You Can Eliminate **Discrimination** Against Women

NOVEMBER 2024



Photo by Gayatri Malhotra on Unsplash

You Can Eliminate Discrimination Against Women!



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Lecturer of the GCED Course "You Can Eliminate Discrimination Against Women"

Ivy Josiah

Co-founder, Women's Aid Organisation

A fearless activist who is known for her efforts in championing equality and justice for women



Ivy Josiah is a prominent **women's rights activist** who is integral in helping establish the Women's Aid Organisation, the first shelter in Malaysia for survivors of domestic violence. As its former president and executive director, she was responsible for developing and implementing the types of services provided at the free shelter, from crisis support, counselling, to child care centre.

She is also credited for **raising significant awareness about domestic violence**, educating the public on the subject and successfully advocating for legal and policy reform to protect abused women and combat violence against women.

Currently, Ivy is teamed up with leaders from 14 women's organisations, spearheading **Malaysia's first Women Tribunal**, which aims to provide an alternative form of justice and advocacy for women's human rights and gender equality in the country. The tribunal, which will give a voice to women affected by gender discrimination and gather their testimonies, aims to offer recommendations to effect change.

She is **the lecturer of GCED Course**: "You Can Eliminate Discrimination Against Women", held in October and November 2024. This course, supported by **the GCED Online Campus** and **the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) under UNESCO**, empowers women from all walks of life to understand and combat gender discrimination. It focuses on feminist activism, the UN's CEDAW, and violence against women through interactive lectures, collaborative projects, and personalized action plans.

Explore more free GCED courses: **https://www.gcedonlinecampus.org/.**

MAGAZINE TEAM

Editor

Vanessa Boas-Moser

Austria



A passionate linguist and political scientist, Vanessa Boas-Moser has become a woman's rights activists since her pregnancy. Currently on maternity leave, she worked as a Project Officer at the **International Institute of Applied Systems Analysis** prior to the birth of her daughter. She has a rich background in project management, having overseen environmental projects in the Caucasus and across Europe. She holds a **PhD in European Studies** with a special focus on the European Union's aid relationship with Central Asia.

Designers



Ndamononghenda Rimbandunghila Shiimi

Namibia

She is a **Civil Society Activist** who has worked on HIV/AIDS programs from 2006 to 2008 as a TCE Field Officer in Oshikoto and Oshana Region, Namibia. Now **Founder/Director of Small Step Boy Child Foundation.** From 2008 to 2011 she worked as Receptionist and Rapid Tester for Catholic Health Services stationed at Oshikuku Hospital under Intrahealth. From 2011 to 2014, she worked at Oshakati Intermediate Hospital CDC Clinic under Global Fund as Data Clerk.



Danfeng Zhu

China

She is an **MSc student in Sustainability** at the United Nations University (UNU-IAS), with focus on climate change and gender equality. She has supported the UNESCO ESD-Net 2023 Global Conference and contributed to a biodiversity initiative under the UNDP Global Programme on Nature for Development. Danfeng is also a formal member of YOUNGO, a 2024 **World Bank Youth Summit delegate** and UPG Sustainability Leader.



Fatmah Suleyman Mirambo

Tanzania

She is a dedicated **advocate for digital inclusion**, focused on empowering young women through digital skills and leadership training. As a **human rights activist**, her work is rooted in a commitment to gender equality and creating inclusive spaces where young women can thrive. She strives to build a network of empowered youth who are capable of using digital tools to lead, innovate, and drive positive change within their communities.

This magazine represents the collective work of all participants of the GCED course entitled "You Can Eliminate Discrimination Against Women," which took place from October to November 2024.

Article 01

A Short Speech on "You Can Eliminate Discrimination Against Women "

by Yogeeta Mandhwani (Pakistan)



I am here to talk about a very severe issue that affects plenty of people all around the world, that is discrimination against women. Although there has been a lot of advancement in recent years, there is still a long way to go in the fight for gender parity.

It is crucial to acknowledge that discrimination against women is a systemic issue that stems from deeply rooted societal biases and assumptions, rather than just a personal one. It can show up as harassment and aggression, as well as unequal compensation and little possibilities. We must confront these damaging stereotypes and seek to create a society that is more just and equal if we are to really end discrimination.

The promotion of gender equality is greatly aided by education. By encouraging gender-inclusive education and dispelling damaging preconceptions, we may give the next generation the resources they need to create a more diverse society. Modifying policies is also necessary to remove structural impediments that support prejudice. We can level the playing field for everyone if we support equitable opportunities in work, school, and healthcare.

Let's pledge to work toward a time when discrimination no longer prevents women from realizing their full potential. Together, we can create a future in which gender equality is reality rather than simply a pipe dream.

Article 02

Breaking the Silence

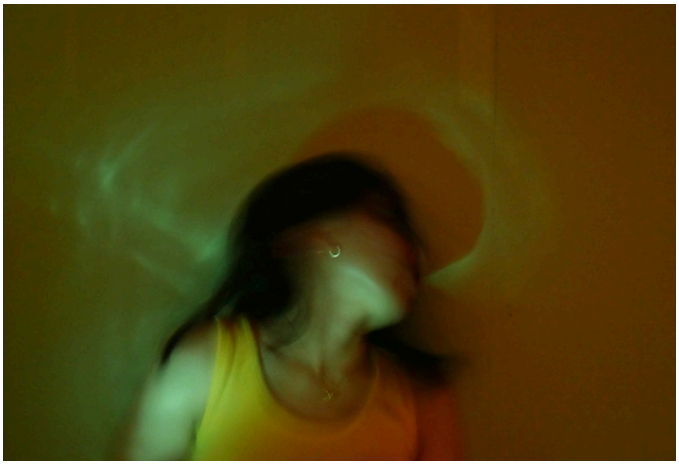
by Agustina Siahaan (Indonesia)

A tremble in her voice, bruises on her skin,
fear in her eyes, sorrow deep within.

She digs a grave inside her soul,
to bury the humiliation, the abuse untold.
She fears the family's and community's gaze,
that would spotlight her,
saying, "It's your mistake."
"Behave more, do more," they demand,
a checklist to be a great wife, a great mother,
at hand.

She screams inside, knowing help won't come,
the family says, "It's private," the police,
"It's family, done."
Her voiceless, tearless cries mean nothing to anyone.

When the night howls, she whispers to herself,
"I should do better, behave more ladylike,
It's my mistake, I deserve this agony."





In restless sleep,
her mother and daughter appear,
Their voices creaky, yet clear,
"It's not your mistake, you don't deserve this fear."

The day dawns, the heat rises,
She walks into a room of uniformed faces,
of lowly gazes, she screams aloud,
"I need help, I am hurt,
I don't deserve this, it's not my fault."

The grave starts to crumble,
the silence finally breaks,
For now, she knows her worth isn't in their gaze,
not in her partner's, the community's,
or the system's maze.

Her strength ignites, her spirit clashes.
She is enough, she knows,
she deserves the world equally,
when the silence breaks, change emerges,
it's coming, surely, steadily.

Article 03

SILENT STRUGGLES

A Girl's Journey in Gilgit Baltistan's Male-Dominated Society



by Shafia Khan (Pakistan)

On a chilly morning in 2002, their mother urges the twins Ainie and Fatima to prepare for Madrasah, their Islamic learning school. Fatima eagerly begins, while Ainie shows some reluctance. Their mother scolds Ainie for her lack of enthusiasm. The twins head to Madrasah at 6 AM in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan, known for its cold climate. Afterward, they go to school. Ainie obediently follows their parents' instructions and attends Taat school, while Fatima rebelliously charts her own course, opting for a newly opened private school where her male cousins study.

In a region where over 30% of girls drop out by age 12, Fatima's struggle highlights a harsh reality. Family pressures compel her father to take drastic action against her desire for co-education, ultimately expelling her after grade three. With a heavy heart, Fatima attends Taat school, determined to catch up with her cousins through hard work. Despite Pakistan's Constitution guaranteeing free and compulsory education (Article 25-A) and international commitments to gender equality (CEDAW), systemic discrimination persists.

Fatima develops a habit of borrowing books and magazines from her male cousins, defying restrictions imposed by even the educated men in her family, who believe reading could "feminize" her. These tensions lead Fatima to contemplate drastic measures, yet her resolve keeps her striving for knowledge. Ultimately, she emerges as a successful and empowered woman within her family.

In Gilgit, only 25% of girls complete secondary education, hindered by geographic isolation and gender bias. In contrast, 45% of boys complete their secondary education in the same region. These statistics underscore the urgent need for equitable educational opportunities for girls like Fatima, who continue to battle systemic inequalities.



Article 04

A SPEECH ON YOU CAN ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

by Chukwudi Tochukwu (Nigeria)

Discrimination against women is not just a dream. I tell you the truth, it is a necessity for a just and equitable society.

Unequal pay, limited opportunities, societal stereotypes, and nutritional discrimination are amongst the various forms discrimination against women manifests itself.

As we all know, knowledge is a very powerful tool. We must educate ourselves and others about gender equality. We can promote a culture of respect and inclusion by raising awareness.

Again, we need to advocate for policy changes that uphold women's rights. Collective action can bring about a significant change so let us put over voices together make a difference.



Finally, we must learn to support women in all areas of life. In the workplace, at home, or in our communities. Recognizing the contributions of women and duly appreciating them are crucial steps towards equality.

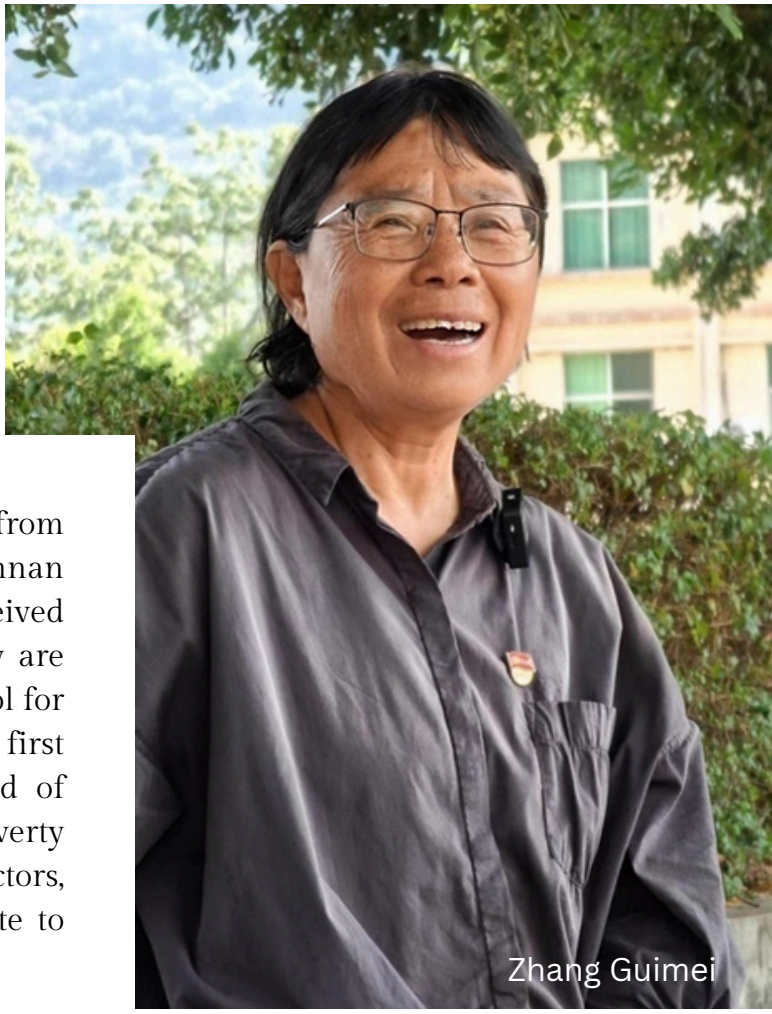
Let us commit ourselves to stand against discrimination in all its forms. Together we can create a beautiful future where a woman is recognized, respected, valued, empowered, heard, free to break barriers and achieve their dreams.

Thank you.

Article 05

13 YEARS, 2000 GIRLS

The Story of First Free High School For Girls In China


Zhang Guimei

> By 2021, more than 2,000 girls from impoverished mountainous regions in Yunnan Province, including 172 orphans, had received an offer to pursue higher education. They are all students of "Lijiang Huaping High School for Girls “, founded by Zhang Guimei, China’s first entirely free high school for girls. Instead of getting married early and staying in poverty forever, these girls become teachers, doctors, soldiers etc., who work hard and contribute to society actively!

In impoverished regions, limited resources often lead families to prioritize boys' education, leaving girls to marry young, perpetuating a cycle of poverty. Determined to change this, Zhang Guimei founded the "Lijiang Huaping High School for Girls" in 2008, China’s first entirely free high school for girls from mountainous areas in Yunnan.

It took five years to build the "Lijiang Huaping High School for Girls" in 2008, focused on offering quality education to girls from impoverished mountainous regions in Yunnan Province. To keep students in school, Zhang Guimei traveled approximately 110,000 kilometers to visit families, to get dropped out students back to school. She continuously persuaded parents, saying, "We don’t charge a penny for high school, and we will also help with university expenses."

Since its founding, Huaping High School for Girls has maintained a 100% pass rate for the college entrance examination for 10 consecutive years. To change the fate of girls in impoverished mountainous areas, she has devoted all her time, energy, money, and even her health. All the children at the school affectionately call her "Mom". Aged 63, Zhang Guimei has not stopped moving forward. She continues on the road, using a cane for support.

Invest in women’s education, change will happen!

by Danfeng Zhu (China)

Article 06

AWAKENING

A poem by Odette Eleda Esteve (Philippines)

A once innocent flower,
Curious and full of potential,
Dancing with the wind, embracing the sun,
Exploring the world like a dream yet to unfold.

So innocent, so carefree, so unaware—
But every bloom must weather its storms.
What began as a tale of beauty and light
Transformed into a haunting paradox.

The flower, once naive, now bears the scars,
Stung by the very bee meant to nurture.
What happened to trust in the garden of grace?
Clueless, it stands, caught in the thorns of betrayal.

Months passed and with the weight of the years,
The flower learned through shadows and fears.
From silence born of a need for peace,
It found its tiny voice, a cry of realization.

Stung before, led to the fears of the present
Hauntingly scary, suffocatingly reminiscent
Of what once innocence,
gone through forever.

Try'n to ride the tides of survival
Flower moves to reach for the sky, bold and wise,
No longer just a petal, but a force that defies.
In the face of the world's unjust decree,
This flower stands strong like a phenomenon.

Surviving, healing, and thriving...
A flower who doesn't want to be tied down.



Photo by Sapan Patel on Unsplash

BREAK THE BIAS TOGETHER WE CAN

by Momeena Mehdi (Pakistan)

Discrimination against women is a daily reality for millions. It begins with the everyday spaces we occupy at home, at school, and in the workplace. This discriminatory behaviour is a deeply embedded mindset. While external forces like laws and policies play a role in eliminating or circumscribing the bias, the real change starts when women stand together and hold each other's back, in their daily lives.

We cannot wait for the world, as it might take decades or centuries to reach a natural equilibrium. From domestic affairs to professional setups, classrooms and communities, our collective actions speak louder than words. At home, we challenge the concept of domestic duties. In offices, we fight for equal pay and competitive roles. In schools and colleges, we resist outdated norms dictating girls' limitations, pushing for equal opportunities in education and extracurriculars.





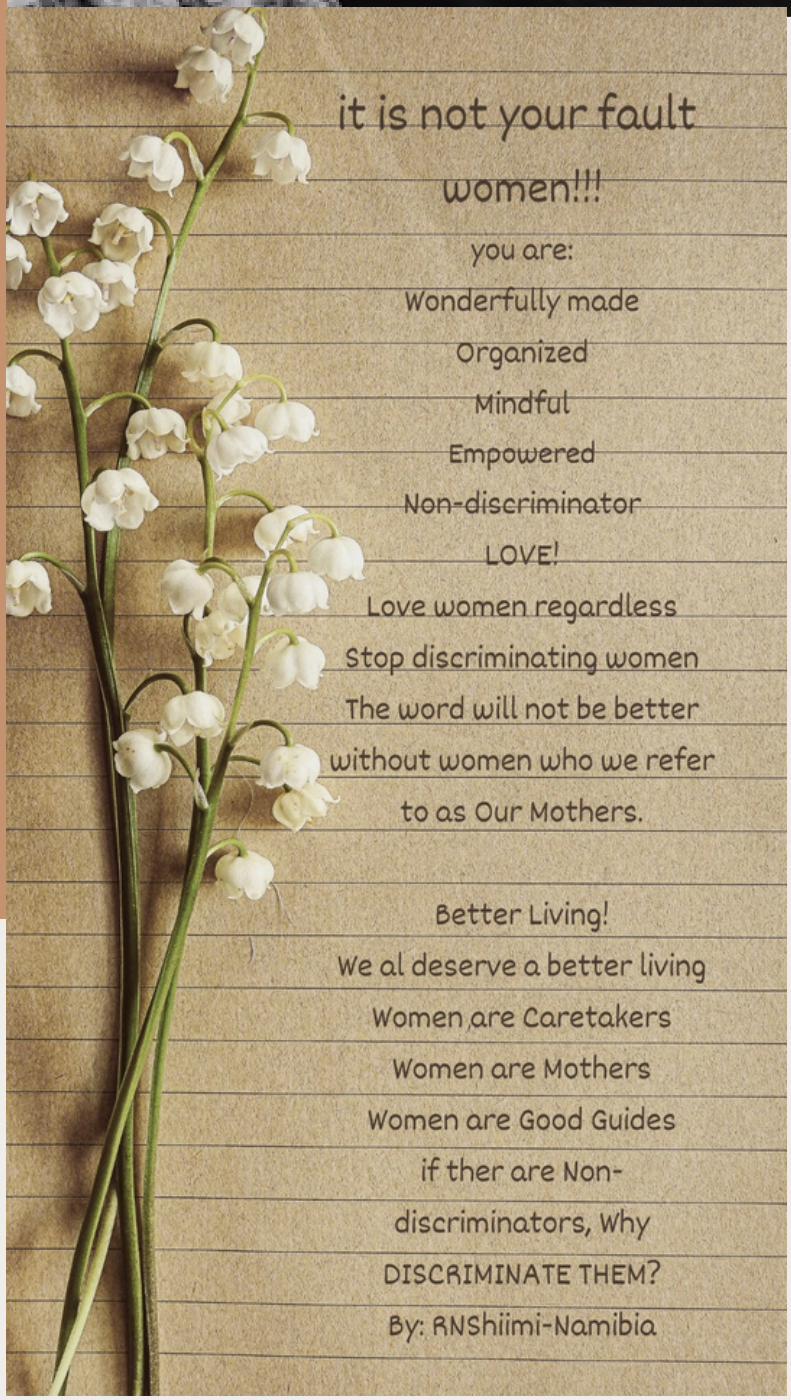
Togetherness creates a ripple effect and a power that cannot be ignored. This resistance isn't one of violence or hate—it's one of unity, solidarity, and resilience. It is about showing the world, especially the generations of women who come after us, that we can not be silenced, divided, or held back by discriminatory practices.

In my opinion, true change happens when women refuse to compete against each other, but instead, stand as one. When we do that, we send a message not just to men, but to our patriarchal societies as a whole. That the days of passive acceptance are over. We are here to rewrite the rules, and we will not stop until the walls of gender inequality have crumbled entirely. Together, we can create a future where gender doesn't determine fate, equality is a given, and women are free to thrive without barriers.

Let's pledge to lift each other and break the biases that attempt to bring us down.






it is not your fault
women!!!
you are:
Wonderfully made
Organized
Mindful
Empowered
Non-discriminator
LOVE!
Love women regardless
Stop discriminating women
The word will not be better
without women who we refer
to as Our Mothers.
Better Living!
We al deserve a better living
Women are Caretakers
Women are Mothers
Women are Good Guides
if ther are Non-
discriminators, Why
DISCRIMINATE THEM?
By: RNShiimi-Namibia

More ways about how to handle Gender Discrimination

- Conduct regular gender sensitivity training for teachers, staff, and students.
- Include gender equality topics in the curriculum.
- Encourage classroom discussions on gender roles and discrimination.
- Implement gender-neutral policies, including dress codes and extracurricular activities.
- Ensure equal participation of girls and boys in all activities.
- Set up a confidential reporting system for gender discrimination.
- Enforce a zero-tolerance policy on gender discrimination.

Quotes:

- **"Gender equality is more than a goal in itself. It is a precondition for meeting the challenge of reducing poverty, promoting sustainable development, and building good governance." – Kofi Annan**
- **“Children must be taught how to think, not what to think." – Margaret Mead**
- **“It's not our differences that divide us. It's our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences." – Audre Lorde**
- **"The most effective way to do it, is to do it." – Amelia Earhart**



BY: MRS. MARISA DG. CAYAO
Philippines

Join the Movement

Take Action

- Volunteer for initiatives that promote women’s rights and gender equity.
- Use social media to raise awareness about gender discrimination and promote campaigns.
- Sign petitions and support legislative changes that address gender discrimination.

Stay Informed

- Follow the social media accounts of activists, organizations, and thought leaders in gender advocacy.
- Stay engaged in academic research by reading studies or journals related to gender discrimination.
- Monitor local and global legislative changes impacting gender equality.
- Participate in community discussions or events that focus on gender-related topics.

ELIMINATING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

in a school setting



Why is it important?

Discrimination in schools impacts student performance, self-esteem, and future opportunities. Promoting gender equality ensures that every student—regardless of gender—has the chance to thrive and succeed.

Here are some practical steps you can take:



1) Promote Gender Equality in the Classroom

Challenge gender stereotypes in lessons and discussions. When teaching or interacting with students, ensure that materials (books, examples, roles) do not reinforce gender biases. For instance, show that both boys and girls can excel in any subject or career.



2) Address Gender-Based Bullying and Harassment

Intervene immediately when you notice sexist comments, jokes, or behaviors. Create an environment where such actions are unacceptable.



3) Role Modeling and Leadership

Set an example by modeling respect and fairness toward all genders in your own behavior. Students are likely to mirror what they observe in adults. Promote women's leadership by supporting and encouraging female students to take on leadership roles in class projects, student government, and extracurricular activities.



4) Encourage Critical Thinking on Gender Issues

Create opportunities for students to discuss and reflect on gender issues. For example, host debates, discussions, or projects on topics like gender stereotypes, women's rights, and equality.





5) Ensure Equal Opportunities in Sports and Extracurriculars

Promote activities that allow students to question traditional gender roles and explore the impact of these roles on society.



6) Collaborate with Parents and Community

Engage with parents and the community to promote gender equality beyond the school. Host awareness events or workshops for parents on the importance of gender equality in education and at home.



FATE OF A WILD-FLOWER

by Kalpani Dambagolla (Sri Lanka)



She was a wildflower, unnoticed, untamed,
in her quiet home, peacefully framed.
No tears to shed, no sorrow to know,
no fear of humans, no violence below.
She was free, with no bounds, no rules to obey,
her spirit untethered, in nature she'd stay,
finding her freedom in the wilds' gentle sway.

But then came a day,
she was noticed, and torn away.
Her home lost, freedom now gone,
Her eyes wept rivers, mourning till dawn.
She feared the hands of men,
and the world's cruel ways,
bound by laws and rules,
she now strays.
Forced to sit by a man unknown,
chained, her legs turned to stone.



She cried to the wind, "Set me free!"
but it whispered back, "Peace is all I can be"
The rain fell soft, a fleeting relief,
but couldn't unbind her unyielding grief.

Now this wildflower rests, forever still,
in the graveyard of a man, against her will
for eternity she lies, unseen, unknown,
in a world not her own, forever alone.

Disclaimer: This poem is solely inspired by my observation of a little white flower in a graveyard. It captures my thoughts and emotions surrounding that moment and is intended to resonate with HER who has gone through similar experiences.

FEMINIST MANIFESTO

by Shokria Muhsini (Afghanistan)

The term "woman" has shifted through history, influenced by societal gender roles. Women have not only survived oppression but have been pivotal in movements for both gender equality and broader social justice, intersecting with other causes like the abolition of slavery. Intersectional feminism highlights how various identities, such as race and class, compound women's challenges. Feminism, as a force for everyone's well-being, includes critiques like Marxist feminism, which sees capitalism as central to women's oppression. A feminist future would promote social and environmental justice for all marginalized groups, especially women.

One area needing reform is the gender gap in STEM. While studying civil engineering at Kabul Polytechnic University, I saw firsthand how societal biases limited women's participation. To dismantle these barriers, I advocate for educational reforms and financial aid to support women in STEM fields. Additionally, engaging community activists and expanding feminist education are crucial steps. Ultimately, I envision a world of respect, dignity, and equal opportunity, where gender and privilege do not dictate one's future.

Jasmin Kaur in her poem says:

Scream
So that one day
A hundred years from now
Another sister will not have to
dry her tears wondering
Where in history
She lost her voice...



From the Shadows to the Spotlight

by Lenirose B. Mondero (Philippines)



In a patriarchal society, where men's voices dominate, there are women who, from the shadows, observe, question, and ultimately drive change. This has been my journey, evolving from silent observer to an advocate for women's rights and empowerment.

Growing up in a rural area with entrenched gender roles, I often wondered why women were not afforded the same opportunities as men. Attending a state university opened my eyes, inspiring me to challenge the status quo and envision a world where women are valued, empowered, and safe.

As a GAD Director, I led initiatives that champion women's health, legal rights, and economic empowerment through education and livelihood programs. Working closely with victims of Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) strengthened my resolve to advocate for change, envisioning a world where women can heal and thrive without fear.

My journey from the shadows to the spotlight demonstrates how one person can create meaningful societal change, inspiring others to stand, speak up, and support one another in the pursuit of equality.



Article 13

Is Celebrating Women's Day Enough?

by Garima Gaur (India)

Every day, the news is filled with stories of crimes against women, yet we continue to celebrate International Women's Day as though it resolves the deeper issues. It feels like we are ridiculing womanhood itself. In a country where we revere Goddess Durga for nine days, keeping fasts and rituals in her honor, the irony is glaring—when it comes to respecting real women, stereotypes persist.

How can we please Goddess Durga for nine days if we ignore her embodiment the rest of the year? Women in our society are still judged on their clothing, speech, and lifestyle. Why can't she make her own choices? Why must a woman always need a male figure to look after her? And if she's divorced, single, or a widow, societal restrictions rain down on her, branding her with titles too harsh to even write.

We claim India is a developing nation, but the condition of women seems worse than in the Vedic era. Those who impose these constraints should remember: in ancient times, women were among the most respected members of society. Women could choose their own husbands, widows could remarry, and girls were given education. There was no rape, domestic violence, or eve-teasing.

If modernization and development have brought us nothing but an increase in rapes, molestation, domestic abuse, and societal restrictions, then I pray to God to bring back the Vedic era. We don't need this version of "progress."

Feminist Advocacy in Irish vs Globally

By Ciara O'Brien (Ireland)

I have advocated for gender equality at a global, European, and national level. My advocacy in each space is different. Here are some key differences that I wish to highlight.

1.My sexuality. In Irish spaces, I commonly open up about the different gender discrimination I have faced and how the gender of my romantic partners has influenced this. Gender discrimination looks different when you're holding hands with a girl.

2.My pronouns. In Irish advocacy, I use she/they pronouns and clarify that these are my pronouns. I use she/her on a global stage. In Ireland, I want to normalise the use of diverse pronouns. I am also most comfortable with these pronouns. Globally, I fear that I will be labelled as radical and dismissed.

3.How personal it is. In Ireland, feminism is not personal to many of its supporters. They have experience of sexist discrimination, but it rarely defines their life. My colleagues in non-European spaces often have very different experiences. They casually tell you about their childhood friends who were married off, among other stories. Their lives are often marked by the discrimination they experience- most often due to reduced educational opportunities. I must be much more careful with my language. I must treat it with the care it deserves.



Photo by Gayatri Malhotra on Unsplash

Advocating for gender equality differs intensely depending on the region. Part of this is the simple fact of what you are advocating for, be it divorce, education, or abortion. Part of it is the expectations of both supporters and opposition. Part of it is the urgency and importance. I seek to match my presentation to suit my audience and adapt to the issue. I never know if I'm getting it right.

GENDER EQUALITY

By Laila Rezay (Afghanistan)

means providing equal opportunities, resources, and rights for women and men. In a world where every individual can achieve their dreams regardless of gender, we will create a fairer, more advanced, and humane society. Gender equality involves breaking down the stereotypes and barriers that have held women and men back from their full potential for centuries. Whenever a woman stands alongside a man in decision-making and social, economic, and cultural participation, it brings forth the power of empathy, creativity, and transformation. By believing in the truth that abilities and talents are not limited to any gender, we can build a better and more just world.





"In hope of global gender equality."

means the equal rights and opportunities for women and men in a society or country. Achieving gender equality requires the establishment and implementation of a set of laws and regulations. Reaching this goal is not only possible but also requires the acceptance of the fundamental principle that both men and women are human beings, and gender should not be a basis for discrimination. Every individual must have equal rights and freedoms.In authoritarian societies, it is essential to raise public awareness about gender equality through various means. When people understand and respect the concept of gender equality, no individual or government can take away this right.





PROVING PURITY

THE HARMFUL PRACTICE OF HYMEN TESTS IN IRAN



by: Atiyeh zeidabadinejad (Iran)

Imagine a young woman, excited about her upcoming marriage, suddenly confronted with a humiliating demand from her fiancé's family: she must undergo a hymen test to prove her virginity. Though humiliated and fearful, she complies, knowing that refusal could lead to the cancellation of her engagement and disgrace for her family.

This distressing situation is not uncommon in Iran, where the cultural obsession with virginity often forces women into undergoing invasive and scientifically baseless hymen examinations. The concept of virginity remains deeply rooted in both cultural and legal frameworks, contributing to harmful practices like hymen tests.

These invasive procedures, conducted to "prove" a woman's virginity, are often demanded by prospective husbands or their families as a prerequisite for marriage. The belief that a woman's worth and honor are tied to her sexual purity perpetuates discrimination and reinforces patriarchal control over women's bodies.

Hymen tests, despite having no scientific validity, continue to be practiced in Iran. They are not legally required but are often conducted due to cultural pressure, particularly in more conservative families. The law does not explicitly prohibit these tests, in some cases, the results are used in legal disputes involving divorce or claims of deception in marriage. Women who fail these tests, regardless of whether their hymen was broken through non-sexual activities, face severe consequences, including the possibility of violence, femicide, and also legal punishments.

This practice reflects broader gender inequality in Iran, where women's autonomy is routinely undermined by cultural and legal systems that prioritize male honor over female dignity. Activists continue to push for change, calling for an end to hymen testing and greater protections for women's rights in the country.



A Woman's Voice

by Kavita Sharma (India)

Rather than being a mere footnote in a book, I represent the core concepts of change and progress. I aspire to embody the unwavering determination of the millions of women who have overcome impossible challenges, created groundbreaking opportunities, and made an everlasting mark on society. As we bear the weight of the world and propel it forward, we are not just carers; we are also architects, plotters, and trailblazers.

Women have always been unsung heroes in every thriving culture. Our efforts were impacting history, from Cleopatra's rule to Ada Lovelace's computer breakthroughs, long before anyone paid notice. Challenging the shadows isn't enough; we must also become the light that dispels them.

In spite of all we have accomplished, there are old prejudices and unfair systems that attempt to downplay our importance. It should be obvious that a society will not go beyond its present condition unless it actively works to improve the status of its women. At the heart of every successful civilisation lies a woman, and at the heart of every revolution there are an endless number of women.

We are inventors, not only carers. Our compassion is important, but so is our courage to lead, to wonder, and to build. Those that play a role in empowering women will have a significant impact on the destiny of their countries.

Welcome us. Honor us. When it happens, the whole extent of human potential will become apparent.

LANGUAGE AND GENDER DISCRIMINATION: THE POWER OF WORDS

BY KHOHINUR AKHTER (BANGLADESH)

Language is more than just a means of communication. It shapes societal perceptions and perpetuates gender discrimination, reflecting unequal treatment of men and women. Many words and expressions carry implicit biases that privilege men while marginalizing women, reinforcing gender inequality.

By using gendered word pairs with language favors men. In English, words like “master” and “mistress” show a clear disparity. While "master" signifies authority and respect, "mistress" implies illicit or scandalous relationships. Similarly, "bachelor" evokes independence, while "spinster" carries negative connotations, portraying an unmarried woman as undesirable or pitiable. These linguistic differences reflect broader societal values, where men’s independence is celebrated, and women’s non-conformity to traditional roles is criticized.

Bias extends beyond specific terms to everyday language. Phrases like “Man is mortal” use “man” to represent all of humanity, despite its masculine connotation. Similarly, in sentences like “An ideal student should focus on his studies,” the pronoun “he” is used to denote both genders, effectively erasing female visibility, positioning men as the societal default.

In Bengali, language similarly reflects gender biases. Words like “sotin” (co-wife) have no male equivalents implies competition and conflict between wives, reflecting cultural acceptance of polygamy, but only for men. Similarly, words like “daini” (witch) demonize women, with no male counterpart, further emphasizing how language targets women disproportionately, reinforcing negative stereotypes and cultural practices that sustain gender inequality.

The power of language lies in its ability to shape thought. By using gendered terms or male-default language, we reinforce societal norms that privilege men over women. The absence of male equivalents for negative female terms reflects the deeper societal bias that language perpetuates.



In conclusion, language both reflects and sustains gender inequality. By rethinking the words we use, we can challenge the biases they carry and foster a more inclusive and equitable society.

A POEM ON ENDING FEMICIDE



By Fatmah Suleyman Mirambo (Tanzania)

We are having a rise in femicide in Tanzania & Kenya and it is frightening, hoping it will end soon!

No More Names, No More Numbers

Whispers of lives silenced,
Shadows cast too soon,
In the streets and homes,
Beneath the heavy moon.

Our sisters fall like rain,
But justice never calls,
Their stories fade in silence,
Behind forgotten walls.

But we are more than shadows,
We rise, we speak their names,
The fight for all our daughters,
No longer ends in flames.

No more names, no more numbers,
No more hearts to break,
Femicide must vanish—
For every woman's sake.



WOMEN DESERVE *MORE*

BY NEEMA NYANKOJO (TANZANIA)

Traditional expectations and assumptions should not be the limit for women. Too frequently, rather than being evaluated on their intelligence, ambition, and aptitude, women are evaluated on how they look, how married they are, or how well they can "balance it all." Instead of placing women in boxes, society should value them as distinct individuals with special abilities and qualities. Women should be free to pursue their passions without having to justify their choices.

Globally, women should have greater access to chances for education. In many regions of the world, girls are still denied basic education, while boys are emphasized. This restricts their options and keeps them stuck in poverty-cycles. One of the most effective methods to improve communities and countries is to invest in the education of girls. Women with higher levels of education support happier, healthier families, and more prosperous societies.

More women should be represented in politics. The needs and rights of half the population are frequently ignored by our laws and regulations since women make up a very small portion of global leaders and politicians. Particularly when it comes to matters like healthcare, family laws, and human rights, women's perspectives are invaluable. It's time to elect more women to leadership roles so they can bring about the necessary change.

More safeguards against harassment and violence against women are needed. Women experience frighteningly high rates of sexual assault, harassment, and domestic abuse worldwide. Too often, these concerns are swept under the rug or victims are blamed for the crimes against them. In order to guarantee that women can live fearlessly in both public and private settings, we need more robust legislation, improved enforcement, and a change in societal perceptions. Nobody ought to experience fear based only on their gender.

A letter to my little sister

I dreamt
Yes, I dreamt
I dreamt of a world where our mother will never experience killing another sister for the desire of a male baby.

I dreamt
Yes, I dreamt
I dreamt of a world where education is your fundamental right, neither a privilege nor a luxury or an expensive delicacy.

I dreamt
Yes, I dreamt
I dreamt of a world where you were no more prevented from playing with your battered doll.

I dreamt
Yes, I dreamt
I dreamt of a world where you were dancing healthy, educated, empowered, and free from all forms of violence.

I dreamt
Yes, I dreamt
I dreamt of a world where your flesh will never again butchered, pierced by female genital mutilation (FGM).

I dreamt
Yes, I dreamt
I dreamt of a world where you were breathing peace and not threatened by the sound of bullets and soldiers' boots.

I dreamt
Yes, I dreamt
I dreamt of a world where you were surfing into the depths of freedom and curating your future.

I dreamt
Yes, I dreamt
I dreamt of a world where you were climbing mountains, making your own choices, and chasing your dreams.

I dreamt, I dream, and will dream until my dream becomes a true reality.



by Anne-Judith Ndombasi Kinsumba Ndamuso (Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC))



WHO OWNS MY AUTHORITY?

WHERE IS MY RIGHT?

As women, and indeed as human beings, we possess the power to make our own choices. However, does society truly grant us the freedom to make those decisions? In Islam, an unmarried woman who is below the legal age does not have autonomy over her rights, such as traveling, marrying, or obtaining a passport; she must seek her father's permission. Even after marriage, this woman remains confined; she simply transitions to another cage, where her rights and decisions are handed over to her husband for the remainder of her life.

IS THERE A PROBLEM?

After reviewing the text above, you may wonder, is this an issue? When planning to leave the country, obtaining your husband's signature is required, which seems non-controversial and unimportant. Similarly, to apply for a passport for yourself or your children, you must have your husband's written consent at a notary's office. While it might not seem critical, it's important to remember that your wife is your life partner and deserves to be informed about your endeavors.

Now put yourself in the position of one of the thousands of female athletes, artists, politicians, etc., who were born in an Islamic society and are married. You are not going to go to a sports competition abroad because your husband doesn't want to let you. You are not going to come to the political conference and present the relations between the two countries because they are not allowing this. You are going to be limited, because the permission is not in your hands. In the future, even in your career, they can stop your progress.

In the end, I suggest you to watch the movie **"Cold Sweat"** which is based on the true story of the captain of Iran's national futsal team, **Niloufard Ardalan**.



Niloufard Ardalan

Tahereh Sanchouli – Iran

by Radwa Hosny Abdellatif (Egypt)

20 Reasons to be A Feminist

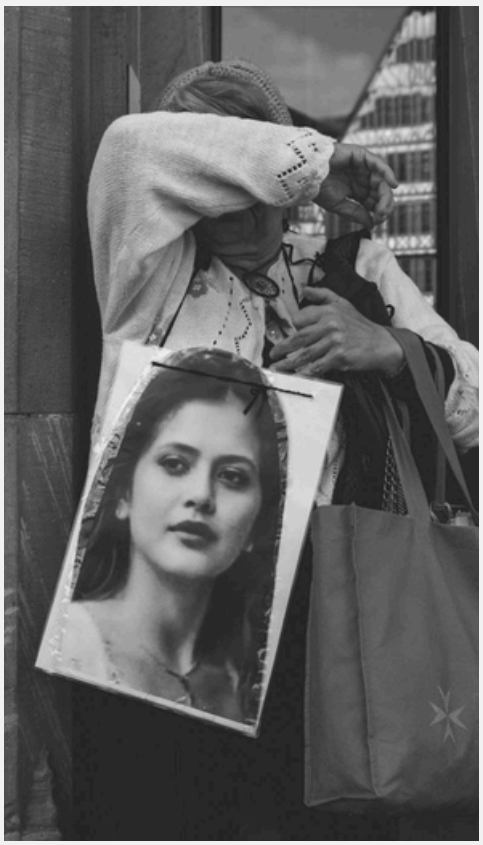


#1 to own your life
#2 to have your rights
#3 to express your yourself
#4 to make your own decisions
#5 to empower women
#6 to be a role-model for girls
#7 to make positive change in your community
#8 to eliminate discrimination against women
#9 to end gender-based violence
#10 to help victims break the cycle of abuse
#11 To achieve gender equality in all aspects of life.
#12 To close the gender pay gap and ensure fair wages.
#13 To protect women's reproductive rights and healthcare access.
#14 To challenge harmful gender stereotypes and expectations.
#15 To increase women's representation in leadership and media.
#16 To fight for the rights of all women, regardless of race or class.
#17 To promote women's mental health and self-care.
#18 To build a community of support and solidarity among women.
#19 TO ENSURE EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS.
#20 To create a safer world for future generations of women.

Iranian Diaspora Protests in Frankfurt

by Sajedeh Jalali (Iran), based in Frankfurt, Germany

This photographic series captures the protests, sparked by the tragic killing of Mahsa Amini and the ongoing struggle for 'Woman, Life, Freedom.





Iranian Diaspora Protests in Frankfurt

Photographer: Sajedeh Jalali (Iran)

The images focus on the voices of the victims and prisoners, emphasizing the urgent need for global solidarity in supporting Iranian women against a patriarchal system that continues to oppress and silence them. Through these photos, I aim to bring attention to the resilience of Iranian women and the responsibility the world has in standing with them.

You can follow my Instagram if you want to see more photos: @sajij_blinks



Article 25

A Life Stolen:

Forced Marriages and Domestic Violence

by Sezim Asanalieva (Kyrgyzstan)

In my country, Kyrgyzstan, women continue to face significant challenges related to gender discrimination, despite some progress in recent years. The rights and safety of women have improved, particularly in larger cities, but in rural areas, traditional practices still hold more weight than formal laws.

One such horror tradition is bride kidnapping (ala kachuu), where a woman is abducted and forced into marriage without her consent. Although it is now considered a crime, it used to be a common way for women to marry, and even some of my aunts were married this way. Unfortunately, the practice persists, with many girls in rural areas—13% under 18—married off due to poverty and financial pressure on families.

After marriage, women's lives often become more difficult. They are typically expected to manage the household and raise children with little help from their husbands or in-laws. Although kindergartens are available, many families, especially fathers and grandparents, oppose sending children there, or they lack the financial means to do so. This limits women's ability to return to work or pursue a career, forcing them to sacrifice their ambitions for the sake of family responsibilities.

Domestic violence is another critical issue. Despite efforts like the U.N.'s Spotlight Initiative, about 90% of survivors do not seek help due to family pressure and stigma. This forces many women to remain in abusive marriages or pursue risky employment abroad. While Kyrgyzstan has made some strides in women's rights, deeply ingrained cultural attitudes and social pressures still create major barriers to true gender equality.



References:

- Borgen Project. "Women's Rights in Kyrgyzstan"
- UN Women. "New Law in Kyrgyzstan Toughens Penalties for Bride Kidnapping"
- UNDP Kyrgyzstan. "Project Addressing Early Marriages Prevention"
- World Bank. "Literacy Rate, Adult Female (% of females ages 15 and above) - Kyrgyzstan." World Bank Data

Sprinkle Sprinkle, Twinkle Winkle



by Mandukhai Baldandorj (Mongolia)

Dear dear drink your wine or water
Does this make you hotter or totter
I will just wait till you twinkle

Sprinkle Sprinkle, Twinkle Winkle

When you blink then the morning
Will you remember why you ache or
What you have winkled out of?

Sprinkle Sprinkle, Twinkle Winkle

I will keep your secrets that
Maybe one day haunt you down
Under my spell, on the web

Sprinkle Sprinkle, Twinkle Winkle

Wicked was your nickname
Wielded my sword to punish
Where is the wound, can you find?

Sprinkle Sprinkle, Twinkle Winkle

When you find the answer
Will you find the sprinkle?
Nights and days three times
Now you have nothing to prove

Sprinkle Sprinkle, Twinkle Winkle

Dear dear grit your teeth
Down the road I will go
Drag the next while I prey

Sprinkle Sprinkle, Twinkle Winkle

Article 27

Gender and Education



by Kali Symbat (Kazakhstan)

Today, in many developed countries, women outnumber men in higher education. They excel academically and achieve high marks in fields ranging from literature to law. However, we also see that women continue to be underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—fields commonly referred to as STEM. Meanwhile, men are often underrepresented in areas like education and healthcare, professions that are typically associated with women.

In many parts of the world, particularly in developing countries, millions of girls still face barriers to accessing even basic education. According to UNESCO, more than 130 million girls around the world are out of school. Many of these girls face obstacles such as poverty, cultural traditions, child marriage, and even violence, all of which cut short their dreams of an education. This inequality does not just hurt girls and women—it hurts entire societies by preventing half of the population from contributing fully to social and economic life.

We must challenge these norms. Schools should be environments where both boys and girls are free to explore their interests without being limited by outdated ideas of what is “appropriate” for their gender.
Gender equality in education is not just a women's issue—it is a human issue. By ensuring that all people have access to education, we unlock the potential of every individual, regardless of gender, to contribute to society. Our task is not yet finished. We must continue to break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and ensure that education becomes the key to a future where everyone—both men and women—can realize their full potential.

Let us work together to make this future a reality.

Thank you.

The Myth of the Blade

They say the blade makes women pure,
A rite of pain we must endure,
But truth's a light that will expose,
It's harm, not honour, that it shows.
For mutilation's no tradition—
Just control in cruel disguise, a fiction.

They say without it we're unclean,
That we won't find where love has been.
But science speaks, and hearts agree:
It's not the cut that sets us free.
Health, not harm, should guide the way—
No shame, no scars, no price to pay.

They claim it makes us fit for men,
But freedom's voice will rise again:
A body whole is worth much more
Than wounds from myths that hearts deplore.
It's fear, not virtue, they defend—
A power game they won't transcend.

They preach it keeps the woman pure,
As if our worth lies insecure.
But in the truth, we see the power,
Our strength, our grace—forever ours.
No ancient law, no sharpened knife,
Can redefine a woman's life.

So let's unchain these silenced cries,
Expose the myths, undo the lies.
Our worth is not in cuts or scars—
It's found in who we truly are.
FGM's lie will fade away,
As truth and dignity hold sway.



by Mary Joyce Takali (Uganda)



WHY IS MY PAIN "NATURAL" AND "NORMAL"?

By Vanessa Boas-Moser (Austria)

My pregnancy taught me a lot about discrimination towards women in society even though I live in Austria, one of the most developed countries on earth.

From the very start, I had to battle with crippling nausea, throwing up for hours on end every day. When I spoke to my gynaecologist about this, I was told that this was "normal" and that I should not take any medication. My nausea lasted until the day I gave birth.

Women are typically told not to take medicine during pregnancy because it could harm the foetus. Doctors still do not know the effects that certain medication has on a pregnant woman's body because there is very little research done into this. [1] Clinical trials tend to focus on men and the results are transposed to the rest of the population. [2]

From the conversations with women around me, I quickly realised that an unmedicated birth was to be preferred. But I also found out that women were often being denied pain medication during childbirth. That is because "childbirth is supposed to hurt" and our pain is "natural" and "normal". [3]

Studies show that men are more likely to be prescribed pain medication than women. [4] Men are also more likely to be taken seriously when discussing their ailments with doctors. **Why is my pain "natural" and "normal" but the pain of a man is not?**[5]

[1] Research in Pregnant Subjects: Increasingly Important, but Challenging - PMC (nih.gov).
[2] Gender Bias in Healthcare: Examples, Impact, Solutions, and More (healthline.com)
[3] Gender Bias in Healthcare: Examples, Impact, Solutions, and More (healthline.com).
[4] Gender Bias in Healthcare: Examples, Impact, Solutions, and More (healthline.com).
[5] Gender Bias in Healthcare: Examples, Impact, Solutions, and More (healthline.com).

REWRITING THE NARRATIVE:
STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE 21ST CENTURY

BY WILMA D. SALAS (PHILIPPINES)

A woman is a complex tapestry of dreams and hopes. She is a tale of fantasies and realities entwined in her failures and successes. She is a canvas of heroic desires and untold sacrifices. A woman is a mystery of selfless love.

The role of women in society involves a much-heated debate as the notion that women as the 'other' and not the main option (de Beauvoir, 1949) is generally accepted by the global society because the world societies mainly consist of patriarchal belief systems. Therefore, in contrast with the question asked by de Beauvoir, in her book, 'The Second Sex', 'What is a woman?', the better option to ask is, 'Who is a woman?' The latter question effectively entails the essence of a woman.

This question reveals the complexities surrounding the nature of women which had long been disregarded throughout the history of human society as humanity is considered as male. The nature of women's condition has evolved from the nature of her partaking in the process of procreation to her liberation from reproductive bondage.



The 21st century is the time for women of the world to feel triumphant because it is indeed the time to rewrite the narrative of the status of women in society. It is the time that she is emancipated from her bondage of being the subaltern through the support of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which declares that women's rights are human rights, too.

EMPOWERING JUANA

Ruhama L. Gomez (Philippines)



On March 8, 2024, Mindanao State University - General Santos City (MSU-General Santos City) launched "Serbisyo Para kay Juana," kicking off a month-long celebration of International Women's Month and a commitment to gender equality. Spearheaded by the Gender and Development (GAD) Office under Dr. Diane Mae Ulanday-Lozano, this initiative aims to inspire women and girls to empower themselves and seize leadership roles, unlocking their full potential and reaping the benefits of gender equality.

The program features free workshops on essential skills like electrical work, plumbing, masonry, carpentry, and coffee brewing, challenging traditional gender roles while fostering self-reliance. In addition, participants received legal and psychological counseling to address pressing issues like domestic abuse and mental health.

A vital component of this initiative is the refined Safe Space Policy, developed in collaboration with the Supreme Student Council (SSC) and various student organizations. This policy strengthens protections against gender-based violence in line with RA 11313, or the Safe Spaces Act, promoting a safer and more inclusive environment for all.

Gladiolus Bloom

She stands, a gladiolus brave and tall,
With petals bright, defying storm and strife.
Her strength, a shield against the cruelest fall,
Her beauty fierce, a force of boundless life.

No longer shall she bend to hands of pain,
Her stem unbroken, though the winds may shake.
Each bloom she wears, a triumph born through rain,
A woman's heart, too strong for hate to take.

For she is more than fragile, more than fair,
Her roots run deep, with strength to still withstand.
The cries and scars she carried in despair
Now fade as we reach out with loving hands.

Together, like the gladiolus grows,
We'll end the hurt, where peace and justice flow.



Article 32

Photo by R.D. Smith on Unsplash

UNBOUNDED WOMEN BREAKING CHAINS

byTayyaba Atiq (Pakistan)

Women for generations have been held back by umpteen unnecessary expectations of the society leading them towards losing their individual selves. Traditional values,restricted environments and misogyny inspired gender roles have confined them into a caretaker for everyone but not themselves. They are for centuries being held back not by their limitations but these invisible chains pushing them to follow the set criteria else ready to be titled “Selfish-Arrogant and whatnot.”

But as they say ‘There is a limit to everything….even silence. With the rising quest for freedom, unbounded spirits of change and resilience—women of today are tearing down the oppressive shackles, fighting systems and reclaiming the space that was always theirs. From politics, activism, leadership, business and sports they are making sure to create the tables led by ‘Potentials’ instead of ‘Genders’. Stepping out of shadows, rewriting their stories and challenging mindset are what define the women of current times—unchained and unbounded.

Times 2024 100 most influential personalities—Mahrang Baloch from Pakistan is one leading example who refused to bow down to both regressive societal structures and state oppression with contribution in altering the perceptions about potential a woman possesses. Emerging from a place of oppression that restricts women to four walls of home, killings and abductions leave even men helpless and beyond that leading the resistance in a way no one has done before embodies the unbreakable spirit she holds while inspiring vision for the upcoming generations. Her journey further reflects that “when chains are broken by women, freedom transcends generations.” The trailblazing story of Mahrang and countless other women lightening the world with hope for a future entails strong and independent individuals, paving a path for the equal and just societies. They are reminding the world that freedom is not just liberation but more about building structure to ensure never getting ‘chained again’.

Article 33

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND SUPPORT FOR MIGRANT

By Angelica Borja (Colombia)



Picture Copyrights: Pedro Anza @Cuartoscuro

One of the harsh realities in Latin America, and in other regions around the world, is the increasing violence against women intersected with other political and social factors including criminality, where women are used as targets to harm their partners or family members.

Threats to their lives, extortion, physical and psychological attacks—often amounting to torture—force some women to flee their countries and face extreme risks while crossing the Darién Gap or the Sonoran Desert in Mexico on their way to U.S, border regions where deaths and disappearances are reported



Picture Copyrights: Pedro Anza @Cuartoscuro

As a volunteer translator for asylum documentation, I have witnessed the importance of International Conventions aimed at protecting human rights combined with those for women's rights, supporting an intersectional approach for asylum processes. Some of them are:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. Article 2, 3: and 14.
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), in force since 1981.
- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, in force since 1987.
- Inter-American Convention to Prevent and Punish Torture, adopted in 1985.
- Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará), which commits countries to take measures to protect women from violence.

These are essential tools that protect the human rights of migrant women and ensure that they receive the necessary support. However, it is crucial to continue working on implementation of these standards, promoting awareness and commitment from states to ensure that all migrant women, regardless of their legal status, receive the protection they need.

MY MOM

BY SUDHA PYAKUREL (NEPAL)

My mom Indira grew up in Kishannagar, a small Nepali village. She had four brothers and was everyone's favorite. While girls were expected to stick to housework, mom was different - she loved studying, especially math. **She dreamed big, wanting to become an officer like her brothers.**

Life changed when she married my dad at eighteen and moved to his village. Things were even stricter there, with women expected to be just housewives. **My mom wasn't ready to give up on her dreams**. Against all odds, she kept studying and finished her School Leaving Certificate (SLC), even when neighbors shook their heads in disapproval.

Having my brother and me only made mom more determined. **She knew education would open doors for us that were closed to her.** That's when she made her boldest move - packing up our lives and moving to Kathmandu. We didn't have much money, and I remember how mom sold her precious jewelry just so we could go to good schools. She never complained, even when times were tough.

I grew up watching mom quietly break down barriers, showing everyone that women could do so much more than stay home. **Now, as a lawyer fighting cases in court, I carry her strength with me.** Every victory reminds me of how she fought for her dreams. The amazing thing is, she didn't just change our lives - other women in our community started believing in themselves too.

Mom never made speeches or led protests. **Instead, she changed minds by example, working hard and never backing down from her dreams.** Today, when I look at how many women in our community are pursuing education, I see mom's legacy living on. Her quiet revolution taught me that real change doesn't always need big gestures - sometimes it just takes one person brave enough to take the first step.



Photo by Bikalpa Pokhrel on Unsplash



Photo by Aditya Romansa on Unsplash



PHOTO BY GAYATRI MALHOTRA ON UNSPLASH

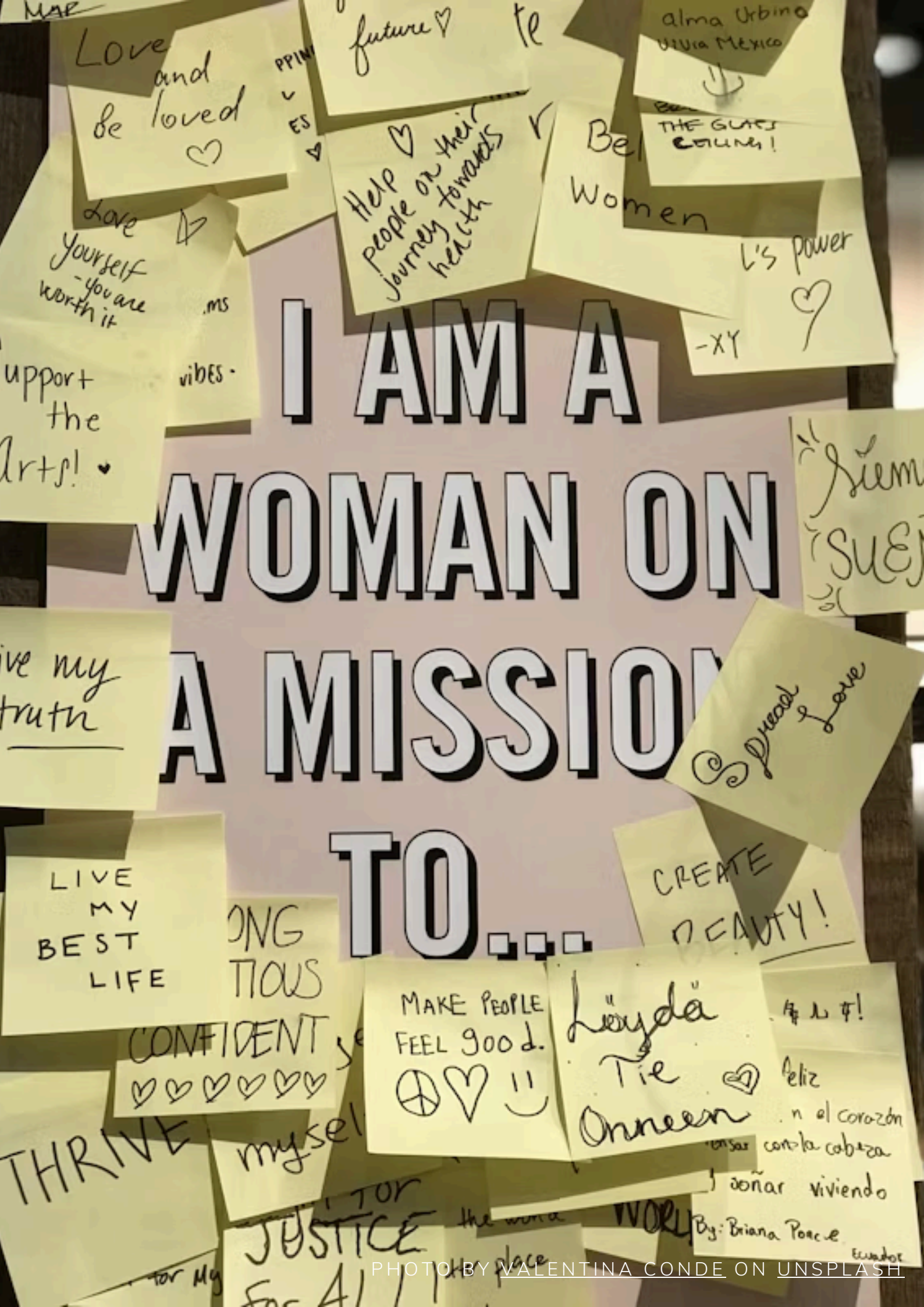


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