and, indeed, the scale of financial support from foreign organizations means such cooperation is often considered unnecessary. Many of the larger local NGOs are weakened by a kind of “star syndrome”: headed by a charismatic leader figure, they give their other members very little recognition or decision-making responsibility.

In a context like this, what can a political foundation do to promote gender justice and embed it in society? Katrin Seidel, director of the Foundation’s office in Phnom Penh, approaches the problem from several different directions simultaneously. “Preliminary studies and conversations with women and men in government, in local organizations, and at the village level enabled us to define two main starting points in the area of gender policy. On the one hand, providing training and discussion opportunities specifically targets women who play an active role within and for their village communities. This not only increases the village’s openness to women’s interests, but also makes women more attractive candidates for positions in the local councils. In the medium term, the program thus contributes directly to strengthening women’s political participation. On the other hand, we support individuals and organizations in their efforts to tailor more general gender models to fit their own political work, and in building creative communication strategies that speak to men as well as women. This means Cambodian organizations are encouraged and enabled to independently develop strategies for a gradual democratization of the current male-dominated gender relations.”

To attract people interested in the topic, the monthly film series “Gendered Lens” at Meta House, Phnom Penh, shows Cambodian films or sometimes a production from Europe or elsewhere in Asia. After the screening there is a discussion with guests from Cambodian and foreign organizations. The film series is one way of exploiting different formats to make the topic of gender more accessible. Another is the radio show on the political empowerment of women; yet another is the film *Bong Srey Saat*

(“beautiful big sister”) by Berlin filmmaker Nana Yuriko. *Bong Srey Saat* presents a kaleidoscope of different Cambodian women, who offer inspiration through their courage and dignity in the face of very difficult life situations—they are the true heroines of this continually changing, post-conflict society.

It is important to highlight the fact that women have something to say and are capable of success, and the Foundation does this by supporting existing national networks that work for increased political participation by women. The Committee to Promote Women in Politics (CPWP), founded in 2005, brings together seven organizations to work toward raising the proportion of women in local-level parliaments from 15% to 25% by 2015, and in the national parliament from 20% to 30%. The Committee has already trained well over 5,000 women, from thirteen provinces, to take up a political role.

What is unique about work in Cambodia is the complexity of the interfaces between gender, ethnicity, and resource politics. These issues are explosive in many different respects at once. Corruption in the awarding of contracts results in land and natural resources being sold off, and the social and ecological consequences of this development model, which caters to the interests of a small political and economic elite, are borne especially by women. Yet the government allows the few women in the institutions very little space to influence decisions, and shows even less enthusiasm for giving a voice to the NGOs that are battling for accountability and sustainability. “NGOs try to tell us how we should use the money we gained from oil, but we aren’t interested. What interests us is how we can transform our resources into profits,” said Prime Minister Hun Sen in a radio address in November 2008. In a setting like that, even guidelines that seem to be “women-friendly” have their pitfalls.

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**Saro from Cambodia**

Saro is forty-seven years old. Her husband left her shortly before the birth of their fifth child. As the head of the household, she received a small rice field from the state in order to feed her family. It was only through the land registration study that Saro discovered her land was registered jointly in her own and her husband’s name. “I am shocked. What will happen if he comes back and demands the land?”

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This is illustrated all too clearly by a Heinrich Böll Foundation study on women and land registration. The Khmer Rouge destroyed all land registry records. For sustainable development to benefit the mainly rural population of Cambodia, it is essential that rights of ownership and use for their land is secured. In the late 1990s, the Cambodian government, helped by international donors, including Germany, initiated a comprehensive land reform. More than 1.5 million land titles have been assigned to private landowners since then; the government claims that these include more women than men, but in 70% of cases registry is as “joint land title” assigned to both spouses.

The government and donors say this figure proves that the rights of women are secure in the land registration process. However, the research study shows that the allocation of “joint titles” is often disadvantageous for women. Based on case studies, the report gives a voice to women who have been penalized in the allocation of land titles due to gender discrimination and stereotypes. For example, in the case of many women who have been divorced or separated from their husbands for many years, their land has been registered as joint property, often without their knowledge. The officials, mainly men, are not always well-informed about the

new rules, and anyway cannot imagine that women might be the owners of valuable land.

This study is one of the very few to address the question of Cambodia's land reform from a gender perspective. Representatives of the Ministry of Land Management have rejected the findings, but Oeng Kantha Pavy, the Minister for Women and the only female cabinet member, has agreed to follow up the study's recommendations for securing women's property-related rights.

**Further reading:**

Mehrak Mehrvar, Chhay Kim Sore, and My Sambath: "WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES: A CASE STUDY OF SYSTEMATIC LAND REGISTRATION," Phnom Penh 2008 (Heinrich Böll Foundation)  
Chap Sopanha: "GENDER IMPLICATION IN CBRNM: THE ROLES, NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF WOMEN IN COMMUNITY FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN CAMBODIA. SIX CASE STUDIES IN CAMBODIA," Phnom Penh 2008

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ISRAEL

**Women demand mobility**

"Tell me how you travel and I will tell you who you are"—this observation by an Arab Israeli woman hints at the impact that public transportation can have on women's lives. Where there is no bus, there is no mobility and no freedom of movement.

That was Kayan's experience. A feminist organization, Kayan brings Arab women together, encourages them to gain independence, and empowers them to participate in political work. But many women interested in the themes could not join the meetings because of the lack of public transportation. And if a woman cannot get to a women's meeting, she is also cut off from getting to work or reaching a doctor.

Clearly, transportation is important for self-determination and personal development. But can a feminist organization change anything? Kayan can: 2009 will see ten villages and towns being connected to the public bus network as part of a four-year mobility project.

TRANSPORTATION IS  
IMPORTANT FOR SELF-  
DETERMINATION AND  
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT.

A 2007 study supported by the Foundation demonstrated that Arab areas of Israel were simply being ignored by the existing transportation systems. The 40,000 residents of the sprawling city of Umm al-Fahm, for example, did not have a single bus route to take them from the highway into the city center. Even if a married woman holds a driver's license and the family has a car, it is almost exclusively the husband who will drive. A woman has to wait until a man can drive her—or else simply stay where she is. The low level of Arab women's participation in paid employment has many different causes—but the feminists of Kayan are determined that a lack of bus routes will no longer be one of them.

Kayan managed to convince the Ministry of Transport to act. The resulting steering committee covered a wide spectrum: the Ministry, the local social administration, the contracted companies, local representatives, and of course Kayan for the project—together with, and representing, local women. They had assessed women's needs through a series of small and larger-scale

meetings and then through forty focus groups, where men were invited to have their say as well.

It turned out that the original time plan could not be met: in the local-level elections of November 2008, eight of the nine mayors were not reelected, and their replacements first had to be inducted and persuaded to join the process. In fact, even a mayor's agreement by no means ensures that everyone else will follow on; Kayan had to battle with politicians' lethargy, hesitation, and mistrust. Last but not least, the "Islamic Movement," a strong presence in Umm al-Fahm, and its female members wanted nothing at all to do with feminists.

But despite the delays, in late December 2008, Kayan was able to hold a party with 110 women to celebrate the successful completion of the project, certain that everything was right on track. Asked by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, they could confidently confirm that the project was sustainable in the long term, because the Ministry had agreed to run the buses on a permanent basis. True, the Kayan women added, it was not yet possible to say once and for all whether the new transportation links would really improve women's lives—after all, women had to actually ride those buses first. But Kayan predicts that many female bus users will soon be showing the signs of something having changed in their lives.

[www.kayan.org.il](http://www.kayan.org.il)

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BRAZIL

**Our bodies, ourselves**

SOS Corpo is a rich organization—rich, that is, in experience and rich in contacts. This feminist institute for democracy, founded in 1981, has left its mark on a whole generation of women in Brazil and the whole of Latin America, disseminating feminist ideals, strategies, and insights. The women of SOS Corpo are active at the grassroots level themselves. They cooperate with many other organizations, develop models and strategies, put pressure on the government to act, and take part in the international feminist debate.

Their work is based in Recife, in the impoverished northeast part of Brazil. SOS Corpo's focus there is on improving health-care: family planning, pregnancy, postnatal care for mothers and children, dealing with the menopause, and education campaigns on HIV/AIDS and cancer prevention. In the state of Pernambuco, their publications can be found even in the most remote towns and villages. SOS Corpo has such a good reputation that the organization also trains medical personnel on matters such as how best to communicate with women who are suffering domestic violence.

Above all, however, SOS Corpo offers consultancy and training for other women's groups—whether neighborhood organizations, churches, or trade unions—so that they can go beyond relieving distress and start demanding rights. SOS Corpo uses a range of different resources to achieve that: seminars, long-term training courses, research studies, brochures, videos. Alongside the specialized qualification courses, they provide advice for organizations. And finally, SOS Corpo also campaigns for the public health services to take account of women and their specific needs. "Poor women now have better access to medical care than in the past," says the sociologist Maria Betânia Avila. "But we have to be vigilant, or we risk losing everything we have achieved, for example due to privatization."

As well as coordinating the work of SOS Corpo, Maria Betânia Avila is also an important theorist. Skillfully deconstructing the history of private life, she is able to convince her readers that their own philosophical, ideological, religious, and political traditions and positions are anything but self-evident.



Protests against the criminalization of women who have had abortions

Every woman should be able to decide autonomously how and with whom she wants to live, based solely on respect for diversity and individual differences. That too is a way for commitment to grow.



Maria Betânia Avila

The Heinrich Böll Foundation has been working with SOS Corpo since 2003. Today, the Pernambuco-based organization is an important partner in the efforts to promote dialogue between the different actors of civil society that are concerned with “bio-politics.” New technologies in this field affect women directly. “At the same time as the discussion on new reproductive technologies, an old and difficult debate in the women’s movement is coming to the fore again,” says Thomas Fatheuer, who heads the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s office in Brazil. “Are new technologies beneficial for the liberation of women, for example by freeing them from the great social pressure to bear children or by making it possible to have children without a male partner?”

Today many new questions are arising in the area of reproductive rights. Prenatal diagnostics is progressing fast, facing women and families with difficult decisions. Is there such a thing as a right to a “healthy child”? Or even: Is there a duty for

a woman to do everything to avoid having a child with disabilities? In-vitro fertilization opens up new possibilities for bearing children, but also new possibilities for selecting them out. A market—illegal in Brazil—is emerging for egg cells and sperm, but sperm donors are selected according to particular criteria (social class, skin color). Is that a step toward a “liberal eugenics”? This and other questions of bio-politics are probed by the Heinrich Böll Foundation together with SOS Corpo. The women of Recife are again taking action on various levels: offering seminars on the topic of body and power, publications, and a nationwide workshop on biopower and reproductive technologies.

[www.soscorpo.org.br](http://www.soscorpo.org.br)

## BRAZIL

### **Doubly disadvantaged: Black women**

“Brazil is a racial democracy! We don’t discriminate against anyone,” say some; “That’s a myth!” reply others, pointing to statistics that show all too clearly the correlation between ethnicity and hierarchy. According to opinion poll evidence, Brazil is a racist country whose citizens all consider themselves to be nonracist. The whites pretend not to discriminate against the blacks, and the blacks pretend not to be discriminated against, explains Mauricio Pestana, the editor of *Raça Brasil*. “We most certainly do feel discriminated against,” say the Afro-Brazilian women and men who are combating racism, both overt and covert.

In the end, the statistics leave no room for doubt: in Brazil, poverty has a color, and that color is black. It is black women who have the lowest income, earning only one-third of a white man’s average earnings. CRIOLA, a group of black women in Rio de Janeiro founded in 1992, has set itself the goal of empowering black girls, teenagers, and women to become agents of change—change

away from racism, sexism, and homophobia – and to foster a society of justice, fairness, and solidarity that regards black women’s contribution as a benefit for the community. CRIOLA activities have reached more than 5,000 women, say the group’s members with justified pride.



The CRIOLA team

CRIOLA has championed the rights of domestic servants, who are mostly black women working under often shameful conditions. Together with a small trade union, black parliamentarians, and others, CRIOLA organized a campaign for these women’s legal protection. The campaign was successful, and today a law exists to regulate working hours and employee benefits. Changes in tax legislation now also encourage legalized employment.

But CRIOLA’s work extends beyond this, and the group has become “an important reference point in the Black Movement,” says Fatheuer, at the Rio de Janeiro office, which has worked with CRIOLA for many years. CRIOLA coordinator Lúcia Xavier stresses that the organization has helped push Brazilian politics (especially under President Lula da Silva) into taking a series of steps in support of Afro-Brazilians: from the changes in the school syllabus and quota regulations in the universities, to specific programs and government departments, right up to the appointment of four black cabinet members. To ensure that measures like these “from above” also strike deep roots “from below,” CRIOLA is actively assisting a new government program designed to improve healthcare provisions for black women. That is an important stage in the fight against institutional racism, which, says Lúcia Xavier, exists “not only in the health system, but also in schools and the law courts. That is why we need a different democracy: one with a fair distribution of income.”

[www.criola.org.br](http://www.criola.org.br)

#### RUSSIA

##### **The feminist club as a center**

Since the elections of December 2007, the proportion of women in the State Duma has risen from just below 10% to 14%,

mainly due to female representatives moving up the governing party’s list to fill the spaces left when male candidates were called to higher offices. However, the climate for a feminist politics is if anything even less favorable now than it was in the 1990s. On the institutional level, practically all the instruments of systematic state promotion of women were demolished during Putin’s presidency. The coordinating council for gender issues in the Ministry of Health and Social Development met just once in 2007, and was then dissolved. The government commission on improving the status of women, established after the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing, met neither in 2007 nor in 2008.

On the political level, women’s issues are discussed and decided according to outdated, patriarchal principles, and generally by men. The “natural” role of women as housewives and mothers is stressed to an ever greater degree. Demographic considerations – Russia’s population has been shrinking for many years – further reinforce the trend to retraditionalization.

These are difficult surroundings in which to reestablish feminist and gender-democratic themes in Russian political discourse. The Heinrich Böll Foundation faces a tough challenge in this respect, but over the past six years the Foundation’s support for the Information Center of the Independent Women’s Fo-

### IN RUSSIA, WOMEN’S ISSUES ARE DISCUSSED AND DECIDED ACCORDING TO OLD, PATRIARCHAL PRINCIPLES, AND GENERALLY BY MEN.

rum (ICIWF) in Moscow has helped to strengthen organizational structures again. The ICIWF was founded in 1994 by a group of women who, after the first (and last) two all-Russian independent women’s forums, in 1991 and 1992, wanted to improve the channels of communication between women’s initiatives. The “Feminist Club” initiated by the Foundation in 2006 opened up a space for discussion, and now attracts widespread attention as a meeting point. In 2006 and 2007, the club tried to take stock of the situation of the Russian women’s movement. In 2008 members began preliminary work on a Web portal with the working title “gender.ru,” which went live in 2009. Participants in the popular, usually theme-based meetings, which take place once a month except for the summer and a short break in winter, are women’s organizations and feminist NGOs, women academics, journalists, and politicians from democratic parties. The Feminist Club is an attempt to bring new vitality into the fragmented and marginalized theoretical debate on feminism and women’s policy by establishing a degree of continuity and institutionalization.

#### UKRAINE

##### **Gender marathon**

“Everything can be turned to the better if we fundamentally change ourselves and the society we live in.” That’s the motto of the women’s organization Krona in the northeast Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. The city is Ukraine’s most important center of science and higher education, as well as being an important industrial lo-

cation, a transportation hub, and the cultural heart of the eastern part of Ukraine.

Krona is the proud result of a women's initiative: in 1996 and 1997, the German women's organization OWEN (Ost-West-Europäisches Frauennetzwerk, or "East-West European Women's Network") ran a course on social management in Kharkiv. For some of the participants, the course turned out to be the jump-start for a whole new life: "We have changed," say Lyudmila Guslyakova and Inna Lasaruk. "We have changed our attitude to life, become more self-assured; we came to believe in our own power and realized we had to help others." Back in fall 1996, Inna Lasaruk had noted in her diary: "I have no job. The winter awaits me with its long, cold evenings." But today she heads Krona, while Lyudmila Guslyakova is the coordinator of a project under Krona auspices, entitled "Establishment and development of women's regional educational centers in Ukraine."

Immediately after the course, the two women set up a self-help group with some of the other participants, registering it two years later officially as "Mothers' Center Krona." Shortly afterwards, that became "Educational Center Krona." In turn, the center has now become one of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's strategic partners and a women's organization well-known and respected beyond the borders of Kharkiv.

The women of Krona initially offered the services that they themselves had found so beneficial: courses of several weeks' duration designed to boost self-confidence, build skills, and encourage social commitment. The plan was successful for the new generation as well. Self-help initiatives were established, and in 2002 three participants stood for election to district and city government. They were not elected, but at least they had taken that stand. Soon, such experiences could be shared and reflected on in the quarterly magazine Ya ("I"), which the founders describe as an invitation to all women who are ready to take first steps on the path of self-fulfillment. The magazine currently has a circulation of 3,000, and copies are also specifically distributed in parliament and to politicians.

In 2004, a new phase began for Krona, when their work in training and education was expanded to include activities in the public sphere, organizing roundtables, summer schools, and socio-political debates. Word quickly spread beyond the city of Kharkiv; participants came from many other regions of the country and events were held in different cities. Through the assistance of the Heinrich Böll Foundation and Krona's growing international contacts, what was once an initiative by resourceful women gradually turned into a force for gender politics. Among the most successful events in 2006 was the gender marathon "Ukrainian Way to Gender Freedom," with events in four cities. The marathon's objectives included publicizing the gender-equality legislation that had recently been passed.

The EU/Ukraine Action Plan of 2005 formally obliged the Ukrainian government to integrate gender equality into all fields of politics. However, there is a lack of political will, instruments, and monitoring mechanisms. "Unfortunately, the conservative habits of Ukrainian politics currently carry more weight than pro-European slogans and declarations," wrote the Krona women to the Heinrich Böll Foundation in 2006. The Ukrainian Parliament includes 8% women, a figure that is slightly better at the regional level and significantly better at the local government level. Dr. Oksana Kisselyova, the president of the Liberal Society Institute in Kiev, which in 2006 drew up a research report for the Heinrich Böll Foundation on women's political activities in Ukraine, confirms the Krona women's observations: "There is still a long way to go before a gender revolution occurs in Ukrainian politics. The inclusion of women candidates in party lists should be seen chiefly as a formality. By filling the lists with famous women

actors, singers, and television presenters, the parties hoped to achieve more popularity—but that has very little to do with a recognition of women as equal political partners."



Workshop on the influence of women's NGOs

However, the women of Krona focus on the opportunities offered by the new law and the ordinance that followed it. "Today the situation is beginning to change in favor of gender politics," they wrote in 2007 to the Heinrich Böll Foundation's regional office in Warsaw, which is responsible for offering them support and advice. Since 2007, Krona has been part of the regional program on "Gender democracy/women's policy" run by the Warsaw office. That makes it an important partner in cross-border cooperation between women's organizations.

[www.krona.org.ua](http://www.krona.org.ua)

## GEORGIA

### No time for democracy

"Here in Georgia, men are really pampered," was the conclusion of one Georgian woman at an event set up by the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Tbilisi office. It was just fifteen years after the end of the Soviet Union, which proudly claimed to have more or less solved the "woman question," as almost all women were in paid employment and a good proportion held public office. But the beginnings of Georgia's transformation, with its declared goal of democracy, market economy, and national state, went hand in hand with a selective return to elements of tradition, religion, and history at the expense of gender equality. That process was not halted by the Rose Revolution of November 23, 2003.

Yet even before Georgia's incorporation into the Soviet Union, the country's women had been running educational facilities for women and girls and working together in organizations. The most daring of them had taken up university studies in Switzerland. When Soviet troops shot at Georgian demonstrators in 1989, most of the twenty dead were women—because women and girls had attended the protests in such great numbers.

Sociologist Tamara Sabedashvili has made a detailed study of the reasons why Georgian women have now largely disappeared from public life. On the one hand, she concludes, Soviet propaganda has left its mark; on the other, women's organizations have not succeeded in convincing the public that democratization has to include equal participation by women. In addition, women have had to bear the burdens of transition, such as the costs of the wave of privatizations in schooling and health. Many women reported

being so absorbed by everyday problems that they had no room in their lives for tackling larger social issues. The political class shows no interest or will to change that, while traditional ideas about the nature and roles of the sexes are so widespread in the population that there is no pressure for change from the broad base of society. If a series of initiatives was developed and equality laws passed in the wake of the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, and once again in 2006, this should probably be attributed not to domestic pressure but rather to the international environment and the government's need to follow the West.

Georgia, like the other two countries of the South Caucasus, signed and ratified the UN convention CEDAW, but progress on CEDAW objectives—both *de jure* and, especially, *de facto*—has been anything but satisfactory. The rights of women are inadequately protected in law, and women's concerns are virtually invisible in politics, the media, and public discourse.

An additional problem is that the stark polarization between the Georgian government and its opposition, along with the lack of systematic, programmatic planning by political parties, pushes "soft issues" like equal rights and opportunities for women ever more firmly into the background. Tellingly, events planned for November and December 2007 on the topic of gender democracy had to be canceled after the representatives of several parties refused to share a stage to discuss the issues.

In 2007, to encourage more women to stand for election—in 2006, only 9.4% of deputies were women—the International Women's Education Center in Tbilisi invited 409 women and 4 men (the men had pressed to be included) to seminars on democracy within parties, local self-administration, and the legal foundations for equal rights. In 2008, accordingly, more women did stand for office, although in the end very few were elected. With only 6% female representation in its parliament today, Georgia takes up the 122nd place in the international ranking. This backward move is, however, partially due to an imminent alteration to the powers of parliament.

According to surveys cited by Tamara Sabedashvili, both men and women in Georgia believe that men make better politicians. The Heinrich Böll Foundation is therefore working on a range of fronts to help undermine the role attributions that are once again becoming so harshly articulated.

Women from Georgia's minorities have an even lower proportion of seats in parliament. To draw attention to minority women's specific problems, a documentary film on Azerbaijani and Armenian women has been produced, with five different language versions—Georgian, Armenian, Azeri, Russian, and English. The film was screened several times at the 2007 Tbilisi International Film Festival, and was then broadcast by regional and national television channels.

**Further reading:**

Tamara Sabedashvili: "GENDER AND DEMOCRATIZATION: THE CASE OF GEORGIA 1991–2006," HBF Survey and Policy Papers Issue 1, Tbilisi 2007

<http://georgien.boell-net.de>

**POLAND**

**One step forward, two steps back**

When the "new" member states were negotiating their accession to the European Union, they accepted the EU's anti-discrimination norms and equal opportunities benchmarks, committing their governments to put these into practice on the ground. Despite the generally satisfactory legislation, however, equal treatment for women and men still encounters constant obstacles and resistance in everyday life. In Ukraine, even the process of

aligning national law with the European standards is only at an early stage.

Sometimes, one step forward is taken, only to be followed by two steps back. That was the case in 2006, when the Kaczynski government in Poland simply closed down the office for sexual equality. Kaczynski's successor, Donald Tusk, brought the equal opportunities commissioner back into office, but without giving her a clear-cut remit and without consulting women's organizations. The parties' political rhetoric refers to women's policy mainly as a matter of family policy; the country's feminist organizations are often ignored and have to rely on support from outside Poland.

Every year, the Foundation's regional office in Warsaw, responsible for gender-political work in Poland, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic, asks its partner organizations to compile a report on the current situation in their countries. In 2007 the Gender Studies organization (Czech Republic) reported on the shortage of daycare facilities for young children, *Aspekt* (Slovakia) investigated the gap between male and female wages, the *Feminoteka* foundation (Poland) asked whether the laws against the use of violence are really being enforced in everyday life, and the Liberal Society Institute (Ukraine) presented a report on sexual equality standards within the European Neighbourhood Policy.

In 2008, all four reports had a common theme: the extent to which aspects of sexual equality feature in schools, curriculum planning, textbooks, and classroom teaching. It emerged that the systematic consideration required by gender mainstreaming was very far indeed from becoming reality. On the contrary: schools are if anything reinforcing stereotypical, traditional divisions between male and female roles. That has an impact on young people's choices when they enter high school. Young women tend to choose humanistic programs, while young men are more likely to go for science and technology-oriented programs. Teaching is mainly done by women, yet the school principal is usually a man. In the jointly written foreword to the report, Agnieszka Grzybek and Agnieszka Rochon, the Warsaw office's gender coordinator and director, even speculate that in this context it makes no difference whether a country belongs to the EU or, like Ukraine, is only one of its neighbors.

The question of whether the EU's most recent draft anti-discrimination directive is suited to the task of achieving equal treatment was discussed by women at two events organized by the Warsaw and Prague offices. For the first time in Central and Eastern Europe, says Agnieszka Rochon, gender mainstreaming was subjected to a public, critical analysis: initially in October 2008 at a panel discussion with Barbara Unmüßig, then in December 2008 with a detailed publication. The process revealed that the concept of gender mainstreaming has been robbed of its radicalism by a narrowly reduced definition and unsystematic, selective practical implementation. At the end of the report, the authors from Poland, the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine respond to this state of affairs with a lengthy list of recommendations on how to make better use of the concept's potential.

**Further reading:**

Heinrich Böll Foundation: "GENDER ISSUES 2008: GENDER-SENSITIVE EDUCATION IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC, POLAND, SLOVAK REPUBLIC AND UKRAINE," Warsaw 2008

Heinrich Böll Foundation: "GENDER MAINSTREAMING: HOW CAN WE SUCCESSFULLY USE ITS POLITICAL POTENTIAL," Warsaw 2008

[www.boell.pl](http://www.boell.pl)

## EL SALVADOR

**Gender democracy: an example that is setting a precedent**

Since the end of the civil war in 1992, El Salvador's elections have been battles for influence between the right (ARENA) and the left (FMLN). The former liberation front FMLN did not manage to gain power in the national elections until March 2009, but from 1997 to 2009 it ruled the capital city, San Salvador. Dr. Hector Silva, the mayor from 1997 to 2003, had signed up to a "women's platform" even before he was elected. Under his government, in 1999 the city council resolved a roadmap for achieving sexual equality. Although a series of measures was adopted and women were appointed to leading political roles, progress was painfully slow. However, after the Heinrich Böll Foundation supported a study on personnel policy and made concrete suggestions based upon it, the move to reshape the city administration along gender-democratic lines began to gather momentum.

Originally the plan was limited to greatly increasing the proportion of women working in the administration. Soon, though, gender-based criteria were adopted in the city's advertisements and job descriptions, and the employees' own attitudes and aspirations were discussed in an open-minded setting. A procedure for dealing with sexual harassment at work was introduced. Finally, the city government accepted the argument that a gender-sensitive approach to politics benefits not only women, but the administration as a whole. In four years, the ratio of women in senior positions rose from 12% to 48%, while the proportion of

*THE CONCEPT OF GENDER  
DEMOCRACY WAS BY NO  
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WOMEN'S MOVEMENT.*

women in the "classical" male domains (such as the city security corps, construction, and utilities) rose from 25% to 35%. Reference to gender-specific issues is now made in 90% of the city government's operational planning documents. The budgets, too, changed in line with the new gender awareness—and as Rosalía Jovel, the Heinrich Böll Foundation's coordinator for the process, points out, "a plan without a corresponding budget is nothing more than a testament to good intentions."

The concept of gender democracy was by no means uncontroversial within El Salvador's women's movement. However, "our task is to put forward concepts and models that cannot be ignored by political debate," says Silke Helfrich, who at the time headed the Foundation's office for Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean. In the end the policy was such a resounding success that other groups began to register an interest. For Julia Evelyn Martínez, gender commissioner at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the project was simply "what the UN jargon calls 'best practice.'" She offered her support for an extension of the project methodology on a national and international scale.



Workshop on gender equality in the judicial system

The conservative ARENA party won the city government elections in San Salvador by a narrow majority in early 2009, and only time will tell whether the new gender-sensitive orientation will be sustained under the new political leadership. There is unease in the city administration; some of the city employees in what is still a very ideologically polarized setting are unwilling to work for the ARENA mayor, while at the same time a new movement has arisen among the city's women, "Women—creators of life and peace," which aims to work from outside the administration to ensure that the progress achieved is not eroded or reversed by a lack of political commitment. Norman Quijano, the newly appointed mayor, has at least announced he does not want to abandon instruments that have proved useful in the past. And that "usefulness" is exactly what the gender-democratic reforms were aiming to achieve from the start.

Outside the capital, the city government's example has set a precedent. Other organizations, such as the consumer protection office in El Salvador and some Cuban NGOs, are now applying the participatory approach to organizational development based on gender democracy. Since 2007 the Heinrich Böll Foundation—together with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)—has been supporting change within the Supreme Court in El Salvador. The Court already had a gender unit and a six-judge gender commission, but setting up posts and panels like these is, at best, only an initial step. The Foundation's support facilitates systematic work toward the implementation of gender democracy. In fifty-one regionally based and fifteen theme-based workshops, staff from all levels of the Supreme Court's hierarchy have worked together to draft an "institutional policy for gender equality," and drawn up an action plan for the next five years (2009–2013).

[www.boell.de](http://www.boell.de)

## MEXICO

**Human rights without machismo**

Human rights violations against women differ from those against men. Realizing that means we can offer more sophisticated responses to the different requirements for protection that women and men citizens will have. The institutionalization of gender mainstreaming in Mexico City's Federal District Human Rights Commission, the CDHDF, is thus a very important project. Equidad de Género, a women's organization set up in 1996, knows a great deal about many different domains, has expertise in organizational development, and maintains robust networks. That makes it ideally qualified to advise the Commission on both political substance and organizational structure.

Very early on, it was agreed that a dual strategy should be pursued: a program for the CDHDF as a whole, involving repre-

sentatives from all sections, and individual projects as the need arose. Equidad de Género responds flexibly to the Commission's needs, for example when a training course is required for a particular section, and also makes proactive suggestions of its own, for example proposing a set of guidelines for gender-inclusive language use. There are regular sessions where participants in the process can reflect on issues and move them forward; in 2008, for example, the most important working documents were reviewed and amended.

Nowadays, gender mainstreaming is a firmly embedded component of the Commission's institutional structure and routine. "It is impressive to see the work of Equidad de Género turning the entire Human Rights Commission upside down," says Ingrid Spiller, who heads the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Central America, Mexico and the Caribbean office. "With the introduction of gender mainstreaming, new gender-specific programs have been initiated; the Commission's finances are now drawn up following the principles of gender budgeting; and even the institutional structure has been changed." In 2007, after four years of cooperation, the Commission committed itself publicly and in writing to the adoption of gender-specific policies. "The gender perspective has already become an important tool for the Commission's institutional development," said the CDHDF's president, Dr. Emilio Alvarez Icasa, on that occasion. The open-minded approach of the Commission members and their willingness to question the existing sclerotic structures contributed to this success, as did the years of tenacious work by Equidad de Género. To make sure none of that progress is eroded, the strong-minded women of Equidad de Género will monitor the process for some time to come.

[www.equidad.org.mx](http://www.equidad.org.mx)

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#### ISRAEL

##### **Analysis and advocacy for the poor**

If it weren't for Adva, the trend toward growing inequality between rich and poor, between Jews and Arabs, between center and periphery in education, health, and wages would continue without challenge or mitigation. If it weren't for Adva, the needs of women would not be reflected in budget allocations, and the most disadvantaged social groups—the Ethiopian and the Bedouin Israelis—would have no strategic advocate. If it weren't for Adva, little public attention would be directed to the phenomenon of increasing numbers of workers with low wages and inadequate social security.

To describe itself that way in its annual report, an organization either has to be exaggerating its achievements—or else it has to be doing extremely good work with a high level of public recognition. For Adva, the latter is the case, as can be seen on the website [www.adva.org](http://www.adva.org), which hosts one thousand visits every day. In an average month, Adva is quoted in the press fifteen times and gives eighty media interviews on the radio, television, and Internet. Adva publications are required reading for social scientists and social workers. Because Adva is so successful, many Israelis believe it is a large institution, but in fact the work is all done by eight to ten people, some of them part-time, and the think-tank's annual budget does not even reach half a million US dollars.

The Tel Aviv institute was established in 1991, and for many years has worked on budget analyses, aiming to force the Knesset and the Israeli public to take a closer look at exactly where the country's money is going and what the consequences of that allocation will be. In 2004, Adva initiated the "Women's Budget Forum," a coalition of thirty Jewish and Arab women's and human rights organizations. The Forum's objective is to main-

stream gender issues in the planning and agreeing of budgets, and to campaign for specific changes in favor of women.

The Adva Center's annual gender budget conferences offer participants a chance to update their own knowledge and qualifications while also putting pressure on parliamentarians and government officials. Every year, the conference addresses a particular theme and invites a special guest from outside Israel. In 2008 the topic was female workforce participation: while 56% of Israel's Jewish women are currently in paid employment, for Arab women the rate is only 18%. The conferences not only analyze the latest research on the theme, but on a more practical level—typical of Adva—also look for examples of best practice in achieving change.

[www.adva.org](http://www.adva.org)

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#### PALESTINE

##### **Gender budgeting at local government level**

The impetus came in 2007 from an international conference in Amman, organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation: on exchanging their experiences on the struggle to give a gender-sensitive dimension to public budgeting, the participants from many Arab countries realized that although efforts were being made on the national level, that was not usually reflected on the level of local government.

This is certainly true of Palestine. As a result, in 2008, the Foundation office in Ramallah joined with MIFTAH, a well-established Palestinian NGO, to develop a plan for a six-month pilot project within local government. MIFTAH stands for the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy, and is led by Hanan Ashrawi, probably the best-known female Palestinian politician.

The moment was favorable, because women made up a relatively high proportion of the newly elected local government representatives (between 18% and 20%). It was decided to locate the pilot project in Bir Zeit, a small university town near Ramallah. Bir Zeit's mayor, Dr. Youssef Naser, is a professor of economics who is very open to innovations; and the city council includes Dr. Somaia Sayej and Nuha Abdallah—two tough-minded women whose election campaigns had been supported by MIFTAH. The mayor and the two city councilors were quickly persuaded to join the project's work.

First of all, workshops were held over a number of days, introducing gender concepts to the council members and administrative staff and then presenting the council's budget for discussion. Working from an analysis based on gender perspectives, the participants developed recommendations for changes to the next budget. Another innovation in the Bir Zeit pilot was the institutionalization of cooperation between the administration and women's NGOs.

The experience gained in this process led to a handbook designed to be used as an ideas bank and guideline for other local administrations to reform their budgeting procedures in a gender-sensitive way. Five hundred copies were printed and distributed to local councils and NGOs. In three districts—in the north, the center, and the south of the West Bank—public events provided information on the project and described the Bir Zeit council's experiences. Two of the districts showed an interest in working out a gender-sensitive budget for themselves along the same lines.

This is all the more remarkable if we remember that the members of MIFTAH are constantly being told that the West Bank really has other, more pressing problems than gender justice—infrastructure, for example. In the Gaza Strip, the politi-

cal situation meant that it was not even possible to present the model.



Gender conference with MIFTAH and the Heinrich Böll Foundation

Bir Zeit, though, has seen some very real change. There are plans to employ more women in a city administration that has so far been dominated by men. Another idea under consideration is to employ a woman in the fees department, as a “money collector,” so that she can talk to women in their homes. The complaints office team will in the future include a woman, so that local women are more likely to call in and present their concerns. And the mayor is now busy talking to other districts, telling his colleagues and the council members about the benefits of the new instrument.

To ensure that this new momentum is channeled in productive ways, MIFTAH remains at the city’s side with advice and action whenever it is required.

[www.miftah.org](http://www.miftah.org)

## II.2

# MY IMAGE BELONGS TO ME

In the media domain, gender mainstreaming proves to be particularly difficult. Dependent on sales, and even more so on advertising revenue, commercial publishers and broadcasters try to pander to the real or imagined tastes of the mass public, serving up sexist representations and sensationalist coverage of gender issues. Again and again, women have attacked these publications and the distorting images that reinforce gender stereotypes—but so far with very little success. This is one reason why the surge of women’s activism over the past thirty years has included many feminist media products, especially magazines, that try to keep their footing on the margins of a difficult market, usually relying on financial support from outside.

However, the media, like all other spheres of life, have not remained completely untouched by change, if only because more women are now active in media professions and because there are occasional booms in coverage of “women’s” topics. There are now networks of women journalists, and a few male journalists, who practice and propagate a more accurate and emancipatory form of reporting. ■

## NAMIBIA

### **Your sister is beside you right from the start**

Sister Namibia has accompanied her country from the first day of its independence. The women who founded the magazine knew that genuine sexual equality in Namibia would have to be fought for hard, despite the revolutionary rhetoric of the new leadership. Sister Namibia aims to stand in sisterhood beside the country’s women as they pursue that fight. The magazine comes out every two months, carrying life stories, reports on events, legal tips, portraits, and literary texts. Men are expressly invited to read Sister Namibia, and since December 2007 “Brother Namibia” has been addressed in a special section, mostly on the last few pages. This sister makes no secret of her feminist convictions, and Elizabeth Khaxas and Liz Frank, the two energetic women behind Sister Namibia, don’t hide their lesbian orientation either.

Borne along by the aspiration to speak to all the women of Namibia, and as many men as possible, the magazine prints 10,000 copies of every issue. They are distributed very carefully, based on specific targets: readers can buy the magazine in selected bookshops and supermarkets, borrow it from NGOs and in the refugee camps, read it in libraries, work with it in schools. Important opinion-makers in parliament and the administration are given their individual copies, while government departments and NGOs receive copies to pass on. Even the prison administration is given Sister Namibia to distribute. Liz Frank, currently the editor-in-chief, knows very well that keeping a sharp eye on a magazine’s distribution, and devoting plenty of time to managing that, is at least as important to the publication’s success as the actual content. She constantly searches for new, low-cost ways of spreading the magazine all around the country. “Most people in Windhoek, from cab drivers to hotel workers, know the magazine

and immediately associate it with the rights of women and sexual minorities," observes an evaluation of Sister Namibia's work.



(above) Demonstrators supporting the equality law, March 2002  
(below) Demonstrators supporting equal rights for lesbians

Sister Namibia tirelessly faces up to the problems of the country, disseminates information about HIV/AIDS, and denounces endemic violence against women. The magazine also acts as a vehicle for campaigns, whether for adequate political participation ("50/50") or, most recently, for the right to sexual autonomy and choice ("50/50 in the bedroom!"), a feminist response to HIV/AIDS and sexual violence. Trying to explain the high propensity for violence in Namibia, Liz Frank refers to the still-raw trauma of the independence war, the failure of reconciliation, and disappointed expectations placed in the independence process: "Taking violent 'possession' of women gives these men a feeling of power and control."

In 2009, Sister Namibia will turn twenty. The celebrations will include a documentary and a party. The Heinrich Böll Foundation will certainly be joining in.

[www.sisternamibia.org](http://www.sisternamibia.org)

## MEXICO

### "Soft" feminism via the mass media

The buzzer next to the red door does not even carry a nameplate, but everyone who comes here knows that the door leads to a cornucopia: a rich abundance of information about women. That information comes in a very modern form—online from a news agency—or can be looked up the old-fashioned way: in an archive. Over the last twenty years, CIMAC (Comunicación e Información de la Mujer) has built up an excellent reputation—both as a source of information and as a communications agency.

In 1988, five women journalists wanted to go beyond simply producing feminist monthly supplements. They were determined to put the realities of women's lives onto the front page, and get gender relations taken into account everywhere in the male-dominated country of Mexico. That could not be achieved through individual interventions and it was going to demand a lot of staying power, so the women founded CIMAC, and now they not only provide news stories, but also teach journalists (both male and female) to look at the news through a "gender lens." So that Mexican women can make their own voices heard, CIMAC also helps women's and human rights groups to present their concerns in writing or verbally in such a way that they will find a hearing. "We see ourselves as mediators between civil society and the media," says board member Lucía Lagunes.

IN MEXICO, ADDRESSING  
SUCH CONTENTIOUS ISSUES  
IS A DANGEROUS BUSINESS.  
MANY JOURNALISTS HAVE  
BEEN INTIMIDATED,  
ATTACKED, OR MURDERED.

In order to assure continuity for their contacts and dialogue, in 1995 CIMAC joined with the national journalists' association Red Nacional de Periodistas to create a network of women journalists. Today the network links up more than 1,200 women and a few men in all the Mexican federal states. In 2000, a tri-national network of women journalists (covering Mexico, the United States, and Canada) was formed, with around 300 members. CIMAC reaches a total of more than 1,300 professional print, radio, and television journalists. The CIMAC building is staffed by seventeen women; only the network administrator is a man. The well-stocked library, offering access to more than 15,000 items, keeps a record of what women have to suffer and what moves them to action.

The agency sends out news to 2,000 subscribers, daily or in a weekly digest. CIMAC women also write radio news items and maintain a website ([www.cimacnoticias.com](http://www.cimacnoticias.com)) with around 20,000 users. It is barely possible to cover the costs of these services, so that financial support, including that of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, is especially important.

Addressing such contentious issues in Mexico is a dangerous business. Again and again, journalists have been intimidated, attacked, or even murdered. CIMAC's coverage of gender issues threatens established interests, and in 2008 there was a mysterious break-in. The burglars were not after only the valuables, but

also audio recordings and files. Like so many similar attempts at intimidation in Mexico, this crime was never solved.

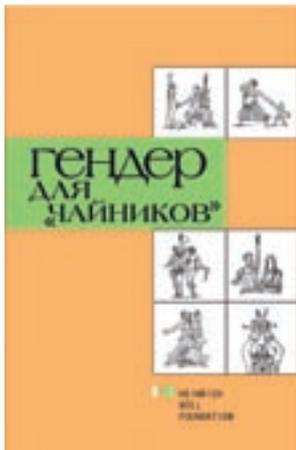
But despite the women's communicative skill, progress is slow. In Mexico the proportion of news reports that address women's lives remains below average. And every second of those reports revolves around violence and crime, which are severe problems in Mexico. "It will be a very long time before Mexico sees a consistent and sustained form of reporting that takes a long-term view of women's concerns," comments Lucía Lagunes tersely.

[www.cimac.org.mx](http://www.cimac.org.mx)

## RUSSIA

### Gender for beginners

In Russian, the term "gendernaya demokratya," or gender democracy, does not create a warm feeling, not even for its few proponents. It sounds technical, alien, inaccessible. Up to now, books and texts on the theme have been written by a small circle of experts for a small circle of readers. It's hardly surprising that the influence of the ten Russian gender centers on public debate has been minimal—even within the narrower field of the NGOs, let alone in society as a whole.



"Gender for Chainiki" booklet

In contrast, a "chainik," a kettle or teapot, draws you to it and warms you up. Applied to people, a "chainik" is a beginner. It was in the hope of attracting a much wider readership that the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Moscow office thus called its handy booklet "Gender for Chainiki." Written by Russians and oriented on daily life in Russia, the collection covers everything you wanted to know about gender—or, rather, everything you ought to know.

It is proof of the idea's success that 10,000 copies have already been sold. That is due in part to the illustrations: sparingly used, but witty and effective, they are variations on the theme of the famous Moscow sculpture of a worker and a peasant woman, who in the original raise their hammer and sickle to the heavens.

The booklet is in demand as much from universities and libraries as from NGOs (including those not specifically concerned with women's issues), the media, and the democratic parties. In response to the volume's success, a sequel is currently being produced and will soon be ready for distribution.

[www.boell.ru](http://www.boell.ru)

## II.3

# RESISTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

On the path to a gender-equitable society, violence against women—whether in the form of domestic violence or as sexualized violence as a means of war—must be highlighted and publicly challenged. "How many more women will be raped?" is the title of a report from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The war in former Yugoslavia not only added the term "ethnic cleansing" to the world's vocabulary, but also taught us that rape is not simply an ugly side-effect of conflicts between men on the battlefield, but is deliberately deployed. In many conflict and crisis regions, the rape of women and girls is used systematically as a weapon of war. Almost every day reports of sexual torture arrive from one part of the world or another.

There are no reliable statistics, but it is assumed that during the genocide in Rwanda half a million women were raped. In Sierra Leone, it is said that 50% of all women experienced sexual violence in the context of the recurrently flaring war. The estimates regarding its neighbor, Liberia, are of a similar magnitude. And peace agreements, important as they are, do not guarantee that women and girls will now be left in peace. Liberia, again, proves the point: despite all the efforts of the government and the UN peace mission, rape remains common.

Sexual violence is the most widespread of all human rights violations. Since violence against women became a topic of public debate—once again thanks to the women's movements of the 1970s—it has been well-known that women are not truly safe anywhere in the world. UNIFEM estimates that every third woman has, at some point in her life, been beaten, forced into sex, or abused some other way. And women usually know their attackers well.

Another, new concept has become established through some cruel cases: femicide, the murder of a person because of her sex. Perhaps the best known, though certainly not the only, example is the series of murders of women in the Mexican border city of Juárez, initially a mystery but almost certainly perpetrated by organized crime. In its latest human rights report, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs also voiced special concern about the increase in femicides in Guatemala.

Violence like this cannot be combated with laws alone, as we see in the case of South Africa. If men want to gain control over women at any price, if they make rape a sport and boast to each other of their attacks, if the police shows little interest, if no more than a tiny percentage of perpetrators is ever sentenced—then, in practice, legal impunity applies. The language of the perpetrators ("I had to teach her a lesson") shows very clearly that rape is a matter not primarily of sexuality, but of power.

In the name of tradition or in the context of transactions during family conflicts, women are enslaved and sold, they undergo forced marriage, are kept under house arrest or have to cover themselves from head to foot. In some regions, young girls suffer genital mutilation. And hundreds of millions of women are still not allowed to decide how many children they will bear, and

are forced to remain in a violent or loveless marriage even if they would prefer to be divorced.

The parallel application of different legal systems—modern, traditional, or religiously based—is generally to the detriment of women, especially as regards family and marriage law. Religiously grounded legal systems make their judgments on the basis of a rigid attribution of gender roles and sexual identities, applied mercilessly to all genders. A secular marriage and family law, with sexual equality at its core, therefore needs to be given precedence. This does not, however, rule out working with reform-oriented spiritual leaders and women’s rights activists to find an emancipatory interpretation of religious legal principles.

Religions shape men and women’s values, attitudes, and perceptions. They play a significant role in the personal relations between the genders, but also in the public sphere. Religious leaders claim the right to lay down rules and to ensure that those rules are observed or that violations are punished. The gender-political connections between religion and politics, the politicization of religion and its impact on gender relations and women’s rights, are something the Heinrich Böll Foundation will be addressing over the coming years with all the expertise it can muster. We know we will have to negotiate delicate balances and borders as we search for coalition allies. We constantly reevaluate our experiences—whether in Poland, Chile, Nigeria, Afghanistan and Pakistan, or in the Middle East—and renew our strategies accordingly. ■

#### RUSSIA/DAGESTAN

#### **Not business as usual: the “Charitable Hospital for Women”**

The “Charitable Hospital for Women” in Dagestan’s capital, Makhachkala, lived up to its name: in the small, two-story building right in the city center, women were treated without cost. The patients, who included many women from the mountain regions where medical care is patchy and inadequate, could also obtain legal or psychological assistance in the women’s resource center attached to the hospital, for example if they had been abused or even raped at home. Through the medical services at the hospital next door, the women’s center was able to establish contact with women who would not otherwise be reached through training or political campaigns. In Dagestan, the fight for women’s rights begins with small steps like these—but even such small steps attract powerful enemies.

Located between Chechnya and the Caspian Sea, with the Kalmyk steppes to the north and Azerbaijan to the south, Dagestan is the poorest and most backward region of Russia. The inaccessible and inhospitable high mountains of the eastern Caucasus, in particular, are home to very many people who live in severe poverty. That applies especially to Dagestan’s women.

The hospital project began in the early 1990s. Dr. Aishat Magomedova, then a department director in the Republic’s hospital in Makhachkala, watched the former Soviet health system collapsing under the sudden impact of the unpredictable new times. There were no syringes, no bandages, no medication, and if a piece of medical equipment got broken, that’s how it stayed. Aishat, who has no family or children of her own, founded the League for the Protection of Mother and Child, one of Dagestan’s first NGOs. In 1994 the Department of Health offered her a small, tumbledown building in the city center, a former children’s clinic, for her to develop a private hospital.

The opening of the small twenty-bed clinic coincided with the first Chechen war. Dagestan had to take in more than a hundred thousand refugees. Aishat Magomedova put together small medical brigades and visited refugee camps. A native of

the mountains herself, she was already making regular medical calls to the remote regions. Since the hospital opened, more than 3,000 women have been treated free as inpatients, with another 30,000 receiving outpatient treatment. Aishat Magomedova felt more and more strongly that she wanted not only to assist women, but also to prevent harm coming to them in the first place. The result, with the help of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, was the women’s resource center attached to the hospital.



(above) Protests against the hospital closure  
(below) Aishat Magomedova

The idea that women are human beings with equal rights in all social and political spheres is not shared even by the majority of women in Dagestan. In 2007 and 2008, seminars were offered in Makhachkala and several other cities on domestic violence, women’s rights, and women’s self-help groups in Dagestan. Very diverse women came along: from the city and the countryside; educated and less educated; wealthy and poor. What most of them had in common was the experience of receiving help from Aishat Magomedova and her colleagues, or else they had heard about such help being offered to relatives, friends, and acquaintances. It was the practical support that created the trust necessary for conversations on other matters—such as the fact that husbands do not have the right to beat or rape their wives and daughters; that women too have a right to an education and a profession; or that women can determine their lives themselves, without asking the head of the family for permission.

For Aishat Magomedova, a devout Muslim, it was a long road to travel. Six or seven years ago, when she first came to a meeting at the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s office in Moscow, a male relative was waiting down on the street in his car. Decency had to be preserved. Upstairs, Aishat Magomedova sat visibly alien within the colorful ranks of human rights activists, environmentalists, and feminists. But when she began to speak, with her quiet yet insistent voice, pushing a few unruly strands of hair back under the white headscarf she had inherited from her grandmother, the usual background murmuring ceased. Everyone was listening. Later, things became more relaxed, and despite her reserved manner, the kiss of greeting that is usual in Russia became

possible, even with some men. There was no longer a man waiting for her outside in the car, shivering in the Moscow winter cold.

The Foundation aims to cautiously foster an awareness that women have rights just like men, offering a series of public events. In Makhachkala in recent years there have been public discussions on topics including “Women’s rights and the Quran,” “The roots of today’s terrorism,” and “Modern Islam.” All of these are contentious issues in the Russian North Caucasus. The Chechen war has placed everything Islamic under the general suspicion of being Islamist, thus “extremist” and related to terrorism. These accusations recur again and again, whether used by the state against the citizens, as part of internal power struggles, in economic conflicts, or in private feuds.

Aishat Magomedova, too, has more than once become caught up in the climate of hostility. The reasons can only be guessed at. It may be the hospital premises, located just five minutes’ walk from the government complex: the property boom of the past few years has turned the ground on which the hospital stands into a highly desirable object. It may be an aggrieved husband, a family that feels its honor has been violated. It may be the pressure on the secret service, FSB, to produce “successes” in its fight against terrorism. These things cannot always be separated out in Russia, and even less so in the North Caucasus. That was the case in 2001, when Makhachkala rumors insinuated that Aishat Magomedova was hiding Chechen terrorists in her hospital’s basement. One night, heavily armed men in masks arrived, threw the sick women out of their beds, and looked under the floor for the basement, which did not in fact even exist. No basement—no terrorists. Aishat marched straight to the FSB headquarters and demanded to know what she was suspected of. The answer: Nothing. It was never discovered who was behind the raid.

Spring 2006 saw the beginning of attempts by the state trust administration to reverse the privatizations that had taken place more than ten years earlier. Supported by Moscow-based NGO networks, Aishat Magomedova and her League for the Protection of Mother and Child ran a political and legal campaign against the attempt to drive her and her hospital out of the building. In 2008 the pressure increased: although there had never been any complaints about the quality of the medical care, as Aishat can testify, the Department of Health began to make life difficult for staff and patients through all sorts of inspections. In response, former patients and other women connected with the hospital marched on the main square of Makhachkala: “As if our country didn’t have other things to do than waging war on a hospital where poor and distressed women are treated for free,” a woman protester told the correspondent of the Internet journal Caucasian Knot. But the battle was in vain. Dagestan’s Supreme Court rejected the hospital’s appeal in fall 2008, and in early February, 2009, the marshals threw patients, beds, medical equipment, and the resource center’s furniture out onto the street. The hospital staff collected everything and brought it inside, but the facility is closed for the foreseeable future.

[www.boell.ru](http://www.boell.ru)

## MEXICO Femicide

In April 1998, Sam Dillon, at the time a correspondent for the New York Times, wrote about a series of murders perpetrated against women in the Mexican border city of Ciudad Juárez. Dillon noted how, as early as 1993, Oscar Máyne, a government criminologist, had pointed out that almost all the victims were slender young women with a cinnamon complexion and long hair.

Máyne had suggested a serial killer was at work, but the authorities did not want to know.

Countless other reports and studies have appeared all over the world since then, a documentary has been made (*Bajo Juárez*), and in 2008 the novel “2666,” based on detailed research on the killings, was a surprise hit in the United States. The city of Juárez has become a “paradigm case for violence against women”: that, at least, was the verdict of a committee delegated by the Mexican Parliament’s chamber of deputies.

The authorities of the city and the province reacted to the murders with an aggressive form of indifference. They did barely anything to solve them, but plenty to impede investigations. That has led many people to believe that the authorities are protecting the perpetrators. The police—not interested, but feeling the public pressure—kept offering up “perpetrators.” Some of these had been treated so badly in police custody that they had signed “confessions.” Family members have been ignored or laughed at; representatives of civil rights organizations branded as unpatriotic; the lawyers of suspects subjected to intimidation, harassment, and persecution. Above all, though, the murders carried on after each arrest.



Scene from the film *Bajo Juárez*

There is no shortage of possible explanations. The deeply rooted traditional “machismo” of Mexican society is reacting to a city of extremes. Juárez is a rapidly growing conurbation on the border of rich and poor, crowded with hopeful or stranded migrants. The city hosts any number of low-wage, export-oriented companies that mainly employ women, and the authorities seem helpless in the face of the growth of the city and the associated climate of violence. Criminal structures have grown up, especially in the areas of people-trafficking, drug-dealing, and nightclubs. In an environment like this, machismo is expressed freely: women who go out alone, the argument runs, only have themselves to blame. Feminists point out that young women find employment in the factories of the low-wage maquiladora industry that feeds the global market, and by doing so gain a degree of independence. Many of the murdered women were abducted on their way to or from their work in factories like these.

The murders in Ciudad Juárez have a range of different backgrounds. By no means all of them are part of a single grisly series; some have been solved. But it is also certain that some of the women were held captive for several days and subjected to sexual torture before they were killed. Feminists have coined the term “femicide” for such murders perpetrated solely on the grounds of the victim’s gender. The feminicides, as a serial crime, are most obvious in Juárez, but they also occur in other countries, especially those of Central America. As the extreme end of a long continuum of violence against women, the events provoke interest beyond the region, and the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s European Union office has made femicide one of the focal points of its global dialogue program.



Scene from the film *Bajo Juárez*

That process was opened up by a Green initiative in the European Parliament, championed by the Catalan deputy Raül Romeva i Rueda. Soon after the hearing on feminicides in the European Parliament in April 2006, the summit of heads of state and government from Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean was held in Vienna. There, Andrea Medina Rosas, the advisers’ coordinator in the Mexican special commission set up to continue the investigations and prosecute the murders of women, gave her report at the summit’s civil society forum and talked to the Austrian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ursula Plassnik. Heinz Fischer, the president of the host country, even raised the matter during lunch with Mexico’s president, Vicente Fox.

The question of what Europe can do to stop the murders of women in Mexico and Central America was the subject of a lunchtime debate organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation on June 13, 2007, in Brussels. The debate was part of the preparations for a European Parliament resolution on the feminicides, which was passed on October 11 by a huge majority. The lengthy document contains very detailed recommendations for the states of Central America and Mexico, and indeed Europe, on how to end the virtual impunity and prevent future murders from occurring.

Almost fifteen years after Oscar Máynes’s alarming analysis, most of the murders of women have remained unpunished, like the great majority of capital offences in Mexico as a whole. That contributes to the continuing occurrence of femicide. The special rapporteur of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Marta Altolaguirre, noted after her 2002 visit that a failure to secure convictions encourages violence against women. And the 2005 report on the CEDAW Committee’s inquiry (on the basis of Article 8 of the Optional Protocol) explicitly points out that violence against women in Ciudad Juárez has taken root and has a specific form that bears witness to hatred and misogyny.

Stung by such fierce criticism within Mexico and abroad, the Mexican government and the authorities have reluctantly made some concessions, including a “general law on women’s access to a life free of violence,” passed in February 2007. The Mexican Parliament has even held out the prospect of budget funding for the campaign against femicide. “But the necessary

financial resources have still not actually been made available,” notes Carolina Velásquez of the women’s news agency CIMAC. She calls on the government to take seriously the recommendations made by Mexican and international organizations.

“We will continue our efforts to make that happen,” says Patricia Jiménez of the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s regional office in Brussels. She is already planning ahead to the Spanish Presidency of the EU in 2010 and the next European-Latin American summit. For the future, her objective is to establish femicide as a distinct criminal offence.

[www.boell.eu/downloads/FEMINICIDOS\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.boell.eu/downloads/FEMINICIDOS_WEB.pdf)

## SOUTH AFRICA

### Keeping control over women

When South Africa’s first freely elected parliament met in 1994, 100 of the 400 deputies were women. Today, women make up 45% of the deputies. That puts South Africa third from the top in the world ranking of female representation in parliament, just behind Rwanda and Sweden.

The South African Constitution, agreed in 1996, sets high standards. Of the seventeen prohibited grounds for discrimination named in Section 9, five are gender-related. No one may be discriminated against on the basis of their gender or—and this is a unique feature—on the basis of their sexual orientation. In 1997 the independent Commission for Gender Equality took up its work. “A lot has changed here,” says Dr. Antonie Nord, who heads the Foundation’s Cape Town office. “We mustn’t forget that. And it is to the credit of the previous ANC leadership.”

## THE PROGRESSIVE CONSTITUTION AND THE REVOLUTIONARY RHETORIC HAVE CONCEALED THE SOUTH AFRICAN POPULATION’S CONSERVATISM ON GENDER QUESTIONS.

In international comparison, the country is thus in a relatively good position. And yet it is constantly attracting negative headlines. When it comes to the number of rapes, South Africa is near the top of the league worldwide. The numbers given by the South African police, over 52,000 cases per year, only account for the officially recorded cases—a fraction of the real figure, as numerous studies have proved in alarming detail. Boys, too, are victims of sexual violence. A 2008 survey of 1,200 schools showed that 40% of pupils under 18 years old had been raped, all too often by a teacher, a fellow student, or a family member.

For a long time, the progressive Constitution and the revolutionary rhetoric of the transition period concealed the fact that the South African population is in fact quite conservative on gender issues.

Many men aggressively insist on traditional ideas because they see themselves as the losers within the new order. In their view, women are given preferential treatment in filling some jobs, while men themselves are unemployed. They are not even masters

of their own home any longer, they complain: no area of their personal life is free from state-meddling. They are being forced to do housework, banned from beating their wives, arrested for sexual harassment...

Protection is needed for heterosexual women as well as lesbians in South Africa. The NISAA Institute for Women's Development, one of the longest-standing partners of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, has been running a women's shelter since 1994. In 2008 NISAA organized its second national conference on women's shelters, which heard reports from sixty-seven shelters. Since it was founded, NISAA itself has provided comfort and advice for 50,000 women visiting the organization. It has also run many campaigns, noted for their strikingly well-designed artwork. The latest campaign, "Consent is sexy," including attractive posters on African community taxis, is supported by the Heinrich Böll Foundation. The campaign prompted debates among the taxi passengers, but a survey of opinions at the taxi stands revealed yet again how deeply-rooted gender stereotypes and violence against women really are in South Africa.

As well as maintaining long-term partnerships, a political foundation needs to be able to respond rapidly to pressing short-term issues. In May 2008, the world was flooded with images of brutal attacks on migrants from other African nations living in South Africa. In reaction, the Heinrich Böll Foundation published an article in its Cape Town-based newsletter, *Perspectives*, that dealt specifically with violence against female migrants. Its author, Romi Fuller, notes somberly that violence is the norm in South Africa: "Violence against migrants/refugees and violence against women are two forms of violence that are viewed with horror by the general public and outside world but are, in fact, normalized ways in which South African society interacts with minority and vulnerable groups."

Currently, a research project at the renowned Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSRV) in Johannesburg is investigating the attacks on female migrants and refugees in more detail. It is very evident that the xenophobic violence has a gender dimension. South African men accuse the migrants and refugees (often better educated than themselves) of "stealing our women," while female migrants are accused of "stealing husbands." The project's initial results indicate that some government officials are exploiting the situation of the women by, for example, demanding sexual services in return for papers and other assistance.

As a foundation attached to a political party, the Heinrich Böll Foundation works toward political intervention and dialogue. Many years of work with various partner organizations in South Africa have taught us that the many successes in increasing women's political presence and creating new legislation have not genuinely transformed the country to the benefit of women and LGBT communities. Building up a "gender machinery" has helped many committed women to gain positions in politics, administration, and the academic world, but at the same time it has eroded what was once a vibrant and active women's movement. Many women have been locked into specific loyalties, for instance to a party, or have developed new interests. And many women voters had placed all their hopes in the ANC, currently ruling with a two-thirds majority, and are now only gradually losing faith in their former liberation movement. Women's rights activists and feminists were shocked when Jacob Zuma became party leader in December 2007, then president in April 2009: this was a man whose patriarchal views and lifestyle, whose aggressive verbal attacks on gay men, and whose ill-conceived claim that HIV/AIDS could be prevented by showering, could only arouse incredulity. Many women were also dismayed that internal power struggles

within the ANC's Women's League culminated in the League taking Zuma's side in the vote.

[www.nisaa.org.za](http://www.nisaa.org.za)

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## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

### **Domestic peace is a long time coming**

When the weapons fall silent, that does not automatically mean peace has arrived. The violence of the war years remains a presence in everyday life. In most post-conflict societies, violence within the family increases. The men returning from military action bring with them painful, unprocessed war experiences, and it is women and children who bear the brunt. If, additionally, the economic and social conditions of life are precarious and there is little hope of a speedy improvement, then the danger of violence will be even greater.

Women in Bosnia and Herzegovina know all about that. But their complaints have mainly fallen on deaf ears. What happens within the family is considered a private matter in which the state has no business to interfere. Quite apart from the fact that in such difficult times, the state supposedly has "more important things to do."

Even so, in June 2003 the Sarajevo Parliament passed a sexual equality law. The draft was the result of two years of work by almost 200 NGOs. The fact that an informal coalition from civil society had collaborated in the drafting of a law was praised as exemplary, and around 85% of the NGOs' demands were ultimately integrated into the law, says Mirela Grünther-Decevic, the head of the Foundation's country office in Sarajevo. In 2004, the Foundation decided to try to enhance the visibility and impact of this important law, at the time largely unnoticed by the public, by inviting many representatives of the informal NGO coalition to a public seminar.

After a further law came into force in March 2005, protecting women from domestic violence, the Foundation brought together officials from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, legal experts, and NGO representatives. They all agreed that more cases of violence within the family are coming to light and that, if only slowly, this is beginning to be understood as a problem that affects society as a whole. However, especially in rural areas, neighbors and the authorities still turn a blind eye. In three cities—Trebinje, Bihac, and Bijeljina—public debates were therefore held in 2006, with invitations specifically sent out to doctors, social workers, and the local police.

The findings were sobering in all three cities. Violence against women is growing; perpetrators are to be found in all social classes; and men with "good connections" always manage to find a way out of trouble if a complaint is made. The authorities are not adequately sensitized to the problem, and the legal system is sluggish. Where there is a women's shelter—and there are only seven in the whole country—it is likely to have been set up through the help and support of international donors and to remain reliant on foreign assistance.

"The state has passed the right laws," says Mirela Grünther-Decevic, "but it is not truly facing up to the problem."

[www.boell.de](http://www.boell.de)

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## IRAQ

### **Laws or religious edicts?**

War, international sanctions, and the increasing politicization of ethnic and religious identities since the fall of Saddam

Hussein's regime in 2003 have resulted in considerable setbacks for the position of women in Iraq. Additionally, past years have seen a drastic reduction in the presence of women in the public sphere due to conflicts between the various groups and with the state "security forces." The female relatives of political opponents are subjected to targeted abuse and rape. Iraqi women are forced to observe conservative dress codes; women with a public profile, such as doctors, are intimidated and in some cases murdered. Within families, violence against women is escalating.

In the context of the debates on the new Iraqi Constitution, further serious setbacks look imminent due to the possible introduction, called for by some religious parties, of a family and personal status law based on sharia. This debate is taking a highly controversial turn within Iraq. Religious and political representatives of the Shiite and Sunni communities and secularists engage in bitter arguments over whether the state courts currently responsible for questions of personal status should or should not be turned into sharia courts. These conflicts revolve around the more general question of how the new Iraqi state is to define its citizens: will they primarily be individual citizens before the state and the law, or will they be members of religious communities and tribal alliances?

*IRAQ'S FAMILY LAW IS  
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In July 2008 the Foundation's office in Beirut invited prominent Iraqi family court judges and other legal experts to a six-day workshop. The participants even included Midhat Al-Mahmoud, the president of the Supreme Court of Justice. Although Mr. Al-Mahmoud is regarded as secular and reform-oriented, the other judges initially had difficulty daring to speak in front of Iraq's highest judicial authority, let alone to contradict him—the consequences of many decades of authoritarian rule were still making themselves felt. In the end, however, a lively debate was provoked by the controversial nature of topics like rape within marriage or a divorce law based on equal rights for men and women. The gentlemen were certainly facing a serious challenge: after all, nobody expects an easygoing afternoon when a group of Iraqi jurists meets up with Arab feminists. At times strong words were exchanged, but ultimately each day's work closed on a conciliatory note.

While Iraq's family law is more modern than that of some of its neighboring states, it is still far removed from the ideals of equal rights. At the workshop, the jurists had the opportunity to measure Iraqi law against international norms and to compare it with the legal situation in Morocco and Lebanon. Because Iraq has signed many international agreements, Iraqi judges are always able to invoke these in their decisions.

The examples of Morocco and Lebanon were chosen to demonstrate to the participants how personal status legislation in an Islamic country can comply with international standards (as in Morocco), and how dangerous it is to adapt the law to suit sectarian interests (as in Lebanon). The event was co-organized by the Iraqi Al-Amal Association, which has an extensive network in all

Iraqi provinces, and the Lebanese women's organization KAFA—Enough Violence and Exploitation, both valued partners of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

A year earlier, KAFA had already run an intensive gender-training course for eighteen Iraqi activists, journalists, legal experts, and social workers. Gender is an area where the Iraqi partners of the Foundation's Middle East regional office frequently ask for specific training and advice. That is partly because many Iraqi NGO activists received training in gender soon after the end of the war, but lacked the necessary expertise to put into practice what they had learned.

[www.boell-meo.org](http://www.boell-meo.org)

**The example of Morocco**

Under pressure from women's rights organizations, Morocco amended its family law to assure more justice for women. On December 10, 2008, the sixtieth birthday of the General Declaration of Human Rights, King Hassan announced that all the country's reservations to the UN women's rights convention CEDAW had been withdrawn. "We hope," says Lina Abou-Habib, "that Morocco's action will motivate other Arab countries to strengthen the rights of women by abandoning their reservations to CEDAW." A campaign is now demanding that other governments follow Morocco's lead. More than that: they should also ratify CEDAW's "Optional Protocol." The Protocol, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1999, enables individuals and groups to submit claims to the CEDAW Committee, the body that monitors compliance with the Convention.

**EGYPT**

**A life free of violence and discrimination is possible!**

Ten organizations from seven countries are pursuing a common vision: a life without violence and discrimination is possible! The words may sound obvious; in fact they are anything but. Violence against women is a taboo topic in all Arab societies, and when it is made public, emotions run high. It is true that sexual equality makes the occasional appearance in a law, but none of the Arab countries have required it right across the board, and it certainly is not part of citizens' everyday reality.

Forming the core of the cooperation are three organizations in Egypt, Jordan, and Palestine. The Egyptian group, El Nadeem Center for the Management and Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, was established in 1993 to mobilize against torture, which is widespread in Egypt. But alongside female victims of torture, the center also began to attract women who were experiencing sexist violence at home, and in 2004 a separate women's section was set up to help battered and sexually abused women. El Nadeem also offers training courses for women who undertake volunteer social work in the countryside, especially in the area of support for victims of violence.

Because El Nadeem takes up the cases of people who have been tortured while imprisoned or whose human rights have been violated in other ways by the Egyptian state, the organization is constantly in the sights of the secret service.

Sisterhood Is Global Institute/Jordan (SIGI/J) was founded in 1998 in Amman. The organization works for women's rights, campaigning against gender-specific violence. In 2005/2006 it led a nationwide campaign against early marriage. In 2001, King

Abdullah II had tried to fix the minimum age for marriage at eighteen for both men and women, but parliament did not ratify this “temporary law.” Since 2001, SIGI/J has hosted what is the Arab world’s largest Web portal on violence against women ([www.amanjordan.org](http://www.amanjordan.org)). The award-winning portal gives access to 86,000 documents; there were 14.7 million hits in the three months from October 1 to December 31, 2008, alone. The largest group of users (27.5%) lives in Saudi Arabia.

The Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) in Ramallah was founded in 1991, on the premise that there is a connection between a militarized patriarchy and the increasing oppression of women in private and public life. The feminists of WCLAC wanted to take part in the struggle against the Occupation, but they did not want their own specific concerns to become marginalized, as had happened in other liberation movements so many times before. To this day, they lobby with equal energy against the Israeli occupying power and against gender-specific discrimination within Palestinian society.

In the Gaza Strip, influenced by conservative Islam, violence against women remains a taboo topic. According to Mashoor Basissy, the director of the Palestinian Authority’s Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MOWA), only 1.2% of the victims of domestic violence go to the police. At least, after months of wrangling with the Ministry of Social Affairs, the West Bank’s first women’s shelter has now been opened, in Jericho.

The initiator of this alliance of three partners with seven other organizations was the Foundation’s Ramallah office, which still manages all the regional activities within the SALMA network against violence against women. Because the women representing other Arab organizations cannot come to Ramallah for political reasons, the Palestinian women travel to attend meetings with the other organizations abroad.

The groups collaborating within SALMA are very diverse, as can be seen from the three core organizations. Sisterhood Is Global Institute/Jordan is liberal and middle-class, headed by a former cabinet member and government spokeswoman. The Women’s Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling pursues a reform agenda for the Palestinian territories that embraces all aspects of society and politics. The Egyptian organization El Nadeem Center for the Management and Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence is a feminist organization grounded in grassroots democracy, and opposes the Cairo government.

*WHEN VIOLENCE AGAINST  
WOMEN IS MADE PUBLIC,  
EMOTIONS RUN HIGH.*

The result is that, in their debates, very distinct standpoints tend to clash. Should we work with Muslim women’s organizations on specific issues, or not at all? Should we work with Muslim or Islamist parties ( Hamas, Hezbollah, the Muslim Brotherhood) that we normally oppose politically, but that are more amenable when it comes to the topic of violence against women? Is cooperation with state bodies (especially the police) ever legitimate? For the participants from Palestine and Jordan that is not a problem, but for the Egyptian women it is out of the question: they consider it unthinkable to enter into cooperation with the police torturers, which would only give solace to the repressive state. But what about judges? Should we address parliamentarians, or is that a pointless undertaking in countries like these, for the most part ruled autocratically? Should we even aim for legal reform, or in-

stead concentrate on the administrative and executive organs and work in a more administration-oriented way toward improving the mechanisms of protection?

On one matter all the women are agreed: the laws need to be changed. Egyptian criminal law applies in the Gaza Strip, while on the West Bank it is Jordanian law. If a man is found guilty of an honor killing, his sentence will be a maximum of six months’ imprisonment. There is no law that penalizes violence within the family. Before a man can be accused of an attack, the woman has to have spent at least ten days in hospital and must present two witnesses. WCLAC has worked out a draft for a family protection law, but in view of the Hamas majority in the Palestinian Legislative Council, the proposal has no prospect of success. It could only be passed by decree by President Mahmoud Abbas, but that is unlikely to happen. President Abbas has signed the CEDAW convention—but here, too, there are no great prospects of ratification.

The fact that women from different nations are planning and carrying out a campaign—with a shared logo, the same posters, and common materials distributed in all the countries—indicates a degree of cross-border cooperation hard to find in the Arab world. The resulting successes are celebrated together, and the defeats regretted and analyzed together, as well.

[www.alnadeem.org](http://www.alnadeem.org) [www.wclac.org](http://www.wclac.org)  
[www.sigi-jordan.org](http://www.sigi-jordan.org)

### **The return of religion (which had never gone away)**

In the decades after the World War Two, dominated by the idea of social "progress," few people doubted that the advent of modernization would push religion into the private sphere, even in Africa, Asia, and Latin America—as had been the case in Europe in the past. As it turns out, however, developments in Europe were not the rule but the exception. Even in Europe, apparently so secularized, religion as a tradition still implicitly shapes societies and their self-image (as the idea of the "Christian West"). In some European countries, movements with a religious background are politically active, for example those opposing the reform of abortion law in Poland and Spain.

The deep-seated impact of religion on many people's values and sensibilities is reflected in politics as well. The Islamic Revolution in Iran (1979), the Solidarnosc movement in Poland with its strong Catholic base (1970s and 1980s), the Catholic church's role in the political conflicts in Latin America (1970s and 1980s), and the emergence of a Protestant "moral majority" in the United States (1980s onward) made that perfectly clear right across the world. Since then, the election victories of Islamist, Hindu Nationalist, or Evangelical-backed parties have only underlined that impression. Even in Turkey, an officially secular country since Atatürk's reforms, the democratic elections of 2002 brought an Islam-based party to power.

The events of 1979 in Iran provoked a debate, in the course of which "the role of women" became a criterion for judging Islamist movements, often even Islam itself. The largely secularized West, where the legal discrimination of women was in the process of being corrected, saw itself as "progressive" and religions, movements, or societies that insisted on different views of women's roles as "backward" or reactionary. The feeling was reinforced by the restrictive rules imposed on women and the crimes perpetrated against them in Muslim countries. This was one factor contributing to the widespread positive reception given to Samuel Huntington's radically simplistic hypothesis of the "clash of civilizations."

However, as the concept of religious fundamentalism gained significance, the other major world religions came into the critical spotlight as well. Academic studies established that fundamentalist movements in general, not only in Islam, are almost always concerned with views of sexuality, the idea of family, and thus with control over women. Homosexuality is vehemently opposed and attacked by all fundamentalist movements, and the response to homosexuals themselves is often violence.

But why, then, do women vote for fundamentalist parties and engage in political action within fundamentalist movements? There are explanations for this as well: an authoritarian, sometimes elitist or repressive modernization imposed from above, like that practiced by the Shah in Iran, was not welcomed by many women any more than it was by men. Women may also respond to the appeal to family values, all the more so if their everyday lives feel very far removed from those values: some women, for example in the slums of Latin America, hope the Protestants' moral preaching will lead to better men (that is, men with less alcohol and less adultery). In other countries, such as Lebanon, religiously oriented social work provides the services that the state promises, yet fails, to deliver. Finally, fundamentalist movements—sometimes in the face of their own rhetoric—may create spaces for women outside their restriction to family and home (for example the Hindutva movements in India).

Inspired by the women's movement, over the past twenty-five years feminist theologians in Christianity and Islam have begun to take up the challenge of separating religious tradition

from its patriarchal interpreters and the popular customs that have influenced it. In the spaces where scope for political action emerged, women in Muslim countries have used many different ways to gain a voice and influence in the private, and sometimes also the public, sphere.

The situation is complex and the contexts difficult to analyze, but one thing is clear: in most parts of the world, religion plays an important public role and is articulated and organized in the political sphere. It is also certain that religion is a crucial factor in gender relations and in the struggle over the shape that the social order should take. That debate is pursued within civil society, as well as among politicians and in the context of the form of state or government. "This is precisely why these questions form part of our political work in the various regions of the world," says Barbara Unmüßig.

But what exactly is the reciprocal impact of religion and politics? And what does that mean in everyday life, especially for women and for gender relations? Do religiously motivated political movements constitute a threat to sexual equality—an ideal that has become legally embedded in many countries in the wake of the World Conferences on Women? Are they a threat to democracy? Or does a religiously colored movement offer women new public spaces and access to democratic participation in decision-making? Do women's rights have to be implemented in the face of religion, or can they be achieved with religion's help?

When these questions are discussed, feelings often run high. The Heinrich Böll Foundation wants to be able to investigate the issues in depth with a strong background of knowledge and understanding, and to make a contribution to the political debate. To further that goal, it has set up a cooperative project with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) in Geneva.

Eleven country-cases are investigated by women and men from a range of social science disciplines. They are: Iran with its Muslim (Shiite) background; the Jewish state of Israel; Pakistan with its Sunni population; Catholic, conservative Chile; India, which is 80% Hindu; Nigeria, dogged by tension between Muslims and Christians; Orthodox Christian Serbia; secularist Turkey with its majority Muslim population; Mexico, where the Catholic Church is losing its monopoly; Catholic Poland; and the United States, where church and state are clearly separated, but the voters' choices are often guided by religious conviction.

The full versions of the eleven country-studies and the two thematic papers commissioned by the project—on the concept of public religion (José Casanova) and the feminist response to this (Anne Phillips)—are publicly available at [www.gwi-boell.de](http://www.gwi-boell.de). Short versions of the studies will appear in book form by 2010.

"WHY WERE THERE ONLY TWO  
OTHER BLACK GIRLS AT MY HIGH  
SCHOOL, WHILE ALL THE REST  
WERE WHITE PORTUGUESE GIRLS?  
WHY DID MY UNCLE, WHO WAS  
SERIOUSLY INJURED BY A LAND-  
MINE, HAVE TO FIGHT IN THE  
PORTUGUESE ARMY?"

## Ana Paula Assubuji



When Mozambique won independence in 1975, Ana Paula Assubuji was only eleven years old. But she was very much aware of the fact that her whole environment—her family home, school, friends in the neighborhood—was talking about a new and better social order.

Looking back today, she sees this early confrontation with power and power relations, with exploitation and injustice, as the basis for her later feminist commitment. “Why were there only two other black girls at my high school apart from me, while all the rest were white Portuguese girls? Why did my uncle, who was seriously injured by a landmine, have to fight in the Portuguese army?”

Only a few years afterwards, when eighteen-year-old Assubuji wanted to begin her university studies, the new socialist government thwarted her plans. The central planning system determined where the need for labor was greatest, and Assubuji was sent to teach at a technical training facility.

Assubuji caught up with her academic studies later in Germany, where she had fallen in love with a young man from Hamburg. In 1984, now the bearer of a master’s degree in economics, she joined the team of the women’s foundation “FrauenAnstif-

tung,” one of the precursor organizations of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. There she worked with projects on women’s empowerment all over the world, and began to read her way through feminist theory. “I had always had an instinct for injustice and the processes of social marginalization. But close contact with the feminists in Germany prompted me to look into feminism as a concept and a model.”

After seventeen years in Germany—the last of them spent in the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s Berlin headquarters—Assubuji and her family decided to go back to southern Africa. For a few years she worked on development aid in an international NGO, before returning in 2008 to the Heinrich Böll Foundation, this time as part of the regional office in Cape Town. Today she coordinates the Political and Human Rights program, which has a strong gender-democratic focus.

What singles out Assubuji’s work is her special way of winning people’s trust, her political flair, and her high degree of credibility. She does not simply represent a Western “donor organization” that has followed the development policy fashion and suddenly added “gender” to its banner. When she meets with the Foundation’s partners, they accept that she is part of the movement, and that the Heinrich Böll Foundation takes its gender-political goals absolutely seriously. With her charm and her persistence, Assubuji can mediate even in situations where others would have given up long ago—for example when traditionally-minded African women’s rights and LGBT activists have difficulty finding a common political strategy, even though both sides insist that the South African women’s movement must not allow itself to be split. ■

### Chapter III

# BUILDING A GENDER-EQUITABLE ECONOMY

The asymmetrical and fractured processes of economic globalization impact in very different, and often opposing, ways on women and on men. They alter economies, social welfare systems, and cultures in different ways. In some countries, regions, and sectors, women have found jobs that have helped them gain more independence—and women's participation in the labor force has grown rapidly over recent years. However, these new jobs are still largely concentrated in badly paid professions and tasks. For many women, the money they earn is not enough to support them: worldwide, women make up 60% of the working poor.

One of the effects of the current economic and financial crisis is that even more people are losing their jobs. A rising degree of precarization affects women directly, but also indirectly, because it is undermining many men's images of themselves as the family breadwinners.

Informal employment has reached record levels worldwide. An estimated 1.8 billion people are working without a formal contract of employment and without social insurance. In sub-Saharan Africa, three-quarters of all jobs outside agriculture are now "informal." More than 700 million informally employed people live on less than 1.25 US dollars a day. The informal sector, where each person works at her or his own risk, is also riven by gender-specific inequities. That becomes clear when we break down the statistical data for Africa: while 84.1% of women work in the informal sector, for men the figure is only 63%.

Gender inequality is not limited to paid employment, but continues after the end of the working day in the shape of reproductive labor, which is largely carried out, without pay, by women. The economically secure global middle class retains its faith in the traditional sexual division of labor, but—whether in Berlin or Beirut, in Lagos or Los Angeles—it can often afford to hire badly paid cleaners, nannies, or carers. On the global scale, then, there is a significant redistribution of the labor of caring: not a redistribution between men and women, but between women of different countries, social classes, and cultures.

Migration, still often regarded as a male domain, has thus become a women's issue. Half of all migrants are women. If they once contributed to international migration flows mainly as family members, displaced persons, or refugees, nowadays more and more women are moving abroad in search of work. Often earning

very little, they nevertheless save with an iron will and manage to support their families back at home.

Understanding the ambivalence of economic globalization, and ensuring that its impact is taken into consideration during decision-making processes, is an important area for any international politics of gender. Accordingly, the Heinrich Böll Foundation's international work places great value on deepening and extending knowledge of the effects of global economic processes and political decisions—whether in trade policy, labor market policy, financial policy, or investment policy. For future work, we will need to systematically develop our capacities in this area. It is not easy to find local partners with the necessary expertise: women's organizations all over the world have concentrated increasingly on the political sphere, legal equality, and the institutionalization of women's and gender policies; far less on economic issues. The anti-globalization movements around the world, as well, are surprisingly unwilling to look at gender issues. Nevertheless, there are now many analyses that do take gender distinctions into account, especially in specific sectors such as the textile or microelectronics industry or in agriculture, where the majority of women's formal and informal employment is concentrated. Feminist economists have worked out a wide range of different conceptual foundations for gender-sensitive models and analyses. It is one of our goals to bring perspectives like these into the processes of economic decision-making, for example as part of our work on the bilateral agreement currently under negotiation between the European Union and India.

Enhancing the economic empowerment of women is often on the list of objectives in "classical" development projects. The Foundation's approach is slightly different: it aims to enhance

gender-political knowledge and the skills of women (and men) in the arenas of national and international economic policymaking, and to strengthen the capacity of global networks to intervene in decision-making processes. One key project is the regular series of summer schools "Engendering Macroeconomics." We have run three international and three regional summer schools in the series over the past few years. Appraisals of the program revealed that the demand for macroeconomic knowledge is immense, and summer schools like these can really help to answer that need. Yet the summer schools will require far more follow-up discussion and commitment if they are to result in networks that can influence the processes of economic decision-making. We accept the challenge, and in the future will concentrate on regional summer schools. ■

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## SOUTH AFRICA

### At the end of the chain

Gertruida Baartman had to summon up all her courage when, in 2006, she stood up in front of the shareholders of the British supermarket chain Tesco. But she was sure of her case: it was not fair that, as a widow and mother of three children, she earned so little she could not even pay her basic bills. Ms. Baartman was picking fruit six months a year in a farm in Ceres, South Africa—fruit that Tesco sold in its British stores.

She earned warm applause for her speech; David Reid, the chair of Tesco's board, praised her courage, promising she would not be penalized for it and that working conditions in South Africa would be reviewed. But hardly had Gertruida Baartman arrived back home when the farmer informed her she would not be hired for the next season's work. It is only thanks to the energetic intervention of the Women on Farms Project (WFP), the group that had sent her to London, that she was ultimately taken on again. But there was no more room for loyalty above and beyond her daily wage: previously the farmer had driven her brother and his wheelchair to the doctor's, but now she has to take care of that—and pay for it—herself.

Since then, conditions on "her" farm have improved a little, but there has been no fundamental change for the women seasonal workers in the Western Cape. As a result, Gertruida Baartman traveled to London again in 2007. She explained to the shareholders that she would have to put in four hours' work to afford one bag of the South African pears on sale at Tesco.

The fact that a laborer was able to address shareholders indicates the sheer ambition of the Women on Farms Project's horizons. The organization represents the interests of women active in commercial agriculture—supporting them in day-to-day disputes with farmers, but also in larger-scale conflicts with the government or foreign corporations. Fatima Shabodien, WFP's director, feels as much at home at a women farm workers' meeting as at a feminist conference or at a heated debate on the structural injustice of the global economy.

Never in the history of South Africa have so many women been employed in agriculture. Under apartheid, laboring families lived in simple houses on their employers' land, dependent on the farmer in an almost feudal relationship. Women were mere appendages of men, working as "the wives" in the farmhouse or during harvest. That continued for generations.

The new laws protecting farm workers, and the cold wind of the global economy, have meant seasonal contracts are now replacing the previous working relationships that, though informal, were at least permanent and provided accommodation. The process has been accompanied by a feminization: "Around 60%

of the work is now done by seasonal laborers, and two-thirds of those are women," says Fatima Shabodien.

The Women on Farms Project grew out of an initiative by human rights lawyers in 1992. In 1996 the WFP project was formally registered as a separate organization, and it soon attracted foreign donors. "We help to ensure that events like Gertruida's appearance in London do not remain isolated initiatives," says Paula Assubuji, program manager at the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Cape Town office, "so that further steps can be planned, prepared, and carried out that contribute to a sustainable improvement in the situation of women on the farms." One example of that contribution is legal expertise: WFP looks at draft legislation to gauge its impact on women living and working on farms. And when a hearing takes place in parliament, the WFP women are skilled at presenting their interests. Numerous meetings give the farm women information about their rights and encourage them not merely to join in campaigns, but also to take on leadership roles within the organizations.

But NGOs may come and go, so the network of WFP farm-based women's rights groups decided to make their grassroots structure the core of a new, strong organization capable of taking effective action on behalf of its members. In 2004 the time had come, and on August 9, South Africa's Women's Day, the trade union Sikhule Sonke ("We Grow Together") was born. Today it has more than 3,500 members based on over 120 farms. Until the end of 2008, the mother organization WFP maintained its daughter Sikhule Sonke, but now the trade union is completely independent and the two bodies see themselves as sisters.

Like other trade unions, Sikhule Sonke fights for better wages and against violations of labor legislation such as unfair dismissal. At a 2008 Department of Labor hearing in Paarl, in the Cape Province's winegrowing areas, 400 farm workers—most of them women—made it clear to the authorities that their wages were inadequate to support them and their families. Nowhere else in the country had so many people attended a hearing of this kind. Since March 1, 2009, there has at least been a new minimum wage, indexed to inflation, of around 160 US dollars per month. And the government has also finally acceded to the women's demands to apply this wage right across the country rather than distinguishing between different regions.

However, a women-led trade union like Sikhule Sonke goes far beyond the issues dealt with by comparable male-dominated organizations. As Fatima Shabodien notes, it has to apply an "integrated approach" to all the matters that restrict and endanger the lives of the farmwomen. That includes a huge range of problems. For example, the contracts regulating the right to live on the farm land are almost all signed by the husband. If he dies, the widow has no legal claim; some are forced to leave and thus also lose their employment. Additionally, they often have to support the children single-handed, because their menfolk refuse to take responsibility. Although women have a claim to payments such as child benefits from South Africa's rudimentary social welfare system, they need help in filling out the application.

What is particularly difficult is the battle against the violence endemic on the farms. All union members commit to the task of taking action against attacks on women in their communities. They know they cannot rely on the police to help them. "In rural areas, the police are much more interested in livestock thefts," says Wendy Pekeur with a rueful laugh.

Gertruida Baartman, Fatima Shabodien, and Wendy Pekeur are campaigning against the structures inherited from apartheid, against low wages, bad working conditions, and the disregard and abuse of women. At the same time, they are rattling the end of a long chain of global economics—a chain that is being organized ever more tightly as the shareholders at the

other end of the world grow more eager to see hard cash. It was to change this injustice that Gertruida Baartman twice made the long journey to London.

[www.wfp.org.za](http://www.wfp.org.za)

#### BRAZIL

##### **Food on the table, not in the tank**

In the last few decades, Brazil has become a global agricultural power. The country is the world's biggest producer of sugar and meat, and in soya production it takes second place after the United States. Large corporations, often referred to as "agribusiness," have spearheaded this process and are moving into ever new territories. Soya, for example, is now being cultivated in the Amazon region, contributing to the destruction of the rainforest.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation has supported studies of the ecological consequences that can be expected from the increasing cultivation of biofuels, and helps NGOs, networks, forums, and research institutions to develop positions of their own.

Large-scale monoculture farming is a threat not only to Brazil's last remaining ecosystems, but also to peasant farmers and traditional communities. The promised land reform moves ahead at a snail's pace, while agribusiness expands and is rapidly changing the model of agricultural production. The introduction of genetically modified seed, in particular, means smallholders become increasingly dependent on the big agricultural corporations.



Campos Lindos: peasant farmer facing expropriation – soya is to be cultivated on her land.

This trend is being resisted by Brazil's social movements, the Landless Workers' Movement (MST, Movimento dos Sem Terra), the smallholders' trade unions, and the indigenous people and traditional communities. In past years, women have organized in all these movements, and they have also founded the Women Farmers Movement (MMC, Movimento de Mulheres Camponesas), which has a presence in many Brazilian states and is respected nationwide.

Part of their support comes from the long-standing organization Sempreviva Organização Feminista (SOF), which has been associated with the Heinrich Böll Foundation for many years. The São Paulo-based feminists collaborate with the women of the peasant movements, offer training courses, organize meetings,

and publish information material. In August 2008 they set up a discussion on the rising production of agricultural fuels. Around 500 women from all over the country came along to the event in Belo, and discussed in detail the implications of this trend for women: namely, the cultivation of food crops being further squeezed and the peasant economy being increasingly marginalized by agribusiness, which employs women at most as harvest farmhands or as cooks.

### AT RECENT LATIN AMERICAN SUMMITS, THE WOMEN MADE THEIR PRESENCE SO STRONGLY FELT THAT EVEN THE HEADS OF GOVERNMENT WERE FORCED TO LISTEN.

The critique expressed by the social movements and SOF have brought them into conflict with the progressive regimes of Latin America. That does not alarm them in the least; they continue undaunted to put their case at the highest levels. At the most recent Latin American summits, the rural women, supported by SOF and the Heinrich Böll Foundation, made their presence felt to such an extent that even the heads of government were forced to listen. They received a more positive reaction from Evo Morales (Bolivia) and Rafael Correa (Ecuador) than from Lula da Silva (Brazil) and Hugo Chavez (Venezuela). But either way: the women's commitment gave added weight to widespread criticism of a development model that depends on the ruthless exploitation of natural resources and the marginalization of farming women and men.

[www.sof.org.br](http://www.sof.org.br)

#### CHINA

##### **Access to work and social security for China's women**

The economic reforms of the past thirty years have helped the People's Republic of China to achieve impressive economic growth. Millions of people have seen improvements in their conditions of life. But the transformation from a planned to a market economy has come at a price. The structures of collective state provision have been eroded, and although new social security systems are planned, these have not yet been introduced to any significant extent. That puts a special strain on women, who experience the dual pressure to be both flexible (for their employers) and caring (for the various generations of their family).

Between 2006 and 2008, as part of a move to draft political recommendations for the implementation of equal access to the primary labor market and to social security provision, the Heinrich Böll Foundation supported two research projects, on women and informal employment and on women and unpaid reproductive work.

In China's cities, informal employment—that is, work without a written contract—grew from 18.5% to 32.6% between 2002 and 2005, and the tendency is for further rises. Sociologist Deng Quheng points out that the informal sector includes both self-employed people and wage-earners. How does the sector's growth impact on women's working conditions and on their so-



Chinese workers in a Guangdong toy factory

cial protection? What role is played by the provision of care for children and the elderly? What differences exist between women from urban and rural regions? These questions, along with others normally excluded from the curriculum of the economic science faculty, were to be investigated in the two research studies.

The findings show a complex interlinking of family, labor market, internal migration, place of origin, residence, and work, and the related problems faced by women. For example, only well-educated, urban married women with children over two years old have any likelihood of getting their child accepted in a state-run kindergarten and of being able to take up a job with a regular contract and social insurance. A woman's duty to care for her own parents, found the study, has very little impact on her chances of working outside the home, whereas caring for parents-in-law limits those chances significantly in terms of both scope and duration.

Another study notes that women from rural areas seeking work in factories or informal employment in the cities are increasingly leaving their children behind in the village to be cared for by grandparents. These women continue paid employment after marriage and the birth of children. The traditional duties of reproductive labor no longer stop them from entering the labor market, albeit usually in an "informal" capacity. China's rising internal migration has meant that many more children, young people, and grandparents are being drawn into the labor of caring for small children and doing housework. This applies especially to girls and grandmothers.

It is difficult to generalize about reproductive labor and women's access to the formal and informal labor market in China. Nor are usable, detailed statistics easy to come by, due to regional disparities and the extreme contrasts between urban and rural China. The differences between women's diverse lives and situations will need to be taken into account if a woman-oriented social insurance system is to be effective.

Going beyond purely research-based goals, the two projects were designed to help build up a network of women academics and members of NGOs and GONGOs (government-operated NGOs). With this in mind, in early 2007 the Heinrich Böll Foundation facilitated a study trip to India for two Chinese women academics from the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) and the National Bureau of Statistics of China. There they attended workshops on the topic of informal labor in China and India, and met members of the trade union Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and the Social Centre for Rural Initiative and Advancement (SCRIA). However, because of the administrative regulations regarding Chinese organizations' finances, it turned out to be very difficult to provide long-term financial support for the development of a network. As a result, future projects will only be carried out with one Chinese partner per project.

Despite these difficulties, new connections have emerged. In fall 2008, four women doctoral students from the research project presented their papers on unpaid reproductive labor at the nationwide conference of Chinese economic scientists in Chongqing. At a lunch with women economists during the conference, it became very clear that an informal network of different generations of women researchers was growing. Many of the women had met at a workshop at Beijing University some years previously, others at a Heinrich Böll Foundation event in Shanghai. Several of the older women had been abroad and can thus contribute their international contacts to the network, helping to find research grants and other opportunities for the younger women.

The Chinese researchers' determination to intervene actively and constructively in China's reform process is impressive. They see themselves as intellectuals with a responsibility to act for the general good and for the ongoing development of Chinese society—an attitude that can be traced back to both Confucian and socialist traditions. Alongside their teaching and research, many of them have founded initiatives and NGOs at Chinese universi-

ties, offering advice to people from many different segments of the population. That means they are an integral part of public life, and have a practical relationship to social problems which is rare in academic circles in Germany.

[www.boell.de](http://www.boell.de)

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## CHINA

### Facing the examiners

A handbook on how to grill the government on whether it is spending its money on the right objectives—that's a surprising idea for most Chinese men and women. So is the advice to demand of banks that they ensure their investments will benefit women as well as men. But this is exactly what the Washington, DC, group Gender Action has put together in handbook form, in cooperation with legal experts from the Women's Law Studies and Legal Aid Center (WLSLAC) of Beijing University.

Gender Action and WLSLAC began right at the top, with some heavyweight projects. They audited the investments of the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the International Finance Corporation—the main international financial institutions (IFIs) working in China, in which the Chinese government has a seat on the board and a right to vote.

Do the banks' projects benefit women? Or might they even have a harmful impact on women's lives and on gender relations? The first two sections of the toolkit explain that all three banks have a declared "gender policy," and that a woman can present her case to them if she believes they are failing to observe it fully. Audit checklists in the third chapter recommend the best questions to ask in order to build up a precise picture and really put the banks on the spot. In the fourth chapter, Gender Action and WLSLAC present their jointly prepared examination of fifty investments by the three IFIs in China, a representative sample of IFI involvement in China.

More than half of the IFI investments covered in the study fail to analyze gender relations at all; more than three-quarters ignore the gap between men and women, certainly not undertaking to ameliorate it and in many cases not even showing any will to think through the differential impact that their actions may have on women and men. The Asian Development Bank does better than the World Bank, which in turn does better than the International Finance Corporation. As for satisfying the examiners, though: all three were unsuccessful.

#### Further reading:

Gender Action/NGO Legal Aid (supported by the Heinrich Böll Foundation): "IFI GENDER AUDIT AND ADVOCACY. A TOOLKIT FOR CHINESE CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS," Washington, DC, 2008

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## INDIA

### Free trade restricts options for promoting women

India is proud to be the world's biggest democracy. Fifteen parliaments have been elected since Independence, and at the 2009 polls, 714 million people were entitled to vote—more than twice as many as in the elections to the European Parliament.

However, where is day-to-day democracy when the Ministry of Commerce and Industry negotiates with the European Union behind closed doors on a treaty that will affect the lives of 1.14 billion Indians? Negotiations on an EU-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) began on June 28, 2007. And where is parliament's right to have its say, where is attention to the expertise of

civil society, where is consideration of the negative effects feared by particular segments of society?

Aiming to create a bridge between India and the EU that can help address these questions and shift the focus from trade alone to "gender and trade," the Heinrich Böll Foundation in India initiated cooperation with WIDE, a feminist network of women's and development organizations in Europe. The WIDE network has been bringing together gender specialists and activists to discuss trade-related issues since 1995. Their particular interest is in the gender-specific implications of trade policy. A study by Christa Wichterich on gender-related and other social effects of the EU-India Free Trade Agreement formed the basis for a workshop in March 2008 in New Delhi, attended by Indian NGOs. The workshop resulted in a detailed analysis of the dangers that lie in this kind of free trade agreement.

Like every other area of economic policy, free trade agreements impact differentially on women and men. In a country where one fourth of the population lives below the poverty line and women are to be found at the lower end of the scale of both income and cultural value, freedom of competition is likely to make their situation even more precarious. Small and medium manufacturing companies, women farmhands and seasonal workers, small traders and women in the informal sector will all be exposed to the powerful slipstream of the big corporations. At the same time, foreign investors in export sectors like textile and leather manufacturing, diamond cutting, and call centers are highly reliant on women for cheap labor.

Restrictions on the government's ability to specify particular criteria in its job advertising and bidding processes mean that it will lose the freedom to give politically strategic preference to particular social groups (affirmative action) or to particular tasks (such as setting food security as a priority in agricultural policy). This will make it even harder to improve the situation of women, and will also endanger access to basic services like water and healthcare. If private suppliers step into these domains, they will be concerned above all with profit, pushing the delivery of basic services into the background. This, in turn, will affect women to a disproportionate extent.

The 2008 workshop aimed to draw attention to the social and gender-related consequences of the Agreement. In the course of a lobbying trip to Brussels, five NGO representatives got to know the political structures of the EU. The trip gave added depth and momentum to their networking activities, and provided an important impetus for the efforts of the newly founded Indian Forum on FTAs, a network of Indian organizations that casts a critical eye on all the free trade agreements currently under consideration in India. An Internet-based network was established, with ninety-five members, two-thirds of them in Europe and one-third in India and other Asian countries. Most are NGOs, but there are also European Parliament deputies. The discussion list allows interested Europeans and Indians to exchange information on the status of negotiations and on other themes related to the EU-India Free Trade Agreement.

On September 21, 2008, Forum on FTAs made its first public appearance, with a march on the EU Representation in New Delhi to demand that negotiations be halted. The call was signed by seventy-five individuals and organizations, though few women's groups were among them. In India as elsewhere, civil society is fragmented by region and by theme. In response to that fragmentation, the campaign is now planning to seek increased contact with the grassroots movements currently fighting against the problems that could be further exacerbated by the Free Trade Agreement.

In April 2009, three representatives of Forum on FTAs came to Berlin for a workshop on the EU-India FTA. The event

was organized by WIDE and other European NGOs to enable the exchange of ideas and the coordination of further activities. WIDE and Forum on FTAs demand that the negotiation process be made public and that they be given access to the process, then a hearing and the chance to influence its outcome. They know that agreements like these are not gender-neutral—despite all the fine words about “equal treatment for all.” The specific impact on women must always be taken into account, and the agreements must be designed in such a way that they do not widen the existing gap between rich and poor, men and women, but instead promote poverty reduction, sustainable development, and gender justice.

It seems that the two biggest democracies in the world, India and the European Union, need small but effective networks to remind them to ensure transparency and to work for gender justice.

[www.wide-network.org](http://www.wide-network.org)

[www.boell-india.org](http://www.boell-india.org)

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LEBANON

### **Taking early action**

Structural adjustment programs, trade agreements, and integration into free trade areas have far-reaching consequences for the population of the Middle East. But that population normally does not find out about the international agreements until their practical impact has begun to bite. Because many women work in the informal sector and in agriculture, they are hit particularly hard by economic integration. In Lebanon, a national commission has been set up for the World Trade Organization talks, but civil society groups have not been invited to join it—and they lack the necessary expertise to observe and influence the negotiations from the outside.

## LIKE EVERY OTHER ECONOMIC POLICY, FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS IMPACT DIFFERENTLY ON WOMEN AND MEN.

Since 2005, the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s office in Beirut has been supporting the Collective for Research and Training on Development-Action (CRTD.A). The Collective uses pilot studies and seminars to build expertise and attract attention to the fact that international trade agreements have long-term effects on gender relations and on the social and economic position of women. In 2008, the Foundation for the first time supported a training course offered by the International Gender and Trade Network for more than fifty representatives of Lebanese NGOs, cooperatives, trade unions, UN organizations, and government departments. In workshop sessions, the participants were encouraged to discuss the relevant issues in detail, by sector (agriculture, services, textiles, etc.) or by theme (the GAT agreements, GATT, TRIPS, the rights of local producers, subsidies). At the close, they agreed on a set of priorities for shared action in 2009: to pass on the insights gained from the discussions, to actively monitor the accession talks, and to establish an information hub for cooperation between civil society and the private sector.

To enable cross-border cooperation, Syrian women activists had also been invited to the conference and had the opportu-

nity to learn about the mechanisms of the WTO. In the medium term, a regional advocacy platform is to be set up.

At the end of the course, Mariarosaria Iorio, the International Gender and Trade Network’s Geneva coordinator, joined with the Foundation to lead a series of consultations with individuals and institutions involved in the Lebanese WTO accession negotiations. The dialogue partners were people in the various government departments, the Chamber of Commerce and Central Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the European Commission. The conclusions are summarized in the document “Lebanon’s Accession to WTO: Highlights of Critical Issues,” which can be read online in Arabic or English.

[www.crtda.org.lb](http://www.crtda.org.lb)

[www.igttn.org](http://www.igttn.org)

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UNITED STATES

### **For gender justice in global economic and financial policy**

How can macroeconomic theory and practice—at present largely gender-blind—be changed so that the goals of economic action are no longer economic profit in its own right, but social justice, respect for human and especially women’s rights, and thus ultimately gender justice?

In 2007, the fifth International Summer School in Washington, DC, on “Engendering Economics in a Globalizing World” focused on the gender policies and gender-specific impact of the International Financial Institutions (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the regional development banks). The summer school aimed to encourage women and women’s groups from the partner countries to start looking at macroeconomic issues, as well as motivating economists and development practitioners to apply a challenging “gender lens” to their own professions.

The Washington, DC, office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation has long been concerned with gender and macroeconomics, especially in the area of trade and in cooperation with Gender Action, an NGOs that has specialized in this topic for many years.

The publicly funded international financial institutions are supposed to reduce poverty and promote economic growth. Nevertheless, say Gender Action and the International Center for International Environmental Law, both based in Washington, DC, those institutions often ignore the inequality between men and women and thus contribute to the rise in poverty, prostitution, and HIV/AIDS. Although some of the multilateral banks the groups investigated do have a gender policy, this usually has little impact due to a failure to allocate the necessary financial and human resources. Fewer than 1% of the personnel in these institutions are gender experts.

If the financial institutions themselves evaluate their policies as gender-neutral, in fact those policies impact on women and men very differently, with disproportionately negative effects on women. The summer school participants came to this conclusion after analyzing cases like that of the International Monetary Fund’s “inflation bias”: when social, health, and educational services for the poorest segments of the population cease to be provided by the state, the duties are assumed by women—without pay—and appear nowhere in the country’s national economic statistics.

As well as creating new contacts and future pathways for cooperation, the summer school offered participants the chance to test out their new knowledge and their skill as advocates of gender-equitable economic and finance policy, in discussions

with representatives of the World Bank, the IMF, and the United States government held during visits to the various institutions.

Teaching modules were developed so that the economic literacy gained could be disseminated beyond the summer school. They can be downloaded as a Web dossier.

**Further reading:**

Gender Action: "GENDER GUIDE TO WORLD BANK AND IMF POLICY-BASED LENDING," Washington, DC, 2006

Gender Action/Center for International Environmental Law: "GENDER JUSTICE: A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO GENDER ACCOUNTABILITY AT INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS," Washington, DC, 2007

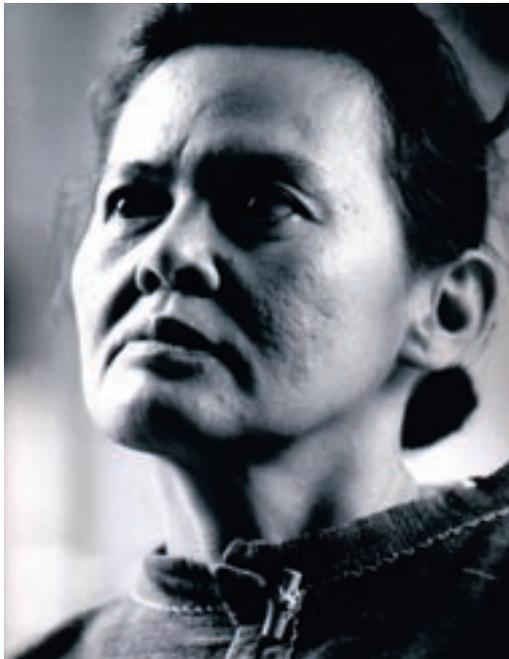
[www.boell.org](http://www.boell.org)

THAILAND

**The "aunties" take charge**

In Thailand, the cohesion and impact of the women's movement has declined significantly in recent years. Due to the hierarchical structures of many women's organizations, the older generation has given the new generation of feminists and gender activists little space to establish itself and position itself within what it defines as a "postmodern" or "postcolonial" approach.

In contrast, women play an important, often leading, role in Thailand's social movements. A study by the Campaign for Alternative Industry Network (CAIN) asked why that is so. "We don't want to cause friction between men and women," says Penchom Saetang of CAIN, "but we noticed that highly motivated and strong women are at work in many grassroots movements. Men are politically active as well, but women have a different approach and pursue different strategies."



Dawan Chantharahassadee

It is the "aunties" who set the tone in these movements. The surveys for the CAIN study show that they have to overcome a lot of resistance before they can do so—starting with their own families. Sombun Srikhamdokkae, who campaigns for industrial health and safety measures, was isolated from the rest of her family due to the silicosis damaging her lungs; her husband threatened her with divorce three times because he refused to accept that his wife wanted to stand up for other people's concerns.

Dawan Chantharahassadee, who exposed corrupt practices in a large water-treatment project, is more afraid of her husband leaving her one day than of the possible results of locking horns with powerful government officials.



Chintana Kaewkhao

Many women's activists have had to face slander, such as persistent rumors that they are unfaithful to their husbands. In response, the group run by Sompong Wiangjand and Charoen Kongsuk, which campaigns against the building of a dam, has begun to pay regular visits to the families of its women members in more than sixty villages. Only one woman, Phinant Chotirosseranee, has been supported by her husband from the start: he pays a part of her expenses with the profits from his store. Chintana Kaewkhao—a woman who prevented a coal-fired power plant from being built—is not in such a happy financial position. She has frequently been threatened, so that her husband usually has to accompany her on her travels, leaving the family vegetable store closed to customers for the duration.

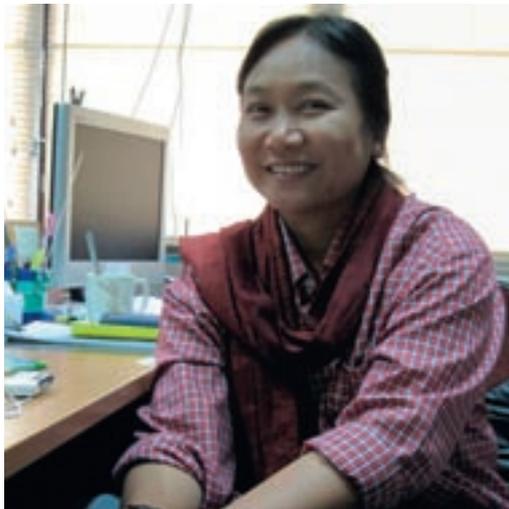
MANY WOMEN'S ACTIVISTS  
HAVE HAD TO FACE  
SLANDER.

It is by no means the case that these women held leading positions in their movements at the start. They only took over when the men began to weary or allowed themselves to be co-opted by temptingly lucrative offers. Charoen Kongsuk, the elderly lady who has been fighting for years against the dam that threatens her livelihood, received visits on fifteen days in a row from a former governor who wanted to persuade her to give up the campaign. "Why do you offer me as much money as I want?" she asked him. "I can't accept that. I had money before these state development projects began. I had livestock—pigs, ducks, hens. And I had jewelry. Enough of everything. I have clothes, children, my husband, and the house you are sitting in. What would I need money for?"

The women approach their work with a down-to-earth self-confidence. They gather the knowledge they need to face the experts from the government and big corporations. When they are successful, they do not set themselves apart, observes Penchom Saetang: "They take an egalitarian approach to communication and never order the others around." To ensure that women do not always take on the "support" tasks while men pick up the microphone and collect the laurels, says Phinant Chotirosseranee, "we need to alter social structures. As long as society continues to

look down on women and then calls on them to fight, it will be another 200 years before we achieve equal rights. But if we change politics and also the infrastructure, equal rights could be here in just thirty years.”

In the wake of the study and a 2007 workshop on women-led environmental movements, the Heinrich Böll Foundation decided to promote two of the women in particular. Chintana Kaewkao, of the Ban Krud Natural and Conservation Group, is interested not only in the fight against coal-fired power plants, but also in recruiting and training young women to carry forward future citizens’ initiatives. “What impresses me,” says Jana Mittag of the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s Southeast Asia regional office in Chiang Mai, “is that this brings us so much closer to our goal of integrating gender into our programmatic work.” Sombun Srikamdokkhae, of the Council of Work- and Environment-Related Patients’ Network of Thailand (WEPT), is helping to draw attention to occupational diseases and workplace health and safety standards from a gender perspective. Whereas men more often suffer injuries, women tend to suffer long-term health damage caused by exposure to chronic stresses. Sombun’s organization, too, is working to build up a sustainable network of female activists.



Sombun Srikamdokkhae

With the help of the women from the citizens’ movements, one day it may be possible to address an underlying dilemma: “Women have little involvement in political decision-making at a national level, because they feel this male-dominated sphere is too ‘dirty,’ corrupt, and ineffective due to its lack of networks to be worth their commitment. As a result, an increase in the political participation and representation of women on the level of national politics is only likely if the basic mechanisms of government—currently nepotistic, semi-feudal, and male-dominated—are changed” (Heike Löschmann, director of the Southeast Asia regional office until 2008).

[www.boell-southeastasia.org](http://www.boell-southeastasia.org)

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## **CAIN**

The Campaign for Alternative Industry Network (CAIN) arose from the Toxic Chemical Campaign Committee (TCCC), established after the disastrous chemical fire at Bangkok’s Klong Toey Port in March 1991. Since its founding, CAIN has focused on the ways that industrialization and the chemicals industry’s toxic contamination impact upon ecosystems, communities, and the health of industrial workers. To support the right of the workers and others involved to a clean environment, CAIN participates in various campaigns such as those demanding a “Right to Know” and a “Right to Justice and Participation.” CAIN also fights for improvements in living conditions and healthcare for the people who have suffered most severely from the negative effects of industrialization.

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"I HAD ALREADY LOST  
EVERYTHING YOU CAN POSSIBLY  
LOSE! SO THE ONLY QUESTION LEFT  
WAS, WHAT DO I WANT TO DO WITH  
MY LIFE?"

## **Saima Jasam**



Even as a small child, Jasam wouldn't stop asking questions. "Why are we different, and why am I treated differently?" Back then her name was Sanjeevani Mehra. She was born in 1964 into a well-off, protective family in Lahore, Pakistan. As the child of well-off Hindu parents, she could not avoid noticing every day that she belonged to a minority within the majority Muslim society. During the 1971 India-Pakistan war, the schoolchildren patriotically shouting "Long live Pakistan!" refused to let her join the street celebrations. "You can't, you aren't one of us," they told her. Not for the first time, Jasam felt shut out, and asked her parents about this unfairness: "Why can't we be like the others?" And yet those years also taught her a sense of solidarity and perhaps the life-affirming political energy that would come to fruition in her later working life.

The fact that she did not enjoy the same rights as others, as both a member of a minority and a woman, was brought home to her with great cruelty in 1981. A Muslim mob had murdered her parents in front of her eyes but unlike her brother, only two years older, after this traumatic experience she was not allowed to go back to school, certainly not to college, but instead was sent to India for several years to stay with her only remaining relatives. She experienced this as a banishment and as a discriminatory injustice. Why did she have to go? Just because she was a woman?

And why did the Hindu inheritance law assign all her parents' assets to her brother? Why, when she returned to Lahore in 1989, did she have to convert to Islam, changing her name to Saima, just because she wanted to marry a young man by the name of Jasam? It was a love match, against the will of both families. "I know for a fact that to this day, my relatives in India still have not forgiven me for converting to Islam," says Jasam. In a low but decisive voice, she adds: "Maybe, just like my Muslim parents-in-law, they were happy that after my husband's early death in an accident I also lost my unborn child."

The young Pakistani went back to India again. A year began that Jasam now sees as having marked out her future life. "I had already lost everything you can possibly lose! So the only question left for me was, what do I want to do with my life?"

Above all, Jasam wanted a good education, and so she set about catching up. After a master's in history, she gained a degree in development policy in The Hague and a diploma in women's studies in the Philippines, then wrote a book, "Honour, Shame and Resistance," about violence against women. The topic was central in Jasam's first professional position, with Amnesty International, and it has continued to be so during her work with the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Lahore office since 1993.

Pakistan's civil society knows and respects Saima Jasam, and she is familiar as the face of the Heinrich Böll Foundation—to which, in her words, she owes her political progress up to now. It is also well-known that her other area of expertise is the crucial one of South Asian peace and security policy, especially the reconciliation process with India and intercommunal harmony. This is as close to her heart as it was to her father's: only six months before his violent death, he had publicly forgiven the perpetrators of a previous vicious attack. ■

## Chapter IV

# BUILDING AND SECURING PEACE

It was obvious from the beginning that this would be a special moment in the history of the United Nations. In October 2000, the UN Security Council invited a few women to its session—women who had something to say about war and peace. The members of the public observing the proceedings, too, included an unusual number of women. On October 31, after a lengthy discussion, the Council passed a resolution that immediately entered the history books: Resolution 1325.

It had taken fifty-five years for the New York headquarters of the United Nations to make official what is actually self-evident: that war is not a matter limited to men, but affects both genders, if in different ways and to different degrees. The fact that the Security Council at last agreed to look at war through women's eyes can be attributed to two developments, the war in former Yugoslavia and the new women's movement, which has drawn attention to the existence of formal rights for women and the richness of women's potential contribution. The platform for action resolved at the World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 had dedicated a whole section to women and security, and at the UN headquarters committed women, peace activists, UN staff, and diplomats from several countries had all helped pave the way for this milestone decision.

Looking back today, the concern expressed in Resolution 1325 that "civilians, particularly women and children, account for the vast majority of those adversely affected by armed conflict [...] and increasingly are targeted by combatants and armed elements" seems very understated, given that the world has now seen sexualized violence being deployed in conflict after conflict, and that the calculated cruelty against women and girls appears to know no bounds. Reports from the Eastern Congo, where women are being sexually tortured in front of their children and husbands, are only the most recent of many examples.

In June 2008, the Security Council drew the logical conclusion from these developments and passed a separate, significantly more strongly worded resolution on sexual violence in armed conflict (UNSCR 1820), which was adopted unanimously. The new resolution notes that "civilians account for the vast majority of

those adversely affected by armed conflict; that women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instill fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group, and that sexual violence perpetrated in this manner may in some instances persist after the cessation of hostilities."

During the debate, the Dutch Major General Patrick Cammaert, at the time the commander of the UN's MONUC mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, summarized his thirty-nine years of professional experience thus: "It has probably become more dangerous to be a woman than a soldier in armed conflicts." That was an unusually stark judgment by the standards of international diplomacy. The perpetrators must not continue to go unpunished. The Council stresses that crimes of sexual violence must be excluded from amnesty agreements, and calls on the member states to fulfill their obligations in prosecuting the criminals. This resolution, like UNSCR 1325, was immediately described as "historic" because of its strong, unambiguous message.

Even so, the milestone remains 1325. That resolution does not limit itself to the protection of victims and the punishment of perpetrators; it does not see women only in the eye of the storm, but also aims to make a place for them at the negotiating table and in post-conflict society. ■

## IV. 1

# BRINGING WOMEN TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE!

If October 31, 2000, in New York saw something resolved that might just change the world, barely anyone in Germany noticed the event. The fact that there is now a debate and a movement concerned with Resolution 1325 can be put down to the work of committed women all over the world. They are the ones who made the Resolution known to a broader public and put pressure on governments to finally give life and substance to the internationally binding agreement on a national level. In Germany, the Gunda Werner Institute for Feminism and Gender Democracy, part of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, is working with the German "Women's Security Council" – a coalition of feminist peace activists – to push for the German government to pass an action plan on Resolution 1325.

The book "Roadmap 1325" describes the political impact that coalitions of women can achieve with plentiful volunteer energy and commitment but (unlike lobby groups) very little funding. Far more than most UN Security Council resolutions, 1325 is gradually becoming widely known at the grassroots level, especially among women in conflict and war zones. Maha Abu-Dayyeh Shamas of the Foundation's partner organization Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling in Ramallah observes that even Palestinian women, who normally do not have a good word to say about the UN Security Council, are discussing the Resolution and putting their hopes in its efficacy. In northern Nigeria, Resolution 1325 has been translated into Hausa. Nigerian women are hoping that this kind of backing from distant New York will help them intensify their efforts to get local powers to accept women's participation in peace initiatives.

In 2010, Resolution 1325 will celebrate its tenth anniversary. That is an opportunity to take stock across the world and push even harder for governments to implement the resolution's objectives. And none too soon, for foreign and security policy remains a male domain; even actors in conflict prevention and conflict resolution still seem to think they can get by without a gender perspective and without the direct participation of women in the search for solutions. That is a grave error, as is shown by countless cases of failed conflict management across the world. Gender politics makes a difference everywhere, and that includes in war and peace. ■

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## ISRAEL What if...

There are moments when something special is achieved. In Israel, that was the case in June 2005, when Amendment 4 to the Equal Representation of Women Law (1951) was passed. A coalition of feminist organizations had prepared the ground for that day with care and perseverance.

The new law was inspired by the UN Security Council's Resolution 1325, but it goes further than the 2000 resolution's general call for women to be involved in issues relating to war and peace: it aims to ensure that women from Israel's different ethnic, religious, and social groups can participate in these processes with all the associated responsibility.

The change this amendment could potentially achieve was outlined by the members of Itach ("We with you") in the form of questions: "What would the world be like if women led peace talks and resolved conflicts between nations with opposing interests? And if they were the ones to make decisions about life after a national trauma? How would the socio-economic rifts between the various groups in Israeli society be addressed if women from all social groups were invited to draw up models for the best possible policies? What would change in the relationships between Israel's different groups if Jewish, Muslim, and Christian women worked together on decisions for the country as a whole?"



Dove of peace in Acre, northern Israel

But the carefully thought-out provisions, along with their revolutionary potential, appear to have been quickly relegated to the back of the filing cabinet. In 2007, Itach, an association of women lawyers for social justice, decided to change that. Their project "Women's Voices–Women's Impact" aims to embed gender mainstreaming and diversity firmly into the government's work around conflict and security. The women of Itach, founded in 2001, have made contact with the authorities responsible for the promotion of women and presented a report to the relevant parliamentary committee. Together with other organizations, they presented a petition to the Supreme Court protesting the decision not to include any Bedouin women in a commission that was set up to make recommendations on the treatment of Bedouin settlements in the Negev region. The court showed some sympathy for this concern, and signaled its agreement, but the petition was not accepted because the commission's work was already too far advanced.

The women of Itach held talks with the directors of six government departments on the obligations that arise from the new law. In late December 2008, again in cooperation with other women's organizations, they then turned to the United Nations Security Council, calling on the UN to ensure that Israel fulfill its Resolution 1325 obligations – in view of the political situation, the matter was urgent.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation is the only organization supporting the groundbreaking step initiated by the Itach lawyers. "We are hugely impressed by these women's serious and professional approach to their work," says Romy Shapira of the Tel Aviv office, "and the issue is anyway close to the Heinrich Böll Foundation's heart."

[www.itach.org.il](http://www.itach.org.il)



Women are not allowed to ride in a taxi with strange men

## NIGERIA

### Operation Peace

Year after year, conflicts in northern Nigeria escalate so badly that television images across the world show burning homes, roadblocks, and dead bodies. In the hope of preventing such images from recurring, the Gender Awareness Trust (GAT), an organization founded in 1990 and based in Kaduna and Abuja, drew on support from the Heinrich Böll Foundation to offer twenty-four women (half of them Muslim, the other half Christian) training in peacebuilding over 2007 and 2008.

The graduates of that course, in pairs, then carried out training sessions themselves in twelve local districts of the federal state of Kaduna. The sessions attracted a total of 270 participants, 47% of them women. An accompanying, easy-to-understand brochure on UN Resolution 1325 was published in Hausa and Pidgin English. GAT's experiences in Kaduna echo those of other women around the world: women who have played a calming and mediating role during and after conflicts are later barred from coming to the table of peace negotiations. GAT therefore decided to begin by getting more women into the existing arenas and initiatives for peaceful coexistence.

That is difficult work, because the men responsible for "peace and order" have very particular notions of peacebuilding. Most of the federal states in northeastern Nigeria have established interreligious committees: as GAT sees it, this involves one man—the governor—appointing other men. On the streets, men drive around in police cars. In the state of Kaduna they wear uniforms with the slogan "Operation Yaki" – "Operation War."

The women of GAT refuse to be intimidated by the police sirens, and they continue their peace work on the ground. Progress may be slow, but these women are tenacious.

#### Further reading:

"UNDERSTANDING UN SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325 ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY: PREVENTIVE PEACEBUILDING PROJECT FOR COMMUNITY WOMEN," Gender Awareness Trust, 2008

[www.getaware.org](http://www.getaware.org)

## CAUCASUS

### Bus No. 1325

For the male-dominated societies of the Caucasus region, integrating gender aspects into the analysis and management of

conflicts is something new. The training program for mediators co-funded and organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, "Omnibus 1325," aims to sensitize and train women and men for the task. At the core of the project are qualification courses in the Caucasus and in Germany: basic courses (held in 2006/2007), advanced courses (held in 2007), and a seminar and study visit to Germany (2008). Whereas the basic courses mainly address the substantive connections between gender, culture, and conflict, modules in the advanced course deal with the methodology, standpoints, and attitudes of trainers themselves.

The three basic courses were attended by sixty-six people, mainly women. Their journey on "Bus No. 1325" began with a ten-day seminar for the South Caucasus in the remote mountain town of Bakuriani, Georgia. The participants from the North Caucasus met up in two stages, first in Novocheerkassk, the capital of the Don Cossacks, and later in Sochi on the Black Sea. The north-south dialogue across the Caucasus mountains was provided by an Armenian. In May 2007, ten people each from the North and the South Caucasus came to the third basic course, held in Trabzon on the Turkish Black Sea coast. That location was chosen because the deep lines of tension dividing the Caucasus region would have made a meeting within the Caucasus itself very difficult to organize.

For some of the participants, the experience of the course provoked a profound personal transformation. Until then, they said at the close, they had given little thought to the gender traditionalism of their societies, assuming it was impossible to change.

The follow-up meetings, "Making Peace Visible," held in September 2007 in Rostov on Don and in Tbilisi, reunited almost all the participants of the previous courses. Each group also had the chance to exchange experiences and ideas with five graduates of the German training. For three days, they studied together, discussing their own difficulties and examples of best practice from the South Caucasus and Germany within a supportive circle of colleagues. The high point of the meetings in Tbilisi was the evening event with the group Women in Black of Belgrade. The feminist and pacifist convictions of the Belgrade women sparked off animated discussion among the participants—who come from societies where ancient stereotypes of the "enemy" go largely unquestioned—about their own self-image and assumptions.

The advanced course held in Istanbul in November 2007 was attended by twenty graduates of the basic courses, ten each from the South and North Caucasus. During the modules, they worked out their own thematic units and piloted these within and outside the course with other groups.

In October 2008, a meeting was held in Germany that brought together the members of the Caucasian and German "Omnibus" courses. One participant, from Azerbaijan, was struck by the Germans' feeling of shame over fascism: "In our country you don't see that—we are not ashamed of the past. Instead we try to justify it." Participants in the four-day seminar met with representatives of peace and human rights organizations from Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Cuba, Colombia, and Nicaragua. It was the first step in a dialogue addressing the practice of gender-conscious work for peace and human rights.

At the end of the three years, an international pool of experts has formed, which offers gender-related training and consultancy within nonviolent, constructive conflict management and peacebuilding. There is easily enough energy here to fuel the omnibus on its continued journey.

The experiences gained from the educational work of the mobile peace academy "Omnibus 1325" in the Caucasus and Germany formed the basis of a handbook, published in late 2008, on "Gender in Peacebuilding—Educational Ideas and Experienc-

es." The handbook is available in German and Russian from the association OWEN e.V.

[www.omnibus1325.de](http://www.omnibus1325.de)

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CROATIA

**High-level, long-term, and fully networked**

Women's libraries and documentation centers are an integral part of any women's movement. They collect data on women's issues, conserve the history of the women's organizations, and support women's political activism. Often enough, they also provide the basis for local, national, and international feminist networking.

Since 1992, autonomous women's documentation centers have also been arising in the postcommunist countries, and one of the first was the Ženska Infoteka in Zagreb, Croatia. It was founded by the historian and archeologist Durda Knezevic, who was active in feminist politics even in socialist Yugoslavia through the organization "Woman and Society."

Ženska Infoteka collects and disseminates information, maintains a reference library, publishes books and a journal, organizes seminars and international conferences, supports research work, and carries out its own research studies. The library contains almost 4,000 books and 800 periodicals. The center's own journal, "Bread and Roses," has already published thirty-two issues, each of which has a thematic focus as well as reporting on the Croatian women's scene. Alongside this, Ženska Infoteka publishes books by Croatian authors and translations of foreign feminist literature, whether classics or new publications.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation supports the annual international "Women and Politics" seminars that Ženska Infoteka has been organizing since 1996. The seminars are attended by twenty-five to thirty women at the Inter-University Centre in Dubrovnik, a renowned institute for postgraduate studies. "Right close to the city's historical center, women living in Croatia meet up with participants from other parts of the world to discuss the conflicts in Latin America and Asia. This gives Croatia a chance to take part in international debates." Vedran Horvat, director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's office in Croatia, sees this as a benefit for his country.

[www.zinfo.hr](http://www.zinfo.hr)

## IV.2

## DEALING WITH THE PAST

Even when a society liberates itself from a dictatorship or emerges from a war or conflict, a shadow of the repressive past will still hang over the country for many years, influencing politics and culture. Despite their different experiences, all these countries share the need for a conscious process of working through the era of despotism, oppression, and violence—one that, especially, allows the victims to claim their right to remembrance and restitution. The truth has to come to light; it must not be locked away or reconciliation will be impossible. Since its very beginnings, the Heinrich Böll Foundation has made it a special task to support initiatives that enable society to process the experience of dictatorship and reach some degree of justice. ■

## RUSSIA

**Women's memory  
(working with "Memorial")**

Russian archives have never really been freely accessible for researchers. Although many archives, even that of the KGB, were opened after the fall of the Soviet Union, large gaps remained everywhere, and state secretiveness led to concerted attempts to impede access. When Putin became president in 2000, the doors of the archives anyway slammed shut. Increasingly, it is a matter of good luck and good connections (usually a combination of both) when a little treasure of a file suddenly emerges from the mostly gray and concrete basement archives. That was the case for the project "Women's Memory." In 2001 the Kazakhstan group Memorial acquired the files on more than 8,000 women who had been sent to a dedicated camp near Akmolinsk in the Kazakh Steppes during the Great Terror of 1937–38 for eight or more years, convicted of being the "wives of enemies of the people." With the support of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Memorial turned the files into a long-term project that is still continuing today.

*THE CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND  
WERE OFTEN PUT INTO SPECIAL  
CHILDREN'S HOMES TO  
ALIENATE THEM SYSTEMATICALLY  
FROM THEIR PARENTS AND RE-EDUCATE  
THEM.*

The destinies and the suffering of women in the Gulag had previously been recorded only in biographies, with very little scholarly attention. Compared to the men, these women were

few, but in absolute terms they numbered several hundred thousand. Researchers knew even less about the millions of women who waited at home – often subjected to daily harassment and discrimination and often in vain – for their husbands to return from the Gulag. Little was known, either, about the fates of the children of such unhappy parents.

The project began with a simple book of commemoration. In 2003, Memorial published a thick, silver-colored volume with the title "Prisoners of the ALZhIR." ALZhIR is a typical Soviet Gulag acronym, and stands for "Akmolinsk camp for the wives of public enemies." The book is an unadorned collection of the short biographies—just a few lines each—of more than 8,000 women.

The book attracted far more attention than its authors had expected. In particular, many children (especially daughters) of the imprisoned women contacted Memorial, as did a small number of survivors themselves. The book clearly touched a very sore point, and the historians of Memorial quickly saw both their moral duty and their scholarly opportunity: this was the first historical project to highlight the specific position of women who endured state repression under the totalitarian Soviet Union. Since 2004, members of Memorial have been recording interviews with women who were either in the camps themselves or lived in constant fear of their husbands, fathers, or mothers being taken. The children left behind were often put into special children's homes in order to alienate them systematically from their parents and to re-educate them as "true Soviet citizens." The stories told by the imprisoned women often include attempts, usually tragically unsuccessful, to find their children again after their release.

By the end of 2008, Memorial had recorded, transcribed, and analyzed a total of nearly 350 interviews with these women and their children. For 2009, the plan is to make the interviews, with an extensive commentary, publicly accessible via the Internet—of course, anonymized and only with the express permission of the interviewee. Even today, more people are being found by Memorial or contacting its members to narrate their experiences, and the interviews continue. Memorial has created a set of PowerPoint presentations that are used especially at regional conferences of history teachers and in the school history competition "People in history: Russia in the 20th century." The project has been expanded, and is now entitled "Family memory."

[www.memo.ru](http://www.memo.ru)

## SERBIA

**Still on the streets of Belgrade**

Dressed in black, and silent. That's how they have stood every Wednesday since October 9, 1991, on the Serbian capital's streets and squares: the Women in Black of Belgrade. During the war, their protests showed the world that the government was not acting in their name. However, while the end of the Balkan war may have silenced the guns, it did not resolve the conflicts or do away with the fear—which is why the women still stand there regularly once a week. They are protesting the way the past has been silenced, repressed, and reinterpreted; they demand that those responsible be put on trial.

The feminism of the Women in Black is one that aims for radical transformation. It is anti-nationalist, anti-militarist, and anti-fundamentalist; it attacks homophobia and calls for international solidarity and a different form of globalization. Through all kinds of events, training courses, and an extensive spectrum of publications, Women in Black campaign within Serbia and, through their strong international networks, also far beyond its borders, against patriarchal structures and everything that protects and supports those structures. Through its cooperation with



Demonstration by the Women in Black

feminist initiatives in the other countries of Southeastern Europe, the group has for many years acted as a bridge across the former frontlines.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation has been associated with Women in Black for a long time, and has been one of WiB's most important foreign partners and donors since the early 1990s. In 2007, the Foundation supported the project "Fundamentalism today: democratic and feminist responses." The project's events in Serbia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina were well attended, and the accompanying book was an even greater success: it had to be reprinted in 2008. In the context of the dispute over increasing clericalization and the controversial new law on church and religion of 2006, Women in Black joined with other civil society groups to form the Coalition for the Secular State. The women were alarmed by the growing influence of the Serbian Orthodox Church, the calls for a ban on abortion, and the propaganda for a pro-natalist policy. In 2008, they made secularization and women one of their key themes. "We want democracy, not theocracy," was the campaign's slogan. This work is a logical continuation of the women's commitment during the war years in the 1990s—against ethnic violence, nationalism, and the militarization of state and society.

"I am here for the sake of our shared future," said Kada Hotić at the opening of "Srebrenica—memory for the future." The vice-president of Mothers of Srebrenica and Zepa, who herself lost many family members in the Srebrenica genocide, Kada had come to Belgrade for the opening of the exhibition, organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Women in Black in Belgrade have long been campaigning for a far-reaching confrontation with the past—one that is individual, collective, moral, and political. In

2005 they began specifically to address the gender dimension of efforts to think through the past. Their training courses gave acknowledgement to women's resistance and tried to channel the feelings of bitterness, powerlessness, and guilt into constructive forms of political commitment. Looking to the future, women's crucial role in building a culture of peace was highlighted and a feminist ethics proposed: a stance of resistance to patriarchy and advocacy for others. After the courses, the women used the blueprints and contextual knowledge they had gained to set up workshops all over the country; a total of 200 women attended. In 2009, with support from the Heinrich Böll Foundation, a sixty-minute documentary film was made, applying a feminist perspective to the topic of dealing with the past. *We leave traces* is the working title, and the film will also thematize the diverse artistic commitment of Women in Black and the aesthetics of resistance.

[www.zeneucnom.org](http://www.zeneucnom.org)

"IN ISRAEL THERE ARE MANY  
GROUPS CAMPAIGNING FOR  
WOMEN'S RIGHTS. IN A SOCIETY  
WHERE BOTH THE JEWISH MAJOR-  
ITY AND THE PALESTINIAN MINOR-  
ITY ARE STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY  
PATRIARCHY AND MILITARISM, THIS  
IS TOUGH WORK AND A GREAT  
CHALLENGE."

## **Romy Shapira**



Romy Shapira is always full of surprises. For a while now she has been taking lessons to obtain a truck driver's license. Although she is delicate and petite, she is a whirlwind of energy and ideas. In the evenings she finds time to play the flute and practice yoga.

At work in the Heinrich Böll Foundation's Tel Aviv office, too, Shapira is always open to new ideas. A fluent speaker of Hebrew and English, she takes an interest in German expressions. The humorous slang she learns sometimes surprises her German-speaking colleagues when she uses it to spice up their normally English-language conversations.

Shapira has been part of the Tel Aviv team since 2008. She brought not only the necessary skills and knowledge, but also her excellent contacts, to the post of gender project coordinator at the Foundation. A graduate of economics, sociology, and anthropology at the universities of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, she has been working for many years in a range of groups committed to action for social justice.

Shapira plays an active part in women's organizations that continue, despite the adverse conditions, to nurture communication and cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians. This includes the group Bat Shalom and the International Women's Commission for a Just and Sustainable Israeli-Palestinian Peace. Shapira regularly gives lectures on human rights issues, especially in connection with the rights of migrant workers and the problem of trafficking in women.

Shapira defines herself as a feminist, and she has a wide-ranging, sophisticated understanding of feminism. She rejects attempts to reduce feminism to the issue of women's rights or to day-to-day questions of whether women are represented in a particular panel discussion or not. For us all to achieve gender democracy, she believes, men too must be integrated and challenged.

In Israel there are numerous feminist groups campaigning for women's rights. In a society where both the Jewish majority and the Palestinian minority are strongly influenced by patriarchy and militarism, this is tough work and a great challenge. ■

## **Appendix**

# GUNDA WERNER INSTITUTE FOR FEMINISM AND GENDER DEMOCRACY

The Gunda Werner Institute (GWI) within the Heinrich Böll Foundation is a special place where themes related to the politics of gender are bundled and the debate on feminism and gender democracy is actively pursued and promoted.

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### THE INSTITUTE'S NAMESAKE

#### **Gunda Werner (1951–2000)**

The Institute's namesake, Gunda Werner, was a tough-minded feminist and a pioneer of the concept of gender democracy. As a lesbian intellectual, she wanted to explore innovative approaches, drawing feminist analyses and strategies into a new dynamic of tension with the assumptions of gender democracy.

From 1996 onward, Gunda Werner (1951–2000) was instrumental in developing the concept of the common task of gender democracy, an innovative starting point within the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

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### TASKS AND GOALS

- To proactively draw gender themes onto the political agenda
- To critically reflect on feminist and gender-democratic approaches
- To implement women's rights and participation, promoting and supporting the formation of networks
- To enable dialogue between academia, politics, and civil society
- To enhance gender expertise through consultancy services

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### STRATEGY

- To advance feminist theory and practice and to set feminist agendas
- To expand gender expertise and strengthen emancipatory networks
- To promote equal opportunities policies and gender mainstreaming

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## KEY AREAS OF WORK

### Joining forces

Gender politics and feminist analyses and strategies hold a firm position in the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Gender policy is one of the Foundation's hallmarks, and gender democracy is a central component of its mission. That mission is consistently pursued within the Foundation's political education work, organizational structures, and research promotion.

### Thinking toward the future

The GWI works for the social emancipation and equal rights of women and men in all areas of society. To this end, we apply a consistent gender perspective to our analysis of blueprints for political action and reflection on social theories and discourses. The GWI takes up controversial debates both within Germany and in the European context. Conferences and workshops, an Internet portal, and print publications serve as a forum for exchanging ideas and imparting knowledge.

Women from Green and other groups working on women's political issues—a mixture of generations and cultural backgrounds—meet regularly at the "Green Ladies' Lunch" in Berlin to discuss topical gender-policy themes.

The "Forum Men in Theory and Practice of Gender Relations" is a nationwide network of men from men's and gender studies, men's education and counseling, and politics, especially in the area of men's issues. The GWI supports the forum in a coordinating capacity, contributing organizational, financial, and intellectual resources. The documentation of the conference "An invitation from men: gender dialogues" can be found at

[www.gwi-boell.de/de/web/361\\_1115.htm](http://www.gwi-boell.de/de/web/361_1115.htm)

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## NETWORKING AND SENSITIZING

### Example: peace and security policy

For the most part, international peace and security policy lacks a gender perspective. We aim to counteract this gender-blindness by sensitizing the agents involved and bringing about political change. It is our objective to create strong connections linking gender justice with conflict prevention and post-conflict work. Together with feminist networks, we work for implementation of UN Resolution 1325: the resolution demands that women take a full part in decision-making in war and peace treaties. More on this topic can be found in the book "Roadmap 1325."

[www.gwi-boell.de/de/web/361\\_1307.htm](http://www.gwi-boell.de/de/web/361_1307.htm)

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## EVALUATING STRATEGIES

### Example: gender policies in Europe

The GWI searches out those political models across Europe that promise to further gender justice, and assesses whether they can be transferred to the political contexts of Germany and the European Union. The Institute carefully examines models that seem to be fruitful in feminist and gender-political terms, and presents positive examples of work toward new strategies in an EU policy context. It presents, documents, and discusses new models and the experiences gained in implementing them.

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## ANALYZING WIDER CONTEXTS

### Example: self-determined lives

Social security systems are key to a gender-democratic society: equal gender relations can only be achieved when women and men are able to secure their own existence independently. Through discussions with experts, workshops, and dossiers, the GWI spearheads the debate on topics such as basic social insur-

ance and basic income, pensions and tax policy, and the criteria for gender-equitable life prospects. Our goal is to stimulate the creation of models that enable the participation of all genders on an equal basis.

One example of this work is the brochure "New thinking on social security: the unconditional basic income and needs-oriented security from a feminist viewpoint" (in German).

[www.gwi-boell.de/de/web/361\\_1114.htm](http://www.gwi-boell.de/de/web/361_1114.htm)

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## BUILDING EXPERTISE

### Example: gender consultancy and training

The sustainable, broad-based integration of feminist and gender-democratic practice into politics and organizations will only be possible if sufficient knowledge and expertise on gender is available to support the process. The GWI makes a long-term contribution to that goal by providing training and consultancy, in cooperation with the training academy "Green Campus," and through gender-related consultancy and qualification within the Heinrich Böll Foundation itself.

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## OPENING UP PERSPECTIVES

### Example: knowledge portal

The GWI's Internet portal [www.gunda-werner-institut.de](http://www.gunda-werner-institut.de) (in German) makes available a unique range of feminist and gender-political information. The portal provides communication and networking opportunities in a range of innovative forms, giving broad publicity to new insights, research findings, and campaigns. The knowledge portal narrows the "digital divide"—the division between genders and regions in terms of their access to information.

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## PUBLICATIONS

### Roadmap to 1325: Strategy for gender-sensitive peace and security policies

With contributions by Sanam Naraghi Anderlini, Andreas Zurcher, Karen Barnes, Lynne Christine Alice, Mariam Notten, Ute Scheub and others. Edited by the Gunda Werner Institute for Feminism and Gender Democracy in the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.

Verlag Barbara Budrich, Leverkusen/Farmington Hills 2010, 224 pages, 22 €. ISBN 978-3-86649-311-7

### Human Security = Women's Security?

#### No sustainable security without a gender perspective

Documentation of a conference. With contributions by Elmar Altvater, Claudia von Braunmühl, Tobias Debiel, Ilse Lenz, Vivian Taylor, Cornelia Ulbert and others.

Series of the Gunda-Werner-Institute for Feminism and Gender Democracy in the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, Volume 2 English/German. Berlin, December 2007, 224 pages. ISBN 978-3-927760-74-5. Price: free

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All over the world, gender relations are changing. Economic and cultural upheavals are giving rise to ever new ways of life and work. When those changes benefit women, that is usually due to the work of feminist networks, small and larger-scale gender-oriented organizations, and courageous individuals. They resist their social and political exclusion, the impoverishment of their lives, oppression, and violence. Sexual minorities, too, are defending themselves against oppression and discrimination, seeking allies all over the world. More and more men are also committing themselves to a gender-sensitive politics. But the new dynamics of gender have also mobilized counterforces that defend the old roles and privileges, often citing tradition and religion. Although we can look back on great progress compared with the situation of women a century ago, the power imbalance that benefits men still persists to a great degree. And yet it has been clear for a very long time that politics requires a consistent gender perspective integrated into all domains – whether the economy, security, or the environment. Politics can only succeed when it is inclusive of all genders. Gender justice is an ambitious goal, one that the Heinrich Böll Foundation is pursuing together with many different allies worldwide. This publication gives an overview of their work.