
ANNUAL REPORT

2021

GENDER EQUALITY STUDIES AND TRAINING PROGRAMME



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

GRÖ
GEST

Gender Equality Studies
and Training Programme
Under the auspices
of UNESCO



**UNIVERSITY
OF ICELAND**

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1. Introduction

The Gender Equality Studies and Training (GEST) programme was established at the University of Iceland in 2009 and has from the start been integrated into its School of Humanities. Since 2020, it operates as a part of the GRÓ Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Societal Change, a UNESCO category 2 centre. GEST's mission is to use a multidisciplinary approach to promote gender equality and social justice in low income, conflict and post-conflict countries through:

- Strengthening capacity of professionals, scholars, and organizations
- High-quality, collaborative, and policy relevant research
- Creating a platform for transnational dialogue, knowledge production and exchange

GEST presents activities consistent with the programme's mission and strategy including its main activity, an interdisciplinary postgraduate diploma programme in International Gender Studies, as well as research collaborations, and communication platform. In 2021, the GEST programme's operations and activities continued to be affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and several activities were postponed. Nevertheless, opportunities arose during the year when restrictions were released and/or softened, allowing for implementation of rescheduled activities. The academic programme was delayed to the autumn semester and for the first time since the early days of the GEST programme, fellows were welcomed to attend the postgraduate programme in Iceland in August instead of January. The following report demonstrates the GEST programme's main activities and contributions to its mission during the year 2021.

2. Capacity of Professionals, Scholars, and Organizations

GEST's contribution to academic advancement of professionals and organizations is twofold: A twenty-week postgraduate diploma programme in international gender studies (30 ECTS) at the University of Iceland; and short courses in partner countries. In 2021, the postgraduate diploma programme was moved from the spring to the autumn semester. This led to rescheduling of modules and activities. With the pandemic developing worldwide, windows of opportunities opened to implement GEST's short courses in its partner countries. The following section reports on GEST's activities regarding strengthening the capacity of professionals and organisations.

2.1. Postgraduate Diploma Programme in International Gender Studies (30 ECTS)

GEST's core activity is an annual twenty-week postgraduate diploma programme encompassing thirty ECTS credits in six interdependent modules. The programme aims to strengthen individuals' understanding of fundamental social structures needed to advance gender equality and social justice. The programme encourages GEST fellows to use critical thinking skills and to acquire essential analytical tools for understanding gender equality issues and their impact on social development and public policy.

The programme is built to strengthen the capacity of young professionals and junior researchers as well as organizations working in the field of advancing gender equality in low/middle income, conflict, and post-conflict societies. The GEST postgraduate diploma programme targets junior professionals and researchers who work on gender issues for government ministries and agencies, civil society organizations and educational or research institutions. Candidates shall at a minimum hold a bachelor's degree or equivalent from an accredited university, they should have at least two years of relevant experience and have a good command of the English language. To identify candidates for the postgraduate programme, GEST invites organizations and universities to nominate promising junior professionals and researchers.



The cohort of 2021 exploring Reykjavik during orientation

2.1.1. Fellows of 2021

Twenty fellows, nineteen women and one man, from fifteen countries, participated in the GEST programme starting in August 2021. The group consisted of experts working in governments, academia, research, civil societies, and non-governmental organisations. All the selected fellows were funded by GRÓ except for two fellows; one fellow from the Arctic (Russia), who was funded by the Arctic Affairs at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Iceland, and one fellow from Uganda, who was co-funded by GRÓ and Erasmus+. For the first time since 2010, fellows arrived in Iceland during the summer months of August, to attend the autumn semester instead of the spring semester at the University of Iceland. This postponement was due to the prolonged global pandemic during this period. At the time of the arrival of the fellows, there were social restrictions in place, requiring many of the fellows to complete a five-day quarantine before joining the group of fellows for the programme's orientation.

2.1.2. Postgraduate diploma 2021 - Curriculum

The 2021 postgraduate diploma programme in international gender studies consisted of six modules of five credits each, totalling 30 ECTS credits. Each module was coordinated by GEST staff. Classroom (and online) teaching was in the hands of coordinators and module lecturers, who were Icelandic and international specialists in their respective fields. Course assessment was based on short and long written assignments, presentations, and class participation.

The rescheduling of the academic programme required the programme's semester to start earlier than a standard autumn semester at the University of Iceland. This was to ensure that all the modules as in previous programmes could be included, as well

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF FELLOWS
China*	1
Egypt*	1
Kenya	1
India	2
Iraq (Kurdistan)	1
Malawi	3
Mexico*	2
Mongolia*	1
Namibia*	1
Nepal*	1
Nigeria	1
Palestine (West Bank)	1
Russia (Arctic)	1
Sri Lanka	1
Uganda	2

**marks countries that were represented in the GEST programme for the first time in 2021*

as days for quarantine, three days of orientation, introducing the new fellows to Iceland, the university and its systems, and the programme, and a multi-day field visit around the south of Iceland.

The regular introduction to the complimentary activities such as field visits and visiting lectures were kept at minimum to ensure enough time for the credited components of the programme.

The autumn semester included the following modules:

Theories and Concepts of Gender (5 ECTS)

13-31 August 2021

Module coordinators: Dr. Thomas Brorsen Smidt and Dr. Giti Chandra

Other lecturers: Dr. Abena Busia, Nikkita Hamar Patterson, Florence Ndagire

Description:

An understanding of the basic theories and concepts in international gender studies is a prerequisite for understanding all subsequent modules of the GEST Programme. As such, this module introduced established feminist theoretical traditions as well as more recent feminist conceptualizations relevant to global gender politics.

Through a combination of readings, lectures and in-depth class discussion, fellows considered how unjust politics and constructions of gender could be changed through transnational transfers and dialogues. Fellows explored gender equity for suppressed minority and oppressed groups from historical, intersectional, transnational, indigenous and human rights perspectives. Discussion centred on how issues, ideas, and debates engaged in by feminist theorists played out in specific contexts, particularly the contexts of so-called “developing” nations or “the global south”, as well as post-colonial and conflict/post-conflict societies. Fellows were encouraged to think critically and intersectionally about gender, and mentally map the differences (ethnic, racial, class, etc.) that matter in the societies and organizations they come from; they reflected on the meanings and significance of these internal social differences and political struggles as viewed from global and transnational feminist theoretical perspectives. They were asked to consider and apply the transnational feminist theoretical concepts they read about to those gender justice movements they were familiar with as well as those they will learn about from their peers; and to consider the roles played by civil institutions, NGOs, leaders, grassroots organizers, and advocates for women and sexual minorities. Through close, critical reading and intensive dialogue with one another, fellows will be encouraged to develop theoretically informed views and transnational feminist perspectives.

Gender and Development: Tools and Strategies (5 ECTS)

1-17 September 2021

Module coordinator: Dr. Guðrún Sif Friðriksdóttir

Project manager: Guðrún Eysteinsdóttir

Lecturers: Dr. Suzanne Clisby, Dr. Elisabeth Klatzer, Sólrún María Ólafsdóttir, Hjálmar Sigmarsson, Þórður Kristinsson

Description:

This module was designed to encourage discussion on the connections between gender and development, its theory, policy and practice. Students explored the connection between gender and various aspects of social change and learned how to use a critical theoretical approach to analyse contemporary processes of development. They increased their understanding of the different configurations of inequality and how they impact projects’ effectiveness and outcomes.

Through a combination of lectures, exercises, group discussions and assignments, students were equipped with tools for gender analysis and integration of gender equality concerns and principles into programmes, operations and reporting. They learned about project management, the logical framework approach, public policy, gender mainstreaming, issue and community-based advocacy, and gender responsive budgeting. The course was conducted in a participatory environment.

Gender, Violence and Security (5 ECTS)

21 September-8 October

Module coordinators: Dr. Giti Chandra and Dr. Thomas Brorsen Smidt

Lecturers: Dr. Cynthia Enloe, Marai Larasi, Dr. Vinita Chandra

Description:

The aim of the course was to increase the fellows' ability to understand, discuss, and convey knowledge of gender dimensions of security, especially with regards to international legal obligations, security sector reform and emergency operations, but also in the context of sexual harassment and violence at the workplace, policies, and legal structures. It examined, among other things, the concept of human security versus national security and the role of women in conflicts, peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction, as well as gender-based violence and sexual violence, both as a tactic of warfare as well as a presence in the everyday lives of women and non-binary gendered people.

Gender, Labor and Migration (5 ECTS)

13 October-1 November 2021

Module coordinator: Eva Harðardóttir

Lecturers: Mukul Mangalik, Randi Stebbins, Claudie Ashonie Wilson, Dr. Tamara Shefer, Dr. Marlene Spanger, Valgerður Bjarnadóttir and Andrea Hjalmsdóttir

Description:

This module introduced students to the concepts connected to various types of migration. Students got a fuller view of migration as it intersects with labour and gender by looking at international agreements and treaties, national laws and policies, global and local responses to migration. The module also covered global economic imbalances that lead to migration, as well as migration due to conflict and environmental degradation. How migration differentially impacts men and women was also be discussed considering current theories, research, and agreements. The module also covered how intersecting factors such as gender, racialization and sexuality impact processes of inclusion and exclusion of migrants in their receiving countries.

Gender, Environment and Climate Change (5 ECTS)

4 November-19 November 2021

Module coordinator: Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir

Project manager: Védís Ólafsdóttir

Lecturers: Dr. Auður H. Ingólfssdóttir, Dr. Joni Seager, Dr. Jón Geir Pétursson, Dr. Gunnhildur Lily Magnúsdóttir, Dr. Hafdís Hanna Ægisdóttir and Salome Hallfreðsdóttir

Description:

The purpose of this module was to examine the role of gender in the context of the environment with a focus on climate change. This module analysed the transformative potential of gender equality to advance environmental sustainability as well as resilience, vulnerability, mitigation, and adaptation to global environmental change. Furthermore, the module outlined the main international commitments in regard to environment and climate change and suggested gender sensitive actions. Through the combination of readings, documentaries and lectures, fellows explored the relationship of gender and environment and strengthen the understanding of the impact of climate change on gender, both in rural and urban environments as well as in different geographical contexts. The fellows furthermore investigated international commitments, institutions and as well as possible everyday actions and activism, enhancing public awareness of the world's environmental developments.

Final Assignment

25 August-8 December 2021

Module coordinator and main lecturer: Randi W. Stebbins

Lecturers: Dr. Giti Chandra, Susan Muska

Description:

Fellows worked on a project of their choice throughout the duration of the programme. The purpose of the final project was for fellows to reflect on some of the theories, methods, and skills studied during the programme, to consider when these would be appropriate and to apply them in a practical or research context. The topic should be integrative, relate to the content of the programme, and have relevance for gender equality issues in the fellow's home country. The project could be an essay addressing a specific gender problem and identifying strategies and suggestions to counter it, a project proposal that outlined all the necessary steps and activities needed to solve a problem and implement a project, a research proposal, or in another form in consultation with module coordinator and the fellow's supervisor(s). By the end of the semester, the fellows presented the design and findings of their assignments at an open seminar organized by GEST. Each fellow was assigned a final assignment supervisor, who was an expert in the field in which

the fellow is writing. Supervisors worked with respective fellows to offer direction on the final assignment throughout the semester.

As a part of the module, fellows attended sessions on academic writing, reference systems for literature review and research, introduction to the university library, professional development, and how to deliver professional presentations.

2.1.3. Final Assignments - The 2021 GEST Cohort

In the following section, the fellows' final assignments will be listed in detail. The final assignments consisted both of essays, project, and research proposals, all focusing on the context/community of the fellow and feasible to implement upon the return home.

Iraq's Queer Community Torn Between Militias, Moralities and Masculinities



Fellow: Bakhan Hama Amin Qadir

Country: Iraq (Kurdistan)

Final assignment supervisor: Giti Chandra

Description: In Iraq including Kurdistan Region (KRI) the invisibilised queer (LGBTQI) community live in a state of fear, marginalisation, and discrimination. Homosexuality is contemplated as non-existent and against the religious, traditional values of Iraqis. Otherwise, homosexuals are not tolerated and campaigned against to be eradicated. This deeply embedded and systematized attitude towards the queer community originates from religious and cultural moralities that favour stereotypical homogenic masculinity. In this paper I bring some examples of the violence the queer community has been subjected to with focus on a timeframe after the 2003 US-led war in Iraq. I draw an image of the role of the state by discussing certain criminal codes that have been misused, despite the lack of mention of homosexuality in the Iraqi Penal Code, to persecute queer individuals and activists who advocate for knowledge and equal rights. I discuss the intersection of Islamic morality and masculinity in creating life threatening realities for queer individuals in Iraq and KRI. This paper is an attempt to shed light upon this “war” among others in Iraq that has led to violence, stigmatizations and invisibilisation.

Conflict Related Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Nepal: Political and societal origins



Fellow: Bindu Sharma

Country: Nepal

Final assignment supervisor: Guðrún Sif Friðriksdóttir

Description: During Nepal's 10 yearlong internal war, sexual violence against women and girls was committed on a very large scale by both the state and the conflicting party Maoists. As the war ended in Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2006, the concept of Conflict Related Sexual Violence (CRSV) being the strategy and by-product of war guided and dominated the peace building and transitional justice process. This resulted in the wider social aspects of CRSV such as discriminatory social norms, unequal power relations were not addressed through post-conflict policies and programs. Similarly, there is a lack of systematic categorization of CRSV in Nepal in terms of its causative factors, so a comprehensive form of knowledge is not available for actors and people to easily understand it.

The concept of ordered and enabled sexual violence is an area of knowledge established in international peace and security. While ordered sexual violence takes place due to an authorized order to use sexual violence as strategy by war actors, enabled sexual violence happens when there is an enabling social environment created by social norms and values that promote such violence. This research proposes to consider whether the cases of Nepal's CRSV fit within the framework of enabled and ordered CRSV and examine if gendered social norms supported widespread conflict related sexual violence. To do so, it will review cases of sexual violence that have been already documented by some organizations. The characteristics of these cases will be examined within the framework of ordered and enabled CRSV and descriptive analysis will be generated.

Community Response to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in Mexico City



Fellow: Claudia Pamela Chavarria Machado

Country: Mexico

Final assignment supervisor: Randi W. Stebbins

Description: Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is one of the most prevalent types of violence in Mexico, and in the first two years of the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of reports increased. The response from the justice system has failed to provide safe and efficient answers, and the services and programmes for victims and survivors of IPV have failed to consider the efficiency of working with communities. In seeking a solution to an urgent problem, a change of approach

is needed, and the present project proposes to place victims' needs in the centre and build with them a community-based response (CBR) while aiming to structural changes. This approach involves many strategic stakeholders to build a network to provide a more comprehensive response by providing literacy in financial, social services, legal, and other alternatives to IPV directly to victims and survivors, based on popular education.

Another goal of the project is to promote the participation of the community by integrating at least one committee that addresses the issue of IPV, promote the coordination and intervention over the services and demands of IPV victims and survivors and promote the implementation of concrete actions for women to live free of violence in Mexico City. The project aims to provide capacity-building alternatives and gather data to transform from a generic response to IPV to an intersectional and emergency adequate due to the intensification of violence and inequities within the Covid-19 pandemic. The community-based response proposed in this project is a three-year learning space and community-led process that learns and adapts from the findings of recognized effective models to address IPV in other countries like SASA! and TOSTAN. CBR is a needed alternative to face the urgent increment and isolation of victims and survivors of IPV with the goal not only to provide alternatives for women to exit from violence but also to be a part of a transformative process where communities engage and participate in working together to change the reality of violence as something normal.

Indigenous Women as Water Protectors, Men as Firefighters? Gender and indigeneity in the context of climate change in Sakha (Yakutia)



Fellow: Daria Burnasheva

Country: Russia (Arctic)

Final assignment supervisor: Auður H. Ingólfssdóttir

Description: This paper contributes to the understanding of gender and indigeneity in the context of climate change by looking at what is underneath this established dichotomy. In the last decades, Sakha (Yakutia) in northeast Russia has literally gone through fire and water. The devastating floods and wildfires have caused not only economic and environmental losses but most importantly, social and cultural consequences. However, this paper does not intend to look

at the vulnerability, adaptability, and resilience of indigenous communities in the face of climate change and related disasters. Instead, it attempts to understand what has shaped the existing power relations, strengthened social inequalities and their gendered dynamics in this context. As an Indigenous feminist, I approach these issues from a Sakha indigenous paradigm. In Sakha-speaking rural communities, we still call ourselves people of woods and we refer to big water bodies as our grandmothers. This ontological viewpoint has been a methodological suggestion for my research and defined the specific way the analysis has been conducted. As a result, I claim that an entire shift in paradigm is needed to adequately address the climate change impacts such as wildfires. We should think not only about fighting wildfires but also about protecting forests, which will shift our perspective from what to fight to what to protect. In academic research, shifting the subject of study can raise novel research questions and opportunities for new critical analysis. Addressing the root causes of the wildfires will mean not only fighting its consequences but preventing this disaster. Finally, in the Indigenous feminist paradigms, protecting waters and forests means taking care of our human and other-than-human relations and, on a greater scale, our ways-of-being in this world.

Free Trade for Whom? A feminist analysis on the implementation of the AfCFTA on women informal cross border traders in Kenya



Fellow: E Imungu Kalevera

Country: Kenya

Final assignment supervisor: Kirstin Flygenring

Description: Proponents of the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement (AfCFTA) have hailed it as a visionary free trade agreement that will lift Africans out of poverty into prosperity, but feminist economists across the continent would argue otherwise. Free trade is not a costless exercise and while the agreement scarcely touches on gender equality, it is deeply lacking in any mention of the steps signatory nations will take to achieve gender equality through trade

liberalization.

This seemingly visionary agreement further fails to consider women's contribution to trade in its totality and ignores the need to grow intra African trade through supporting women informal cross border traders who account for 70% of all informal cross border trade activity on the continent.

The needs, interests and potential of these traders have been left out of mainstream trade and development agenda. As the continent begins to roll out this agreement, existing gender disparities between men and women in trade will affect its potential success. Centring our conversation to Kenyan border towns but drawing from other regional and international narratives, this paper will discuss the needs and interests of women cross border traders from a feminist perspective with respect to their intersecting realities, challenges, and identities. It will also draw on existing feminist critique of the policy to draw out areas of interest. The paper will further suggest how this new agreement can serve these interests and deliver on the promise of vibrant and free intra-regional trade and gender equality. In conclusion, it will offer broad and specific recommendations to various stakeholders with the intent to strengthen delivery of the AfCFTA for a gender just trade regime.

Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Well-being and the Rights of Women with Disabilities in the Colombo and Gampaha Districts of Sri Lanka



Fellow: E.M. Kushmin M.I. Perera

Country: Sri Lanka

Final assignment supervisor: Yvonne K. Fulbright

Description: Women with disabilities are 'invisibilised' in Sri Lanka. The strong cultural stigma attached with being a woman with a disability is long, stemming from religious and superstitious beliefs. They are wrongfully stereotyped to be bad luck, asexual, childlike, and dependent and as a result are often kept away from the public eye by their families. When it comes to important issues like sexual and reproductive health (SRH), well-being and rights are not subjects touched

upon in their lives. This lack of discussion or understanding is dominated by a discourse whereby sexual health is also not an open or appropriate topic of discussion in society. As a result, they are unaware of the importance of SRH, well-being and rights and the products or services available to them as women.

This project is focused on establishing a Consortium consisting of women with disabilities aged 18 and over in the Colombo and Gampaha districts with the goal of improving SRH well-being and rights. The beneficiaries will have the opportunity to undergo trainings and workshops to improve their knowledge and practice. In forming the Consortium, the project will employ a participatory approach where the women will take ownership in that they determine the Consortium's activities moving forward and set up a leadership committee.

A special focus will also be extended to their caregivers, parents and or partners who will be directly engaged in workshops in becoming sensitised to the importance of SRH, well-being and rights and eventually becoming agents of change for the women with disabilities.

Strategic partnerships will be a special area of focus in that multilateral funding agencies, religious and community leaders, private sector, relevant government institutions and grassroots organizations will be of great importance to project implementation and the Consortium moving forward.

This project will be implemented over the span of three years ensuring a fully-fledged Consortium and registered Organization of People Disability owned and managed by women with disabilities focussing on SRH, well-being and rights.

The Impact of the Delayed Enactment of the Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act on Eomen: A case study from Namibia



Fellow: Hileni Ndilimeke Alupe

Country: Namibia

Final assignment supervisor: Bjarney Friðriksdóttir

Description: Trafficking in person (TIP) is referred to as a crime that violates the human rights of its victims. It not only affects the victims physically but psychologically as well, especially when ineffective and insufficient mechanisms are in place. The delay in the enactment of the Combating in Trafficking in Persons Act 1 of 2018 left the legal system in Namibia to rely on the Prevention of Organised Crime (POCA) Act 29 of 2004 to prosecute and convict TIP cases.

Some of the convicted TIP cases show that the POCA has several shortcomings while it only has 2 sections addressing TIP. The definition of TIP in the POCA excludes the definition of relevant terms that appeared in some cases. Thus, the prosecution relied on previously convicted cases from other countries. The POCA does not clearly illustrate the roles and responsibilities of the institutions involved, leading to duplication of roles. Additionally, there is no mandate for victim assistance either by the state or the perpetrator. Consequently, victims of trafficking (VoTs) are denied some services that impact their psychological well-being pre-trial, during and/or post-trial. The analytical approach used in this case study indicates that the new TIP law provides remedies for the shortcomings of the POCA. The analysis similarly concludes that, if this law had been enacted at the time when most of the TIP cases were convicted, the outcomes would have been different.

Emergency Health Service Linkages for Street Children Following Sexual Abuse in Lilongwe, Blantyre and Zomba Cities in Malawi. Health Linkages for Street Children



Fellow: Jessy Gondwe

Country: Malawi

Final assignment supervisor: Svava Dögg Jónsdóttir

Description: The “Health Linkages for Street Children” project addresses the long-neglected and proliferating public health problems of HIV infection and pregnancies among street children in Malawi. These challenges largely arise from childhood sexual abuse and marginalized intersectional identities of the street children, hindering their access to that make it difficult to access to emergency health services following sexual abuse. The project aims to enhance equitable, inclusive and gender-sensitive access to services, such as the HIV Post-Exposure

Prophylaxis (PEP) and Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs) for street children aged 7 to 17 years, in the cities Lilongwe, Blantyre and Zomba.

The project uses three interlinked pathways. Initially, it seeks to understand the experiences and health needs of the street children. Second, it will use this evidence to create survivor-centred and gender-sensitive spaces and personnel for service delivery. Lastly, the project aims to empower street children, particularly girls, with peer-led influencing to encourage them to make autonomous decisions about their health. Over three years, with an additional six months for evaluation, activities include a baseline assessment, gender mainstreaming, capacity building for service providers, and integrating emergency health services in rehabilitation centers in the target cities.

Using intersectionality and gender mainstreaming at all levels, the project will offer inclusive, value-based, and equitable health care for street girls and boys. Moreover, activities shift beyond biomedical services to address social factors, essentially reducing vulnerability to sexual abuse and associated health problems. Overall, implementation will cost € 287.280 and led by a consortium of two organizations working on street children and adolescent health. Through the consortium and partnership with government ministries, there will be sustained capacity, a staff with a mix of skills, and strengthened collaboration to outsource resources for sustainability of the services.

Chinese Single Motherhood By Choice: A feminist perspective on assisted reproductive technology



Fellow: Jingyun Pi

Country: China

Final assignment supervisor: Guðbjörg Lilja Hjartardóttir

Description: Reproductive freedom and justice are essential parts of achieving gender equality. Currently, in China, women, especially single women, do not fully enjoy their reproductive rights to decide how they want to have children especially if they are not married. This is reflected in a big research gap in China on single motherhood by choice through assisted reproductive technology, especially from a feminist perspective. Women's personal experiences and voices on this topic are missing. In order to bridge this gap, research that will discuss whether or not it is necessary and possible to legitimate single motherhood by choice through assisted reproductive technology is needed. This research will use standpoint theory, grounded theory, intersectionality and other feminist theories. Semi-structured interviews will be utilized to dig into who choose to be single mothers through assisted reproductive methods, why they want to make such a decision, and what barriers they would encounter when making it. Ideally, enough women of various backgrounds in education, financial status, sexual orientation, ethnic identities, and living areas will be interviewed to be able to formulate a separate theory. The target research group is single women from 18 to 50 years old who are not currently married or in an exclusive and long-term relationship. The study will take place in China both online and offline. A full picture of who these interviewees are, their motivations and potential difficulties in making such decisions will be clearly presented and possible policy recommendations will be built based on this research.

Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in Mongolia: Experience and ways forward



Fellow: Lkhagvadulam Jamiyandagva

Country: Mongolia

Final assignment supervisor: Elisabeth Klatzer

Description: Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) is good budgeting aiming at mainstreaming gender equality in all stages and documents of the budgeting process and in public finance management. It has gained considerable momentum internationally as well as in Mongolia. Despite a relatively good legal framework for gender equality in Mongolia, certain gender gaps persist. Several GRB pilot initiatives have been implemented at different levels of government over the past 18 years. However, there is a lack of institutional memory of GRB knowledge and experience gained and a lack of awareness about Mongolian experience both at national and international levels. Thus, the research aims to take stock of GRB work in Mongolia, assessing emerging context-specific learnings of GRB pilot initiatives to inform future nationwide scaling-up of GRB and its full implementation. Relevant key informants were surveyed about GRB experience, early results, opportunities, challenges, and lessons learnt by means of a questionnaire. The results indicate a mix of promising findings and challenges. While there is progress in certain areas, such as early results related to pilot projects, identifying opportunities, and creating lessons learnt, there is a large room for further strengthening of Mongolian GRB implementation, among others, by leveraging its advancements, tackling evident shortcomings, establishing favourable conditions, and adopting international standards of GRB. In moving forward, key actors should create a stronger legal basis, a comprehensive action plan with an implementation roadmap, a cross-sectoral coordination mechanism, define clear roles and responsibilities, and invest in focused capacity building, to anchor GRB within public finance management (PFM).

Psychological Rehabilitation of Young Girl Survivors of Gender-Based Violence in Rural Egypt



Fellow: Manar Yassin Hussin Mohamed Salman

Country: Egypt

Final assignment supervisor: Hildur Fjóra Antonsdóttir

Description: Violence against children has been silenced and ignored for a long time in Egypt, which has resulted in exacerbating the devastating impact on the child's physical and mental health. This violence is exaggerated in the case of young girls, who are already discriminated against based on their gender (GBV). They are affected by culture, norms, and traditions that reinforce patriarchy and male dominance, and increase the prevalence of violent acts and attitudes against them. Therefore, the project aims to challenge the cultural and social norms that normalize the

violence against women and girls and to address the risk factors for gender-based violence and its mental health consequences on the young girls in rural areas in Egypt. In addition, it addresses the intersectional areas that contribute to gender inequality and discrimination against the target groups.

The wellbeing and psychological health of survivors of GBV is essential. Protecting and supporting young girls is the shared responsibility of everyone in society. Therefore, enhancing the public and social awareness about the importance of providing support will create a way of sensitizing communities' responsibility to work collaboratively for eradicating GBV and support rehabilitation.

The project proposes to mitigate the psychological consequences of GBV on young girl survivors through two pathways of change. First, filling the gap of providing these services to those marginalized young girls who do not have access to this type of service. Second, in collaboration with other partner organizations, stakeholders, and community leaders, to alter the negative stereotypes about GBV survivors and their critical need for psychological rehabilitation.

These goals will be achieved mainly through creating psychological rehabilitation units in cooperation with partner organizations that will work closely with the girls to improve their psychological health after GBV, in addition to raising public consciousness about GBV and its consequences on girls' lives amongst community members in rural areas in Egypt.

Impact of Binary Gender Budget on Transgender Lives in India



Fellow: Meenakshi Ranjan Gandotra

Country: India

Final assignment supervisor: Jón Ingvar Kjaran

Description: The National Legal Service Authority (NALSA) judgement by Supreme court of India in 2014, legally recognized the existence of non-binary gender identities as a third gender category and granted them fundamental rights of equality and freedom as Indian citizen. The judgement used third gender as an umbrella term for transgenders, hijra, intersex, Kinnar, and Aravanis gender identities who may or may not have sex reassignment surgery. It directed central and state governments to take proactive actions for integration and protection of third gendered people within society.

Unfortunately, the process of integration is slow, lacks budgets, and gender mainstreaming policy framework still sees gender identities in binaries. There is no accurate data due to the invisibility of third gender/ transgender in census except for 2011, which hinders access to basic human rights and resources. India, as part of gender mainstreaming and commitment to sustainable development goals, uses gender budgeting tools and ensures that it is part of the national budget rather than a stand-alone component.

This essay explores how the heteronormative concept of gender is institutionalised in Indian Institutional structures. It brings forth the concept of women's empowerment as a default for gender equality and the adverse effects of practicing gender in binary. Using gender budgeting as a driver of change, it recommends the concept of gender budgeting beyond binaries as a pathway for enabling transgendered people's access to their basic rights of education, health, and livelihood. It hopes to influence simple yet effective changes in the narrative of Indian Union Budget Statement 13.

Surpass Beyond Your Expectation: Improved economic status for women with disabilities in Kampala slums, Uganda



Fellow: Namatovu Bernah Namutebi

Country: Uganda

Final assignment supervisor: Ágústa Gísladóttir

Description: Disability is listed as a development concern detailed in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Uganda is among the countries that quickly realised the significance of including it in the National Development Plans (NDP II) 2015/16-2019/20 and the Social Development Sector Plans (SDSP1) 2015/16-2019/20.

Uganda's National census, 2014, estimated disability prevalence at 12.4% for people aged 2 years and above. Women comprised 2.7% higher than men at 13.7% females versus 11% males. Women with

disabilities experience myriad stigma and discrimination in their lives. The disability prevalence rate in Kampala is estimated at 8.1 (Disability Status Report-Uganda 2019, page 80).

In response, the government focused on providing health services, Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR), vocational training, universal primary and secondary education, and holistic representation as some of the key measures to empower persons with disabilities.

The strategic need to support women with disabilities to improve their economic status in Kampala compelled this project proposal to be developed, dubbed 'Surpass beyond your Expectation'. The project aims to equip women with disabilities with financial and literacy skills by strengthening their capacity in financial management, by identifying economic opportunities, building on existing structures to reduce children of women with disabilities' care burden at the household level and overcome stigma promoted by community members.

Five divisions in Kampala will be targeted reaching out to 150 women with disabilities as key beneficiaries and their 150 children. At the national level, the project hopes to engage key decision-makers from the Divisions, line ministries, parliamentarians representing persons with disabilities, NUWODU and NUDIPU to advocate for change and improvement in the economic status of women with disabilities. The project aims to help women with disabilities improve their economic status and ably take care of their families with minimal hurdles.

Undermined, Invisibilised and Silenced: Covid-19, community health workers and state negligence in India



Fellow: Prachi Sharma

Country: India

Final assignment supervisor: Vinita Chandra

Description: The Government of India (GoI) employs approximately one million women as Community Health Workers (CHWs) or ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers. These women, considered to be honorary workers operate on incentives without social security and are at constant risk of violence. CHWs gender and precarious labor conditions place them as one of the least prioritized cadres by the state. Their security concerns are invisible in official data indicating the culture of silence around the issue. As per the Sexual Harassment Law in India, each employer is mandated to institutionalize an Internal Complaints Committee (ICCs) to address harassment complaints. In a decade of this law being introduced the ICCs are reported absent or rarely functioning in case regarding CHWs. Lack of security among the CHWs is a denial of their human rights, disregard of women's labor and the state is to be held accountable for this. This research proposal aims to explicate the root causes behind the devaluation of women's healthcare labor that leads them to be at risk. The key question to explore is why a state, that deployed a female cadre to empower its healthcare, neglecting their need for a safe environment. The primary objective of this paper is to critically situate the state as an employer through a feminist intersectional lens. It aims to provide a feminist labor analysis of the working conditions of women in the public health system of India. It will offer a detailed interrogation into the everyday concerns of CHWs and explore the structural reasons for state negligence. Finally, it intends to delve deeply into their everyday security concerns, reach the root cause of the neglect by the state and propose the development of a framework that ensures a secure working environment for one million CHWs.

The Militarized Character of the UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans in Palestine: Women at the crossfire between militarized identities and security narratives



Fellow: Raghda Antoun Joudeh Da'boub

Country: Palestine

Final assignment supervisor: Valur Ingimundarson

Description: In Palestine, the domestication of UNSCR 1325—through the development and implementation of National Actions Plans (NAPs)—has been impacted and shaped by a prolonged military occupation and violent internal political division. The essay explores the effects of the longstanding domestic militarization of NAPs in Palestine, posing the question of whether the plans have unleashed a transformative potential or whether they have perpetuated the status quo. Building on feminist international relations and critical masculinities scholarship on militaries and war, it offers a detailed analysis of the two NAPs that have been produced in Palestine: their political gestation, their policy content, and their implementation. It is argued—with references to interviews with policymakers and stakeholders—that the NAPs have only partially been successful in “meaningfully” advancing women's rights, as they have not

addressed a pervasive culture of violence reinforced by the militarized aspects of a “security state”, with its masculine discursive manifestations. This failure has resulted in NAP policies that integrate women into militarized structures, while leaving them without effective mechanisms to hold authorities to account for gender-based inequalities and violence.

Construction of Gender Discriminatory Practices in the Mexican A.I. Ecosystem



Fellow: Tatiana Margarita Telles Calderon

Country: Mexico

Final assignment supervisors: Anna Ingólfssdóttir and María Rún Bjarnadóttir

Description: Artificial intelligence (AI) is one of the key technological drivers of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). As such it will impact our world and society in very tangible ways. Previously gender norms, and roles have been constructed and expanded by technology. The Mexican AI Ecosystem is not immune to this. As such it is necessary to examine how Gender Discrimination Practices are being built into it. This research proposal explores the different points of entry for gender discrimination into the Mexican AI Ecosystem. I choose to talk about an ecosystem to emphasize the nature of the connections and relationships between system and actors. The ecosystem is thought as a whole, however the entry points to explore are set in academia, businesses, regulatory practices, and the user base itself. The methodology proposed is a mix of desk research, ethnography, interviews, and surveys with key actors done from a feminist intersectional lens. This kind of data can build a better AI and serve as a push through gender equality in Mexico. Artificial intelligence can't be called intelligent if it is trained to gender discriminate.

Institutional Disability Protection: Sexual harassment experiences of students living with disabilities in Ugandan public universities



Fellow: Tendo Mirembe Namata

Country: Uganda

Final assignment supervisor: Brynja E. Halldórsdóttir

Description: As Ugandan public universities commit to providing safe environments for the education and health of their students, understanding the risks of sexual coercion for women with disabilities on campuses is imperative for the designing of sexual harassment policies and responses. This is especially important as literature shows higher levels of sexual harassment for students living with disabilities than the general population. Even with increased institutional reforms around sexual harassment, limited data exist on the integration of disability needs and perspectives into institutional responses. This research explores the experiences that disabled students have of sexual harassment. Using a phenomenological qualitative research approach, the study focuses on the effectiveness of institutional policies and structures to protect students living with disabilities in universities, their coping responses to sexual harassment and an understanding of their perceived differential needs for diverse types of disabilities. This methodology will be used to collect this data from three public universities in Uganda. An institutional feminist disability theory will be employed. The study will help integrate disability as a category of representation within sexual harassment policies thus increasing equal protection for students on and off campus. Additionally, it will increase representation, reporting and access to justice for those who are disabled. This ground breaking research will provide a starting point to enable institutions to play an active role in improving post-secondary education, gender, and disability outcomes in Uganda.

Mitigating Hegemonic Masculinity Among Young Men Aged 18-35 in North-West Nigeria



Fellow: Ugonna Obi Emeruwa

Country: Nigeria

Final assignment supervisor: Þórður Kristinnsson

Description: The aim of this project proposal is to mitigate hegemonic masculinity among young men in northwest Nigeria from the age of 18-35 years. Hegemonic masculinity is a branch of masculinity that exacts dominance over other forms of masculinity. Its reverence for ideals such as “Be the Man” economically, socially, and religiously has posed huge challenges for both men and women.

The norm of men as breadwinners and financiers of the household justifies the attribute of being a man in Nigeria, especially in the northwest parts of the country. The inability to match up to this attribute has constituted a huge menace and has resulted in drunkenness, violence, and other forms of domineering attitudes against others to meet up with this expectation. These attitudes in young men often result in violence against women, (domestic and sexual). In northwest Nigeria, 70% of women are restricted to their homes, thereby hindering their contribution to the economic development of the household and making them solely dependent on the men to provide. This dependency, coupled with men's inability to meet the family's demands, has further contributed to the rise in domestic and sexual violence.

This project will adopt Gender Transformative, Social norm and Intergenerational approaches for her implementation to deconstruct these ideas of hegemonic masculinity by inculcating new ideas through dialogue, training, workshops, advocacies, MDDs, role models interactions, media (radio, posters and TV shows), intergenerational conversations and lobbying for them to be more inclusive. The main target population for this project, are young men aged 18 to 35. The project will be implemented in northwest Nigeria during a period of five years. the first year, the project will be implemented in one state to ascertain the validity of the tools and approaches, and to reduce risks. Other states will be split accordingly for three (3) years (2 states per year). The last year will be used for the evaluation of the project to ascertain the extent to which the project has impacted the people.

Politics of Patriarchy in Malawi: Backlash against women's movement and political participation



Fellow: Zainab Quareen Chisenga

Country: Malawi

Final assignment supervisor: Magnea Marinósdóttir

Description: Women's movement's advocacy in electoral processes in Malawi has been increasing steadily since the resumption of Multiparty democracy in 1994. This growing advocacy has presented striking challenges to men who feel threatened by the attention on women are culturally expected to remain in the margins and socially situated as weapons of power struggles between political powers. Evidence of this was strong in the 2018-2020

electoral cycle in Malawi where women taking part in electoral processes as political candidates, electoral stakeholders and voters were subjected to multiple forms of electoral violence ranging from physical to sexual assaults and rape.

While countering these forms of violence, the women's movement found itself in a dilemma that questioned its credibility and created a backlash against the women's movement from political powers, public institutions, and citizenry. In analysing this backlash, the paper applies the Backlash Hypothesis to discuss the position of the women's movement in Malawi with reference to political participation, using the gendered electoral violence of the 2019-2020 electoral cycle as a case study.

The discussion qualitatively argues that women's cultural expectations and historical political socialization tolerate electoral violence against women and encourage the backlash to women's political participation that follows women's attempts at unsettling such socializations. It also proposes strategies for countering this backlash to strengthen the women's movement in Malawi and seeks to add to the growing body of knowledge in movement building and political advocacy.

Gender and Climate Change in Malawi: Understanding the impact on agricultural production systems and food security.



Fellow: Zamiwe Phiri

Country: Malawi

Final assignment supervisor: Jón Geir Pétursson

Description: Most sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries including Malawi, rely on agriculture for food, income, and poverty reduction. The current and anticipated effects of climate change threaten the agricultural sector which is largely dominated by women. Worse still, there is limited information available on gender-related decision-making in resource allocation which influences climate change mitigation and adaptation legislations. Understanding the gender disparities

among different rural households is a critical aspect of informing the gender policy on key climate change responses. This essay examines how the distinctive effects of climate change regarding agricultural production and food security affect Malawian men and women differently. With the Sustainable Livelihood Framework and the framework for building resilient food systems amidst climate change, the essay seeks to understand how gender roles intertwine in

the process of climate change. The essay has based its inferences from available literature in countries that are contextually related to Malawi as the data from Malawi. The essay further employs an intersectional lens in the discussion and draws upon empirical evidence on the gendered effects of climate change. The essay finds that indeed women's vulnerability has been increased with the consequences that have come about with climate change. From the analysis, men and women seem to experience climate variations distinctively and this also affects how they adapt to the changes. It is imperative to understand such gender dimensions for policymakers to facilitate more gender-sensitive approaches to agricultural production systems and food security systems which would then improve the quality of life for Malawians.

2.1.4. Extra Curricula Activities and Field Visits

The GEST fellows were invited to attend several extra-curricular activities parallel to the academic programme, hoping to further enrich their stay in Iceland. Due to the pandemic, and the short autumn semester, the extra curricula activities were fewer than often before. Nevertheless, the fellows had the opportunity to participate and attend several field visits, lectures, seminars and conferences.



The cohort of 2021 with the Icelandic Prime minister, Katrín Jakobsdóttir

Reykjavík Dialogue

During the first week, the fellows participated in the Reykjavík Dialogue, dedicated to renewing activism to end violence against women. The dialogue was hosted by the Icelandic government in co-operation with the City of Reykjavík and organised in collaboration with GEST's sister institute RIKK—Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference and took place at the Harpa conference/concert centre. After giving her opening address, the Prime Minister of Iceland, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, met with the fellows at the Harpa Concert/Conference Centre.

RKÍ – Protection Gender and Inclusion (PGI) Basic Training

In September the fellows were invited to participate in a 2.5-day course on Protection, Gender and Inclusion Basic Training, which was open for delegates of the Icelandic Red Cross, GRÓ GEST fellows, and members of Icelandic Civil Society organisations with relevant experience in international projects. The PGI Basic training aimed at raising awareness, enhancing knowledge and building skills of participants to integrate a protection, gender and inclusion approach to programming in emergency, crisis, and development settings. Participants were presented with key elements of PGI and guidance on how to prevent, mitigate and respond to risks, including basic response to child protection and sexual and gender-based violence concerns.

Field Visit in the South of Iceland

With the semester having been postponed until the autumn semester, the annual field visit to the south of Iceland was included in the orientation for the fellows. During their three-day tour, the fellows stopped at the main sights, some waterfalls and glaciers, along the south coast of Iceland. They hiked up to Svartifoss waterfall in Skaftafell, in Vatnajökull national park and joined a boat ride at Breiðarmerkur glacier lagoon. The fellows were introduced to the dramatic changes that have occurred at the Icelandic glaciers, as they are strongly affected by the changing climate.

The visit was a good preparation for GEST's academic module on Gender, Environment and Climate Change.



Few of the fellows standing in front of Sólheimajökull Glacier

Konukot

In October, the GEST fellows visited Konukot, the emergency shelter for homeless women in Reykjavík. Konukot provides access to basic needs in terms of housing, hygiene and food and is managed by Rótin (the Root) - Association for Women's Welfare. Rótin's objective is to promote public discussion on issues relating to women,



The 2021 cohort visiting Konukot, an emergency shelter for homeless women in Reykjavík

addiction, mental health, trauma and violence. During the visit, they discussed the importance of using evidence-based practices when it comes to treatment for women with addiction and the necessity for diverse solutions and a holistic approach to treatment where trauma history and other conditions are treated together.

President of Iceland

In November, the 2021 GEST fellows were welcomed at Bessastaðir, the residence of the Icelandic president, by both the president Mr. Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, and the first lady, Ms. Eliza Reid. Two fellows, Lkhagvadulam Jamiyandagva and Zainab Quareen Manonga, spoke on behalf of the cohort and introduced the fellows' diverse background, their experience in Iceland and their future ambitions.



The 2021 cohort met with the president of Iceland Mr. Guðni Th. Jóhannesson and the first lady Ms. Eliza Reid.

2.1.5. Graduation 2021

GRÓ GEST programme's 13th graduation and second graduation of GEST as a GRÓ Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change took place on 10 December 2021, where the 20 fellows were celebrated and awarded a postgraduate diploma in International Gender Studies from the University of Iceland. The 20 fellows joined the previously graduated 152 GEST fellows, in an expanding GEST alumni network.

The graduation ceremony took place at Veröld, the House of Vigdís, at the University of Iceland. The event was attended by Ms. Þórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development Cooperation; Dr. Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of Iceland; Ólöf Garðarsdóttir, Dean of the School of Humanities, Nína Björk Jónsdóttir, Director General of GRÓ Centre, and Jón Karl Ólafsson, Chair of the GRÓ Board as well as GEST fellows, supervisors, staff, and other guests.

Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir, Director of GRÓ GEST, opened the graduation ceremony following a musical



The newly graduated 2021 cohort with the chair of GRÓ board, the rector of the University of Iceland, the director of GRÓ GEST, the minister for foreign affairs and GRÓ director general.

performance by A Band Called Eva. Ms. Þórdís Kolbrún R. Gylfadóttir, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Dr. Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of Iceland shared their remarks, congratulating the 2021 fellows. Newly graduated fellow, Bernah Namatovu, addressed the guests and shared her reflections on the programme.

Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Awards

The Vigdís Finnbogadóttir award, was presented for the best final assignment. Ms. Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, the matron of the programme, sent her best wishes to the new graduates, but was not available to attend the ceremony. To be considered for the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir award, the work must show strong evidence of sophisticated gender analysis with appropriate academic references, and it shall be well structured and written.

The award was presented in two categories. The first category is for applied projects or project documents in which the fellow addresses and provides practical recommendations for an issue in relation to gender equality in their home country. The second category is for essays or research proposals, which aim at contributing to the existing academic literature on a particular topic relating to gender equality or outlining a proposal for a future PhD project.

In the first category, Claudia Pamela Chavarría Machado, with an assignment titled Community response to intimate partner violence (IPV) in Mexico City, received the award. In this project paper, Pamela succeeded in mapping out a project that puts victims of intimate partner violence and their needs at the centre of a community response programme. Including a nuanced legal analysis, the project considers the current pandemic and the shifting landscape of violence that has come with it. Instead of sticking with older models, the project builds on cutting edge work to introduce a comprehensive overhaul of Mexico City's response to intimate partner violence by supporting victims while addressing both the roots and causes of violence. The proposed project's survivor-centred approach brings together intersectionality, feminist legal theory and education to better address this pressing issue.

In the second category, Daria Burnasheva, with an assignment titled Indigenous women as water protectors, men as firefighters? Gender and indigeneity in the context of climate change in Sakha (Yakutia), received the award. Daria put forward a nuanced analysis on gender, indigeneity, and climate change. Her essay addresses a critical gap in research on how gender and climate change intersect by addressing the experiences of indigenous women "in the margins of the Global North." Situated in the aftermath of devastating wildfires in Yakutia in 2021, the work proposes a paradigm shift based on indigenous feminism that looks to feminize "wildfire narratives" to better protect human and other-than-human dwellers of this world.

Daria Burnasheva is the second fellow from the Arctic to have graduated from the GRÓ GEST programme. The scholarships for the GRÓ GEST fellows from the Arctic are funded by the Department of Arctic Affairs at the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs.



Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Þórdís Kolbrún R. Gylfadóttir; the award recipients, Pamela Chavarría Machado, and Daria Burnasheva; and the Rector of the University of Iceland, Dr. Jón Atli Benediktsson

2.1.6. Selection Process for the 2022 GEST Programme

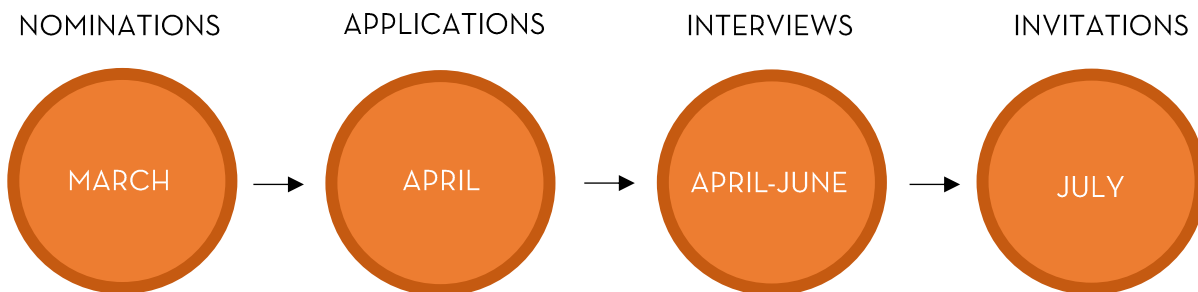
The selection process in 2021 for the 2022 cohort was based on two parallel nominations processes: an open call, and collaboration with universities through the Erasmus+ grant scheme and was completed prior to the arrival of the 2021 cohort to Iceland. The target group for the GEST postgraduate diploma programme is primarily junior professionals and researchers, working on gender issues for government ministries and agencies, civil society organizations and educational or research institutes in low/middle income countries, conflict and post-conflict societies.

The GEST programme sought nominations for candidates who complied to the following criteria:

- have at least one university degree at BA/BS/B.Ed. level
- have at least two years of professional experience relevant to the enhancement of gender equality
- are fluent in both spoken and written English
- are junior professionals or young researchers (*Priority is given to individuals younger than 35 years old)
- have leadership skills and are in a position to lead change towards gender equality
- are committed to enhancing gender equality within their community
- are nationals and residents in low or middle income countries, or from conflict/post-conflict societies*
- will receive credit transfer (ECTS) for the GEST programme to their home university**

*For Open Call candidates

**For Erasmus+ Grant Scheme candidates



Open Call

The *open call* requires nominations of candidates from established institutions, government agencies, non-governmental organisations or higher education institutions. An open call was issued earlier than before, in February, via GEST's official website and social media outlets, and was disseminated among partners of GEST and the GEST alumni. Due to the low number of applications from male candidates, GEST engaged in targeted outreach efforts to reach leading organisations in engaging men in gender equality research and activities.

Erasmus+ Grant Scheme

A call was issued via e-mail to GEST's Erasmus+ partner universities. The Erasmus+ Grant Scheme supports the fellows with a daily allowance and partial travel grant, which is supplemented by funds from GEST's general allocation to raise their financial support to the level of a full fellowship.

The partners in collaborative universities received applications from students, pre-screened them and prepared a short list of qualified candidates for final selection by GEST. The selection was based on the same criteria as the GEST open call, where involvement with grassroots organizations and extra-curricular activities to promote gender equality constituted an advantage for the candidates.

After long periods of lock down in many of GEST's partner universities, GEST received stronger engagement with its partner universities for the 2022 programme than the 2021 programme. Six candidates were selected through the Erasmus+ Grant Scheme for the spring semester of 2022 from the University of Birzeit in Palestine, University of Phristina in Kosovo, University of Nairobi in Kenya, University of Ghana, and University of Sarajevo.

Final Selection

The GEST programme received 247 nominations for candidates who fulfilled minimum requirements for the programme. Of these candidates, 215 submitted an electrical application on the GEST website where 168 applicants identified as female and 47 as males. Of the total number of applicants, 56 candidates were invited for an interview, 16 males and 40 females. The interviews were comprehensive about the candidates' experience and education as well as the future with a special focus on their proposed final assignment with the GEST programme. The evaluation process also included a short-written assignment. The final selection included 20 females and five males, with four

people on a waiting list. With few cancelations due to personal issues, a total number of 23 candidates were expected to attend the programme in 2022, 18 females and five males.

2.2. Short Courses

The GEST programme has developed five-day long short courses, designed to be implemented in partner countries, especially targeted for district level and front-line professionals. In the last years, GEST has focused on two main themes in its short course development, 1) Gender and Climate Change, and 2) Teaching Gender to Youth. These two short courses have been implemented in partner countries in Uganda and Malawi. In 2021, both short courses were implemented, although affected by restrictions caused by the pandemic.

2.2.1. Gender and Climate Change in Malawi

The development of the short course on Gender and Climate Change in Malawi was initiated mid-2019. This short course was built on a short course curriculum developed for Uganda in 2012, and then adjusted to the Malawian context. Early March 2020, the international GEST consultant Dr. Auður H. Ingólfssdóttir travelled to Malawi to initiate the content development in collaboration with the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) and the Ministry of Gender, Child Development and Community Development. The initial implementation plan was to roll out the course in September 2020, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the pilot course was postponed.

A team of experts from LUANAR led by Dr. Tasokwa Kakota and GEST consultant Dr. Auður H. Ingólfssdóttir continued to develop the course during the pandemic with the objective of contributing to gender sensitive climate policies in Malawi through an increased awareness of the gender dimension of climate change. The course focused on both mitigation measures and adaptation to climate change and is to be conducted at district level. The main target group is gender and climate change stakeholders at district level in Malawi, including representatives from regional and local governments, academics, researchers, civil society, women's organizations, relevant private actors, and the media.

Late 2021, GRÓ GEST in partnership with LUANAR, conducted a short course on Gender and Climate Change in Mchinji district in Malawi. The short course facilitators were a team of experts from LUANAR, led by Dr. Tasokwa Kakota, and during this first course, they were joined by a GRÓ GEST consultant, Dr. Auður Ingólfssdóttir.



Participants and instructors during field visits as a part of the short course Gender & Climate Change in Malawi

The course in Mchinji was a pilot course where the participants were district officials in different sectors in Mchinji district. The participants discussed the science of climate change, climate impacts, and the links between climate change and gender, both generally and more specifically for Malawi. The participants also discussed how to create gender sensitive climate policy by using gender mainstreaming as a tool. In addition to lectures, exercises and discussions, the participants visited climate related initiatives and projects in the Mchinji district.



Short course participants with instructors in Mchinji District

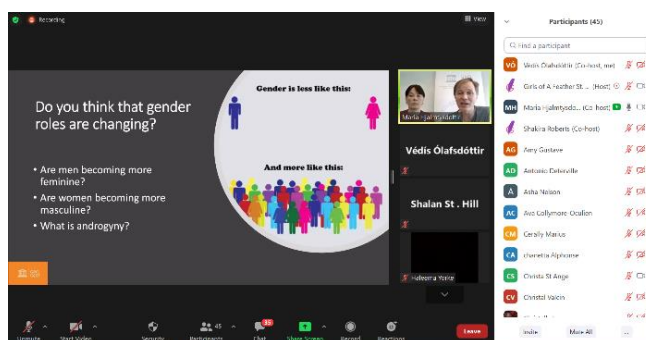
2.2.2. Teaching Gender to Youth

In July 2021, GRÓ GEST in partnership with Girls of A Feather, St. Lucia, facilitated a two-day online version of the short course Teaching Gender to Youth. The training took place in five sessions and was moderated by GRÓ GEST teachers Þórður Kristinsson and María Hjálmtýsdóttir, who both have years of experience in teaching gender to youth in Iceland.

The training was initiated by Girls of A Feather, a non-profit mentorship organisation in St. Lucia, which uses an integrated approach of community and school based interventions to raise the consciousness of adolescents about gender inequality in St. Lucia. Among Girls of A Feather's activities is the establishment of school clubs, where the organisation emphasizes education, and promoting gender equality among the youth. Girls of A Feather invited approximately 50 professionals, teachers, and NGO employees, to participate in this two-day training.

The short course on Teaching Gender to Youth was initially implemented as a five-day training course, and Þórður and María adjusted the course to an online forum, with five sessions conducted over the course of two days. The online course was well attended, and sparked lively discussions and questions on gender equality among youth and in St. Lucia.

Attendees of the training were provided with a Teaching Gender to Youth toolbox, intended to support the integration of gender in their teaching and mentoring. Girls of A Feather will complete the training by hosting workshops, where the training attendees will have the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the exercises and methods introduced in the online course.



3. High-Quality, Collaborative, and Policy-Relevant Research

The GEST programme contributes to international policy-relevant research by engaging in international research networks and collaborations. These activities are in accordance with GEST's multidisciplinary approach of promoting gender equality and social justice in low/middle income, conflict and post-conflict countries. Activities include GEST's newly established Ph.D. scholarship programme, research networks and academic projects.

3.1. Ph.D. Scholarship Programme

The first formal GEST Ph.D. full scholarship was announced in January 2020 and in 2021 two GRÓ GEST alumni commenced their Ph.D. studies at the University of Iceland



Stella Tereka, a 2016 GEST alumna from Uganda, enrolled in the interdisciplinary doctoral programme in Environment and Natural Resources where her supervisor is Dr. Jón Geir Pétursson, an associate professor at the Faculty of Sociology, Anthropology and Folkloristics and at the Faculty of Life and Environmental Sciences and a long time contributor to the GEST academic programme. Stella's research project contributes to GEST's focus on Sustainability and Gender Equality in Sub-Saharan Africa: a research position advertised in 2020 as a collaboration with Makerere University's School of Women and Gender Studies. In her research, Stella aims to examine the gendered dimensions of climate change and to identify effective approaches and strategies to support gender equality transformation in Uganda's policies and processes in response to climate change.

Stella Tereka holds a MA (2013) in Development Studies from Uganda Martyrs University Institute of Ethics and Development Studies in Kampala, Uganda, and a BA (2009) in Development Studies from Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. She has worked at the Uganda country office of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in various positions since 2008, most recently as a programme associate officer for gender and climate change, and a gender focal person.

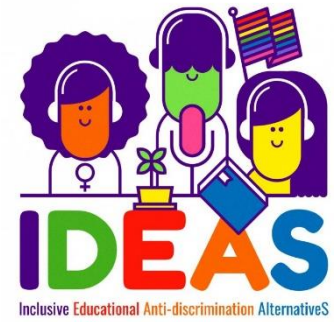
Yeshiwas Degu Belay, a 2017 GEST alumnus from Ethiopia, enrolled in the Faculty of History and Philosophy in the School of Humanities, where he will work under the supervision of Dr. Valur Ingimundarson, a Professor of Contemporary History. He will pursue a joint Ph.D. degree at the University of Iceland and the International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam. His research project deals with Ethiopia's implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, focusing on the national effort to integrate women into peacekeeping and on how the gender gap in peace operations (women only make up 16% of the Ethiopian peacekeeping force) has been addressed, the interactions between national and global actors regarding the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies in peace operations, and the experiences, obstacles and contributions of women peacekeepers.

Yeshiwas Belay has completed MA degrees in International Relations and International Security from the University of Groningen (2019) and in Human Rights, Gender, and Conflict Studies (2013) from the International Institute of Social Studies in The Hague. His BA degree (2006) is in Political Science and International Relations from Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia. Yeshiwas was a lecturer at Mekelle University in Ethiopia and has completed internships at the Youth Alliance for Leadership and Development in Africa, in Cambridge, USA, the Slovenian Migration Institute in Ljubljana, and at the IHE Delft Institute for Water Education in the Netherlands.



3.2. IDEAS: Inclusive Digital Education Anti-Discrimination Alternatives

GEST joined as expert consultant in this ERASMUS+ funded collaboration with Centre for Gender Studies, Belgrade (Serbia), University of Karlova (Czech Republic), Colour Youth (Greece), Centre for Gender Studies (Croatia), and Research Centre for Culture, Politics and Identities (Serbia). This project is a response to the problem of lacking accessible and free anti discriminatory educational content both in formal and non-formal education sectors, especially in the context of rising discriminatory policies and activities in Europe (and worldwide). The goal of the project is to develop a cross-cutting and innovative learning programme intended for adult learners and consists of several courses/modules and a series of interactive lectures, and workshops in an audio digital format of podcasts. The project partners conceptualize and record 35 podcasts, with the aim of disseminating feminist knowledge and contributing to the empowerment of multiple marginalized groups.



GEST contributed to this project by conducting a one day-long workshop on podcasting in Athens in 2021 where GRÓ GEST project manager shared his knowledge in podcasting and digital learning. Furthermore, GRÓ GEST created five podcast episodes where Icelandic and international experts were interviewed on the topic of gender and climate change.

The project is funded by the EU, within the Erasmus+ programme, while the implementation partner is the Tempus foundation in Belgrade.



GEST project manager, Thomas Brorsen Smidt and workshop participants

3.3. Global Gender and Environment Outlook (GGE0)-2

Led by GRÓ GEST's long-time scholar and teacher, Prof. Joni Seager, a collaboration initiated in 2020, hosted by GRÓ GEST and funded by UN Women and UNEP, was intended to take the form of an on-site knowledge sharing meeting in Iceland, to evaluate the prospects for producing a successor to the Global Gender and Environment Outlook, GGE0 from 2016. Unfortunately, the project was adapted to the realities of a COVID-stricken world and the meeting was cancelled. Selected participants produced research into the subject without travelling, which will be used to inform the continuation of GGE0-2.

3.4. ICE-QUEEN

GRÓ GEST co-hosts the RANNIS-funded three-year research project on Queer Refugees in Queer Utopias: Inclusions and Exclusions, led by a GEST project manager on a part-time basis. The aim of the project is to generate knowledge on the social experiences of SOGIE refugees in Iceland, with an international focus towards Italy and Greece.

4. Platform for Transnational Dialogue, Knowledge Production and Exchange

The GEST mission includes creating a platform for a transnational dialogue and knowledge production where international scholars and experts exchange insights and expertise to advance gender equality. This platform also enables a conversation with the public both transnationally and locally. GEST engages in a several academic collaborations through conferences, projects and research, with main activities including conferences, seminars, lectures, publications, research, online courses, podcasts, social media as well as international networks, such as the Nordic Women Mediators network and the GEST alumni network. The online platform continued to be an essential medium for transnational conversations during the pandemic.

4.1. Online Courses on the edX Platform

In 2020, GEST launched its first Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on the edX platform. The course “Gender and Intersectionality” offers a starting point for anyone coming to gender studies for the first time and uses examples from popular culture, classical literature, and history, to analyse religious texts and traditions, class divisions, racial inequality, sexualities, and nationalism through a gendered lens. The course was run as a self-paced open course until June 2021. Due to the demand, the course was relaunched in November 2021. Since the first run of “Gender and Intersectionality”, the course has attracted over 9000 new learners, with over 600 students enrolling in the edX verified track and receiving a signed diploma from GRÓ GEST and U IcelandX.

4.1.1. New Online Courses

In 2021, GRÓ GEST continued their work on expanding their MOOC catalogue in collaboration with scholars from London School of Economics, Peace Research Institute Oslo, University of Oslo and the University of Cape Town. It is envisioned that 2022 will see the launch of two new MOOCs from GRÓ GEST and partners; one entitled Gender, Violence and Post-Conflict States (May 2022) and Critical Approaches to Gender and Development (November 2022). The courses are currently being recorded at the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Iceland, which invests in cutting edge technology and expertise to produce MOOCs that comply with international standards of excellence in online learning.



In the studio: GEST project manager Dr. Thomas Brorsen Smidt and GEST research specialist Dr. Giti Chandra with Prof. Robert Morell on the left and Dr. Marsha Henry on the right.

4.2. Conferences, Seminars, Lectures

GEST seeks to create space for knowledge sharing by hosting and coordinating conferences, seminars, workshops, and public lectures. This year was another challenging year in terms of gathering people physically, setting a strong need for creating hybrid platforms. All of GEST public activities within this pillar, took place either fully online or in hybrid format.

4.2.1. GEST RIKK Lecture Series

#MeToo: Thinking Forward was the topic of the joint RIKK – Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference and Gender Equality Studies and Training (GEST) Programme conversation series in spring 2021. The series focused on #MeToo gains as well as the challenges that remain in the fight against harassment, discrimination, and violence. The conversation series took place in both English and Icelandic, and was entirely online. In the series, authors from the newly published Routledge Handbook of the #MeToo Movement, edited by GRÓ GEST Director Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir, and GRÓ GEST Research Specialist, Dr. Giti Chandra, and the newly published #MeToo book, a part of Fléttur book series by RIKK, edited by RIKK project manager Elín Björk Jóhannsdóttir, and specialists Kristín I. Pálsdóttir and Þorgerður H Þorvaldsdóttir, engaged in a dialogue, reflecting on each other's work on the #MeToo Movement.



4.2.2. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie,

The author of “We Should All Be Feminists” and “Half of a Yellow Sun”, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, gave an open lecture in the Large Hall of Háskólabíó – University Cinema in September, as a part of the Reykjavík International Literary Festival (RILF) and in collaboration with RIKK and GRÓ-GEST.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is known for several of her influential works, in addition to the works listed above, “Dear Ljeawele”, and “A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions”, and her most recent book “Notes on Grief”, which first appeared as an essay in The New Yorker in 2020. Her works have been translated into over thirty languages, including Icelandic.

Irma Erlingsdóttir, Director of GRÓ GEST moderated the session and GRÓ GEST fellows actively participated by addressing Ms. Ngozi Adichie in a questions & answers session. The GRÓ GEST fellows had the opportunity to meet with Chimamanda post the lecture and engage in short discussions.

4.2.3. The Imagine Forum: Building Trust for Sustainable Peace

GRÓ GEST joined Höfði Reykjavík Peace Centre in hosting its annual conference on peace, in cooperation with the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs and The Institute for Sustainability Studies. The conference took place in October at Veröld - The House of Vigdís at the University of Iceland and was also streamed.

The conference addressed the challenges of reaffirming the UN's role to settle disputes peacefully as international cooperation as the effectiveness of multilateral institutions has been questioned. The threats of climate change, pandemics, and the increasing role of non-state actors in conflict in a rapidly changing environment contribute to these challenges and the conference's focus was to discuss sustainable solutions to these issues. The event was divided up in four seminars: Broken Promises? The International Community and Afghanistan; Global Citizenship Education for Peace; Addressing the Impact of Climate Change on Peace; and Global Citizenship Education for Peace.



Among the speakers were Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme from 2009-2017; Fawzia Koofi, Afghan politician and women's rights activist; Gulalai Ismail, human rights activist and founder of Aware Girls; Juan Pablo Villalobos, Mexican author and writer of the novel *Down the Rabbit Hole*; Sanam Nagaragi-Anerlini a British-Iranian author, and Director of the Centre for Women, Peace, and Security at London School of Economics.

Two former GEST fellows, Ofoq Roshan and Zeba Sultani, who moved to Iceland following the Taliban

takeover in August, participated in the first panel of the conference, sharing their insights about the situation of Afghanistan.

4.2.4. Protection Gender and Inclusion Seminar

The seminar Protection, Gender and Inclusion (PGI) took place in October and was hosted by the Icelandic Red Cross in collaboration with GRÓ GEST and with support from the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The aim of the PGI seminar was to assemble guests and participants from diverse backgrounds and disciplines to share knowledge and lessons learned about protection, safeguarding, social inclusion and gender and diversity, as essential perspectives for a comprehensive approach to emergency response and development work.

The seminar consisted of a full day webinar organised in four sessions. The first session offered an overview of Iceland's strategy for International Cooperation and the state of the world regarding the situation of women and children as reported by UN agencies. The second session gathered experts around the area of protection, specifically specialised protection issues such as sexual and gender-based violence and child marriage. The third session focused on gender both as an evolving concept and as a key area of work. The fourth and last session covered inclusion, showcasing different experiences of community engagement and inclusion of people with disability.

The second day of the seminar was structured in three face-to-face workshops at the University of Iceland. The first



session addressed gender budgeting activism by Feminist Finance, the second session was led by Azra Sehic who talked about how to approach gender-based violence in humanitarian settings, and lastly Melanie Powell addressed protection and psychosocial support.

This PGI seminar is part of GRÓ GEST and the Icelandic Red Cross collaboration.



4.2.5 Inclusive Mediation to Sustain Peace

In November, GRÓ GEST, in partnership with Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) and Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), hosted the workshop: *Inclusive Mediation to Sustain Peace* as a side event to the Nordic Women Mediators network's annual meeting (see 4.5.2.).

The workshop's aim was to provide a platform for discussions on how to mobilize and include representation by all community actors, including diverse groups of women, girls, and marginalized groups, to every level of peace making. The workshop was divided in two sections; the first led by Dr. Marsha Henry, Associate Professor at the Department of Gender Studies and a founding member of the Centre for Women, Peace and Security at the London School of Economics, where she critically discussed the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The second part of the workshop was led by Dr. Catherine Turner, Associate Professor at Durham Law School and Deputy Director of the Durham Global Security Institute, who focused on inclusive conflict mediation and the redesigning of peace processes.

The workshop was attended by 35 people including NWM members, GRÓ GEST fellows, and external specialists located in Iceland. The discussions were very rich, where experienced experts within the field of conflict mediation exchanged their insights with diverse group of gender experts, representing over 15 countries.

The workshop was funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers through NIKK.



GEST fellows in discussions with NWM members and other participants

4.2.5. Decolonisation of Nordic Higher Education

GRÓ-GEST organised, in collaboration with Yulia Gradszkova, associate professor of history at Södertörn University, an intra-Nordic workshop *“Decolonizing Nordic Higher Education”* at Södertörn University in Stockholm in October. The workshop was supported by ReNEW, a research hub established to enhance cooperation to develop new quality research on the Nordic region within a global context.

In the Nordic countries, the history of colonisation is largely absent from collective consciousness in higher education. As a result, many Nordic higher education institutions fail to interrogate their own colonial positionality in their collaborations with post-colonial societies. This has direct consequences for what kinds of knowledges are supported and what narratives are produced and reproduced, and for what purposes. The goal of the workshop was to bring together scholars, primarily from Nordic universities, in a bid to stimulate intra-Nordic collaboration on research, action-plans and best-practice recommendations relating to decolonization processes in Nordic higher education.

During the workshop GEST's representatives learned invaluable lessons and received important feedback from scholars from across the Nordic region and beyond, which will lay the groundwork for future collaborations within this important field. The workshop featured presentations, both online and in person, by scholars from across the Nordic region and in a plethora of different academic fields, including keynotes from prominent decolonial scholars Madina Tlostanova and Rauna Kuokkanen.

4.3. Communication Platform

GEST's communication platform's main components are the GEST website, as well as social media platforms. These avenues of communication are essential to support GEST's mission to engage in a transnational dialogue on gender equality and enable GEST to disseminate news about GEST activities, as well as to reach out to potential partners and fellows.

4.3.1. Website

At the GRÓ website, visitors can navigate the four programmes, learn about their operations, news, alumni and publications. The website includes a comprehensive database of all staff, lecturers and alumni as well as publications.

The website development has continued throughout the year 2021 as components of the website were yet to be released.

4.3.2. Social Media

The GEST programme continues to host an active Facebook page where it publishes news about the programme, as well as its alumni. It also operates a new LinkedIn page, a Twitter page and a Youtube channel where videos developed by GEST are hosted. Lastly, GEST hosts a closed Facebook group for the GEST Alumni where GEST shares news about the programme, scholarship opportunities, and news about the alumni.

4.3.3. The GEST Podcast

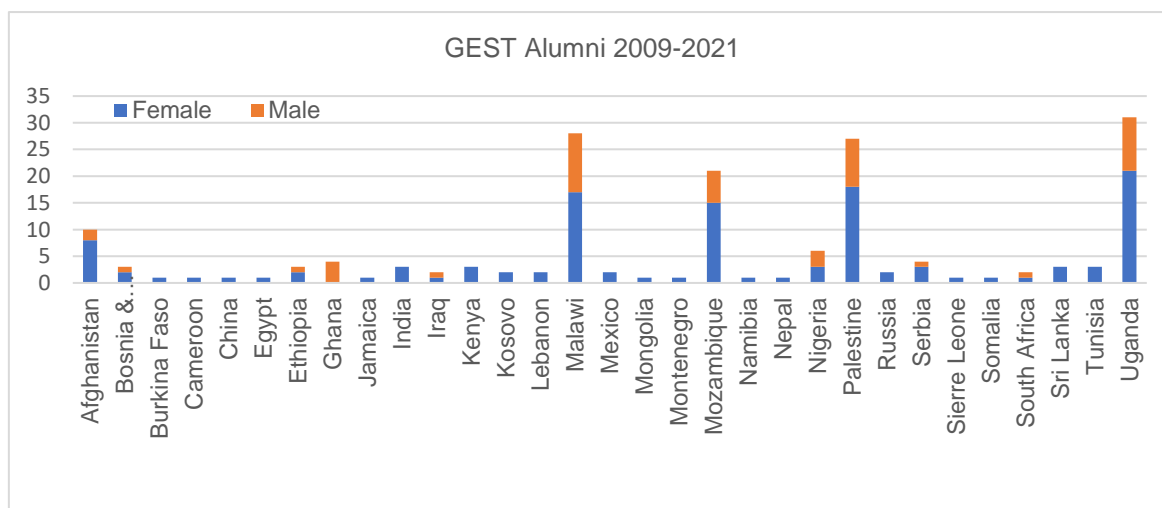
Throughout the year 2021, GRÓ GEST published a number of podcast episodes. The spring 2021 podcast series was dedicated to GEST Erasmus+ partner universities. The podcasts included conversations with Linda Gusia, a feminist activist and lecturer at the department of Sociology at the University of Prishtina in Kosovo; Tonya Haynes, a lecturer at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies; Nita Barrow Unit, University of the West Indies; Islah Jad, the director of the Women’s Studies Institute, an associate professor and a lecturer on gender issues and politics at Birzeit University in Palestine; and Myriam Sfeir, director of the Arab Institute for Women at the Lebanese American University.

4.4. International Collaboration Networks

GEST coordinates two formal networks, the Alumni Network, consisting of GEST alumni, and the Icelandic branch of the Nordic Women Mediators network, listed here below.

4.4.1. The Alumni Network

The alumni network consists of 172 individuals who have graduated from the GEST programme since 2009. The group of gender equality experts represent 31 countries, with the majority located in four of Iceland’s long term development partners, Malawi, Mozambique, Uganda and Palestine. GEST aims to actively support and engage the GEST alumni network in its operations, by initiating their engagement in seminars and projects, to further extend the GEST alumni’s learning, sharing and contribution to the GEST programme.



The Alumni Fund

In 2020, GEST launched an alumni seed fund to finance GEST alumni-led projects. The purpose of the fund is to support alumni in disseminating their knowledge and expertise obtained during their participation in the GEST programme, and to encourage alumni to develop and implement projects focused on advancing gender equality in their home communities.

Through the fund, GEST issues an annual call for proposals for projects with the primary focus on advancing gender equality and promoting gender transformative approaches to achieve social change. These priorities need to be reflected in the project's activities and strategies. The projects funded are to be initiated and managed by alumni of the GEST programme, who must function as main applicants and be ultimately responsible for implementing the project.

The first alumni fund recipient is Chinenye Anekwe, a Development Specialist at Solar Sisters, an NGO that has helped kickstart more than 5,000 women clean energy entrepreneurs. She was awarded a grant for the project "Business Booster Programme for 100 Rural Women Energy Entrepreneurs".

Conceived at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project set out to fund community sensitization programmes for 100 Solar Sister Entrepreneurs (SSEs) in each of the 25 states where Solar Sister operates. This business booster project supported 100 Solar Sister Entrepreneurs in Nigeria to grow their local clean energy business enterprises through targeted activities. The project aimed to improve their capacity, expand their customer base and increase their market visibility. This GEST Alumni Fund grant enabled the Solar Sister Entrepreneurs to create additional impact by funding community-based market awareness and sensitization campaigns, as well as providing marketing materials that build awareness of gender-inclusive business, increase the uptake of clean energy conversion, and provide enhanced economic opportunity to women entrepreneurs.

Within six months, the 100 SSEs reached over 7,000 users with clean energy in 30 communities in Nigeria – five more communities than originally planned. In the target areas of the project, women-owned clean energy businesses have grown their business capital from an average of \$1,000 to an average of \$1,500, a growth that has continued even after the end of the project.

Moreover, after the end of the project, 70% of participating SSEs have gone on to organize mini sensitization campaigns in their own communities, and some of them have moved their businesses to new locations as their self-esteem was boosted. Additionally, participating SSEs scaled up their product portfolio from predominantly pico-systems and phone charging lamps to solar home systems. Most community members upgraded their pico-systems to solar home systems. Finally, this project saw the recruitment of at least 10 new women entrepreneurs during the project. These recruits reported being inspired by what their fellow women were doing, and the prestige that came with it.



An entrepreneur participating in the project

Alumni Seminar 2020 and publishing of research papers

In December 2020, GEST hosted the first Alumni Online Seminar where six GEST alumni shared their research findings on the gendered impact of COVID-19 restrictions. The seminar was well attended by former fellows, representing eleven GEST cohorts, as well as GEST lecturers, supervisors, and staff.

The purpose of the seminar was to record and document a historical snapshot of how the gendered impact related to the global pandemic of COVID-19 unfolded in different national contexts. To assess and further understand the gendered impact of the COVID-19 restrictions, the GEST team called for research proposals from its alumni in October 2020. Six proposals were selected, and those responsible were asked to present their findings at the seminar. Following the seminar, three alumni continued with their research and published their papers on the GEST webpage in 2021. The following research papers are available on the GEST webpage:

- **Shamim Nampijja:** Analysis on the Impact of COVID-19: A Study on Women and Girls with Disabilities in Uganda
- **Nadhiya Najab:** The Balancing Act: Gender Dynamics of Remote Working in Sri Lanka
- **Chinenye Anekwe:** Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Rural Clean Energy Women Entrepreneurs in Nigeria: A Mixed Method Study

4.5.2 Nordic Women Mediators



NWM members and operational partners participating in the 2021 annual meeting in Iceland

GEST coordinates the Icelandic branch of the Nordic Women Mediators Network (NWM) in close collaboration with the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The NWM is a network of women from the Nordic countries with professional expertise relevant to conflict mediation, peace-building and negotiations.

The 2021 annual meeting of the Nordic Women Mediators network took place in Iceland from 17-19 November. The meeting was held in hybrid format, with over 30 people attending in person at the Culture House and another 10-15 people participating online.

The opening event set the tone for the annual meeting, with a conversation between Mahbouba Seraj, Afghani journalist, women's

rights activist, and founder of the Afghan Women's Network, and Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, NWM Iceland chapter member, former UN Women Country Representative in Afghanistan and current Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. They discussed the situation for women and girls in Afghanistan and how the international community, with a focus on the Nordic countries, can support following the recent Taliban seizure of power. Their conversation was followed by panel discussions moderated by Dr. Silja Bára Ómarsdóttir, a member of the NWM Iceland and a professor of international relations at the University of Iceland.

The second day consisted of three panel conversations about transformative approaches to peace processes, how to best include and strengthen women in mediation and peacebuilding efforts, evaluating interventions, and the way forward. Following the conversations, the network members engaged in group discussions. The third day was dedicated to internal discussions about the Nordic Women Mediators network, including an update from its members, reflecting upon the network's work until now as well as the future of the Global Alliance of the Regional Women Mediators.

The Nordic Women Mediators (NWM) was established in Oslo, Norway, in 2015 to connect women from the five Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden – who all have professional expertise relevant to conflict mediation, peace-building and negotiations, with the intention of sustaining peace through promoting the inclusive and meaningful participation of women in all phases of peace processes. GRÓ-GEST is the operational partner of the NWM's Iceland network and is supported by the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs.



5. Management, Personnel and Finance

5.1. University of Iceland

Since the establishment of the GEST programme, the University of Iceland (UI) has actively contributed to the development of the programme with direct financial support, administrative support, academic expertise and collaborative research institutes. Furthermore, during the academic semester, the GEST fellows integrate into the University's community.

5.1.1. RIKK & EDDA

The primary Icelandic collaborative institutes in research and research formation in 2019 are the EDDA Research Centre and RIKK – Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference at the University of Iceland. Established in 1991, RIKK has been instrumental in promoting research with a gender focus and discussions about gender related issues. The institute has from the outset been an interdisciplinary institution where scholars from the social sciences, natural sciences, health sciences and the humanities join forces. The University of Iceland is also the host institution of EDDA, an interdisciplinary centre in critical contemporary research, with emphasis on (in)equality and difference. Through its academic activities, EDDA's goal is to influence public policy and societal debates, especially in the fields of gender equality; social policies; participatory democracy; and foreign, security, and development policies. GEST collaborates with RIKK and EDDA in several workshops, publications, and knowledge sharing.

5.2. Institutional Partnership Agreements

Through its work, GEST has established institutional partnership agreements with higher education institutions as well as organisations. During the year 2020, GEST engaged in new agreements as well as renewing contracts with long standing partners.

The Erasmus+ grant scheme has been an important source of co-financing of fellows and visiting scholars for the GEST programme as well as specific projects such as for the online courses and podcasts. GEST collaborates with various universities with the aim to establish academic partnerships to promote inter-cultural exchange of knowledge and provide students with the opportunity to be exposed to a community in Iceland which is at the global forefront of gender equality. The Erasmus+ programme further facilitates staff mobility to strengthen academic collaboration and research efforts.

In 2021, GEST engaged with the following Universities through the institutional agreements either with student or staff exchange:

- Makerere University, Uganda
- The University of Ghana
- The University of Sarajevo, (Center for Interdisciplinary Studies), Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Lebanese American University
- Kabul University, Afghanistan
- The University of Pristina, Kosovo
- Birzeit University, Palestine
- University of Nairobi, Kenya

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there were minimum staff and student exchange during the year 2021. Nevertheless, GRÓ GEST kept good relations with their partners, by engaging them in interviews for the GEST podcast (see 4.3.3.). Due to the Taliban takeover, the identified student from Kabul University was unable to join the programme in 2021, as she relocated to the Netherlands. Nevertheless, Myriam Sfeir Murad, the Director of the Arab Institute for Women at the Lebanese American University visited the GEST programme. During her visit, she taught at the GEST programme, and shared her research with GEST staff. For the semester 2022, GRÓ GEST expected six students from Erasmus+ to join the programme.

In addition to the Inter-institutional agreements, GEST leads the collaboration of London School of Economics, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), University of Cape Town and the University of Oslo, in developing a transnational online course on gender, development and post-conflict states, as well as partnering in the IDEAS Podcast project, led by Center for Women's Studies from Belgrade. Both of these collaborations are fully funded by the Erasmus+ grant scheme (see 3.1. and 4.2.2).

5.3. GRÓ GEST Personnel

The GEST programme relies on a team of dedicated local and international experts. This includes the GEST staff as well as experts contributing to the academic programme as lecturers, supervisors or module coordinators.

5.3.1. GEST Staff



Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir is the director of GEST. She is a Professor at the University of Iceland where she also heads RIKK — Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference and the EDDA Research Center on critical contemporary research, which focuses on the politics of equality in the humanities and social sciences. Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir has led several large-scale academic projects in the fields of gender studies, globalization, contemporary politics and critical theory, and has wide-ranging experience in cooperating with government ministries, public and private organizations on policy-relevant gender and equality research. Dr. Erlingsdóttir holds a D.E.A (diplôme d'études supérieures) in gender studies and Ph.D. from Sorbonne University in comparative literature and is a specialist in critical theory, contemporary literature and gender. She has published books, articles and book chapters in these fields.



Dr. Giti Chandra is a research specialist at GEST and has been a part-time lecturer at GEST since 2016. In 2021, Giti coordinated the module Gender, Security and Violence and taught in the modules Gender, Security and Violence, Gender Theories and Concepts, academic working methods in the GEST programme in addition to providing academic supervision of fellow's final assignments. In 2021, Giti, together with Thomas Brorsen Smidt, project manager, continued to develop the GEST edX online course, and is working on the second edX online course on Gender and Violence in Conflict and Post-Conflict States. She furthermore moderated number of podcast episodes and online seminars/lectures.

Dr. Giti Chandra was an associate professor at the Department of English at St. Stephen's College in New Delhi in India before relocating in Iceland in 2016. She has a BA, MA, and M.Phil degrees in English Literature from St Stephen's College and Delhi University and an MA and Ph.D. from the Department of Literatures in English from Rutgers University, USA. Her doctoral thesis is titled "Women's Narratives of Violence and Collective Identity: To witness these wrongs unspeakable".



Guðrún Eysteinsdóttir is the operations manager of GEST and is responsible for all academic administration of the GEST fellows as well as GEST's office administration. This includes planning for the application period each year; working on and overseeing the interview and admissions process and the fellow's process of preparing for arrival in Iceland; planning for their arrival and housing preparations; classroom scheduling, liaising with other UI administrative units regarding services and requirements for fellows; documentation and preservation of GEST's student records; preparing for graduation and other events; also all aspects of budgeting and financial reporting, as well as purchasing and payment functions. In 2021, she was the project manager for the module Gender Development: Tools and Strategies.

Guðrún has been involved in higher education administration since 2001 and has been at the University of Iceland since 2007. She holds a BA in Theatre Arts from San Francisco State University, an Ed.M degree in Higher Education from Harvard Graduate School of Education and a postgraduate diploma in Public Administration from the University of Iceland.



Dr. Thomas Brorsen Smidt is a project manager at the GEST programme. In 2021, Thomas contributed to the academic programme through the selection of fellows, orientation of the fellows, and coordinating and teaching in the first module, Gender Theories and Concepts. In 2021, Thomas has led the coordination of research on SOGIE refugees as well as the development of the content for the second and third GEST's online edX courses. Thomas is engaged in the alumni network activities, such as the alumni fund and alumni seminar. Thomas has contributed on behalf of GEST in two international collaborations, the IDEAS project, and the Decolonising of the Higher Education. Thomas is the main host of the GEST podcast which was released early 2020.

Thomas graduated with a Ph.D. in Gender Studies from the University of Iceland in 2018. His research interests centre on gender in relation to higher education and work-life

balance issues as well as to feminism, sexual politics, migration and queer theory. Before joining GEST, he worked as a researcher in the cross-national research project GARCIA under the 7th European Framework programme.



Védís Ólafsdóttir is a project manager at the GEST programme. Védís contributed to the academic programme through the selection of fellows, orientation planning, evaluations, coordination of the ERASMUS+ partnerships as well as the module coordination of Gender, Environment and Climate Change. Administrative tasks included overall planning and reporting for the GEST programme. Védís oversaw the communication of GEST via the GEST website and social media and coordinated the short course development of gender and climate change in Malawi and teaching gender to youth. Furthermore, she led the coordination of GEST behalf of the PGI seminar, Inclusive Mediation Workshop and the Nordic Women Mediators annual meeting.

Védís has a BSc degree in International Business and Politics from the Copenhagen Business School, and an MA degree in Ethnology from the University of Iceland. She has

worked internationally in educational, development, and humanitarian organisations in China, Malawi and Jordan.



Anna Guðrún Aradóttir, is a project manager at the GEST programme. She led the coordination of the admission process of fellows to the postgraduate diploma programme, the selection process, communication to fellows, and all immigration processes. She furthermore supports with all administrative tasks at the GEST programme.

Anna Guðrún holds an MA degree in Global Studies from the University of Gothenburg and a BA degree in Anthropology from the University of Iceland. Anna Guðrún has worked with ICEIDA, and WFP in Mozambique.



Elín Björk Jóhannsdóttir is a project manager at RIKK - Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference and EDDA Research Center, and contributes to specific projects at GEST. Elín returned to RIKK and GEST in 2019, and had previously worked with the institutions in 2016. In 2021, Elín organized the spring GEST/RIKK 2021 conversation series, and assisted with the application process.

Elín holds an MA degree in Comparative Literature which she persuaded at a Ph.D.-level at Stony Brook University in the US, where she also worked as a teaching assistant and an undergraduate instructor.



Dr. Guðrún Sif Friðriksdóttir has been a supervisor for GEST students since 2018 and joined as the coordinator for the module Gender and Development in August 2020. Guðrún Sif main duties were with RIKK, but assisted with GEST events, such as organisation of the Nordic Women Mediators annual meeting and events related to GEST alumni.

Guðrún Sif graduated with a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Iceland in 2019. Her thesis looked into the reintegration of ex-combatants in Burundi, and examined, amongst other things, ideas of masculinity in relation to this process. Prior to commencing her Ph.D. studies Guðrún worked as a project officer with UN Women in Liberia, South Sudan, and Laos.

Björgvin Viktor Færseth joined GRÓ GEST for the summer months of 2021 as an administrative assistant. His position was a part of the Icelandic Directorate Labour employment programme for university students. He assisted in all tasks related to the communication and admission of the fellows, who arrived in Iceland in August. Björgin graduated with a BA degree from the University of Iceland, a major in politics and a minor in English literature. Björgvin had experience in working with texts and translations and had been active in student society at the University.

Armando Garcia Teixeira joined GRÓ GEST for as a part time summer staff as a communication assistant. His position was a part of the Icelandic Directorate employment programme for university students. Armando focused on the GRÓ GEST webpage and content editing. Armando was a graduate student in the MA programme of International Studies in Education at the University of Iceland and has BA in Political Science from the University of Ljubljana. He had experience working as an editor and a journalist for Icelandic and international journals/papers.

Zaw Myo Win joined GRÓ GEST as a part time employee during the autumn months of 2021, to finalise the data transfer for the GEST webpage. He had previously worked in a similar role with the FTP programme, funded by the Icelandic Directorate Labour employment programme for university students.