
ANNUAL REPORT

2022

GENDER EQUALITY STUDIES AND TRAINING PROGRAMME



GRO · GEST
Gender Equality Studies & Training Programme



**UNIVERSITY
OF ICELAND**

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1. Introduction

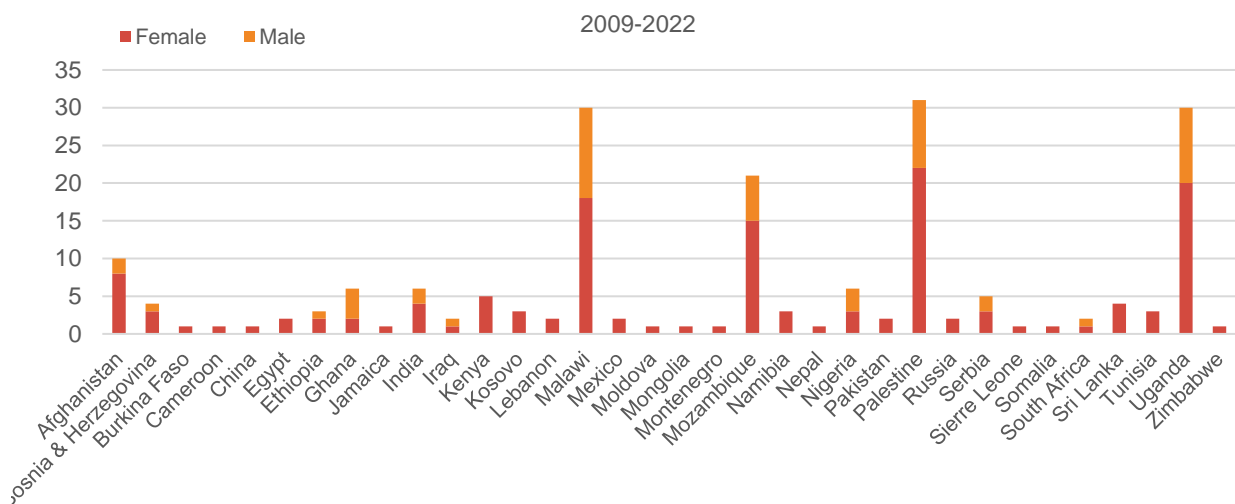
The Gender Equality Studies and Training (GEST) programme was established at the University of Iceland in 2009 and has from the start been integrated into its School of Humanities. Since 2020, it operates as a part of the GRÓ Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Societal 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 organisations
- Creating a platform for transnational dialogue, knowledge production and exchange
- High-quality, collaborative, and policy relevant research

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. The following report demonstrates the GEST programme's main activities and contributions to its mission during the year 2022.

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 2022, a total of 195 fellows from 34 countries had completed a postgraduate diploma programme in International Gender Studies since the start of the GEST programme in 2009.

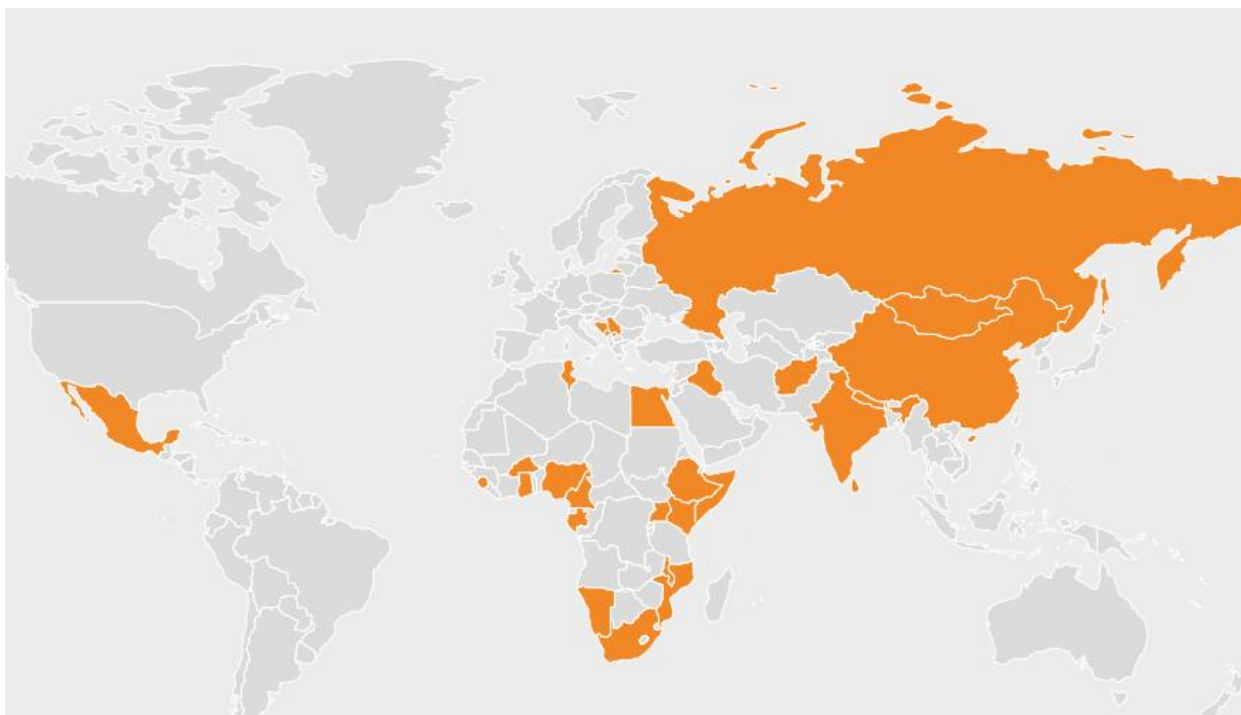


2.1. Postgraduate Diploma Programme in International Gender Studies (30 ECTS)

In 2022, the postgraduate diploma programme, GEST's core activity, was operated as before, with the academic programme running during the spring semester, January-May 2022. This annual twenty-week postgraduate diploma programme in international gender equality studies encompasses thirty ECTS credits in six interdependent modules. 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 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.



2.1.1. Fellows of 2022

Twenty-three fellows, eighteen women and five men, from fifteen countries, participated in the GEST programme starting on 20 January 2022. The group consisted of experts working in governments, academia, research, civil societies, and non-governmental organisations. All the selected fellows were funded by GRÓ including the six fellows who were jointly funded by the Erasmus+ and GRÓ. The fellows arrived mid-January, and one fellow had to complete COVID quarantine upon arrival before joining the group of fellows for the programme's orientation. This year, for the first time, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, and Moldova were represented among the GRÓ GEST fellows.

The table below demonstrates the distribution of fellows based on country and funding.

Country	Number of fellows	Funding source
Bosnia & Herzegovina	1	Erasmus+/GRÓ GEST
Egypt	1	GRÓ GEST
Ghana	2	GRÓ GEST & Erasmus+/GRÓ GEST
India	3	GRÓ GEST
Kenya	2	GRÓ GEST & Erasmus+/GRÓ GEST
Kosovo	1	Erasmus+/GRÓ GEST
Malawi	2	GRÓ GEST
Moldova*	1	GRÓ GEST

Namibia	2	GRÓ GEST
Pakistan*	2	GRÓ GEST
Palestine	2	GRÓ GEST & Erasmus+/GRÓ GEST
Serbia	1	Erasmus+/GRÓ GEST
Sri Lanka	1	GRÓ GEST
Uganda	1	GRÓ GEST
Zimbabwe*	1	GRÓ GEST

*marks countries that were represented in the GEST programme for the first time in 2022

2.1.2. Postgraduate diploma 2022 - Curriculum

The 2022 postgraduate diploma programme in international gender studies consisted of six modules of five credits each, totalling 30 ECTS credits. The academic programme was led by the academic coordinator, but each module was coordinated by GEST staff. Classroom 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 regular introduction to the complimentary activities such as field visits and visiting lectures were reintroduced although they were kept at minimum to ensure enough time for the credited components of the programme. The semester started with a three-day orientation, introducing the fellows to each other, Iceland, the university campus, and the academic programme.

The semester included the following modules:

Theories and Concepts of Gender (5 ECTS)

21 January - 8 February 2022

Module coordinator: Dr. Thomas Brorsen Smidt

Lecturers: Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir, Dr. Giti Chandra, Nikkita Hamar Patterson

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 introduces 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 will consider how unjust politics and constructions of gender might be changed through transnational transfers and dialogues. Fellows will explore gender equity for suppressed minority and oppressed groups from historical, intersectional, transnational, indigenous and human rights perspectives. Discussion will centre on how issues, ideas, and debates engaged in by feminist theorists play 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 will be 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 will reflect on the meanings and significance of these internal social differences and political struggles as viewed from global and transnational feminist theoretical perspectives. They will be asked to consider and apply the transnational feminist theoretical concepts they read about to those gender justice movements they are familiar with as well as those they will learn about from their peers; and in particular 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)



9 February – 2 March 2022

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.

The 2022 GEST cohort with longtime GEST lecturer, Elisabeth Klatzer second row to the left and module coordinator Guðrún Sif Friðriksdóttir standing in the middle of the group

The 2022 GEST cohort was Cynthia Enloe's thirteenth and last cohort, as she will be retiring from teaching. Since 2010, Cynthia has generously given her time and knowledge to teach the GEST cohorts about gender, militarization, and peacebuilding. Of the 195 fellows, who have completed the GEST diploma programme, Cynthia has taught 193 fellows through the programme. The GEST staff and fellows have greatly appreciated her contribution to the programme, her dedication to the education and personal development of the GEST specialists and practitioners from around the world. Furthermore, the GEST programme, staff, and alumni, will be forever thankful to her for sharing her perspective, analysis and understanding of her field of study. She has greatly impacted all of those who she has taught and worked with, sharing her curiosity and inclusive feminist interest in people.



The 2022 GEST cohort with Cynthia Enloe, sitting in the front on her last teaching day with GRÓ GEST

Gender, Violence and Security (5 ECTS)

14 March – 22 April 2022

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

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

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)

7 March – 29 April 2022

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

Lecturers: Dr. Marlene Spanger, Mukul Mangalik, Randi Stebbins, Claudie Ashonie Wilson.

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)

28 March – 13 April 2022

Module coordinator: Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir

Project manager: Védís Ólafsdóttir

Lecturers: Dr. Auður H. Ingólfssdóttir, Dr. Joni Seager, Dr. Jón Geir Pétursson, Dr. Keina Yoshida, Dr. Hafdís Hanna Aegisdóttir and Salome Hallfreðsdóttir

Description:

The purpose of this module is to examine the role of gender in the context of the environment with a focus on climate change. This module will analyse 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 outlines the main international commitments in regard to environment and climate change and suggests gender sensitive actions. Through the combination of readings, documentaries and lectures, fellows will explore 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 will furthermore investigate international commitments, institutions and as well as possible everyday actions and activism, enhancing public awareness of the world's environmental developments.



The GEST 2022 cohort with lecturer Prof. Joni Seager in the second front row to the left

Final Assignment

20 January – 18 May 2022

Module coordinator and main lecturer: Dr. Giti Chandra

Lecturer: María Ellingsen

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.



The GEST 2022 cohort in Veröld, the House of Vigdis, at the University of Iceland

2.1.3. Final Assignments - The 2022 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.

Re(Negotiating) Mobility in Gendered Spaces in Lyari, Karachi: Why Does She Move?



Fellow: Aarti Lila Ram

Country: Pakistan

Final assignment supervisor: Anna Karlsdóttir

Description: Women and girls in Pakistan inhabit a space and city differently from men, due to the strong influence of patriarchal society. Women (re)negotiate the city and perceive and contest the social, cultural, and material boundaries of space differently. In the low-income neighbourhood of Lyari in Karachi, this (re)negotiation is exacerbated by constant fear of harassment and sexual violence, moral policing, surveillance, and control over women's bodies (Adnan, 2019). In Lyari, women and girls are still associated with the private sphere, confined within four walls, where streets and public spaces are dominated by men and their gaze. Just the existence of women and girls outside of the houses is radical. This reality reduces women's and girls' freedom to move around the city for education, work, leisure, and recreation. In addition, it limits their access to essential services, and social and cultural activities, and adversely impacts their mental and physical health (Allen, 2018).

This research project uses the theory of agency through an intersectional lens and incorporates the concept of participatory citizenship, vulnerability, and identity politics in the context of marginalization within a larger theoretical framework, investigating mobility patterns, and spectrums of violence. It explores how women and girls choose to reclaim their space and identity from positions of marginalized classes, gender, and, in certain cases, religion. It further outlines potential themes and draws attention to understanding the barriers that women and girls face in their daily mobility in Lyari and how they (re)negotiate and reclaim their space to access the city including the recreational spaces. The research project aims to build and strengthen the capacity of women and girls in mobility, space, and harassment by introducing them to recreational activities through trainings in Lyari and contribute to their ability to negotiate and question at an individual, household, community level.

Promoting Smarter and Gender Responsive Cities for Women in New Delhi, India



Fellow: Ankita Bhat

Country: India

Final assignment supervisor: Elizabeth Klatzer

Description: Cities in India are urbanizing rapidly and transforming at a brisk pace. This has resulted in growing populations in urban areas, with multiplying needs and aspirations on the one hand, and a massive strain on existing resources and facilities on the other. The planning for such unprecedented growth has failed to consider the needs and aspirations of women. Due to gendered differences, women's experiences of patriarchal, male-dominated, urban, spaces are very different from men. In the context of Delhi, women tend to face more discrimination and violence in public and private spaces, and have limited mobility, agency, and access to facilities including transportation and sanitation. As a result, women are further excluded from actively participating in cities which is disregarded by urban planners in city planning and design. This situation of men and women in cities renders it necessary to have gender responsive urban planning.

This project focuses on promoting gender benefits for women in New Delhi Municipal Council, India, through the creation of gender responsive smart cities. The project seeks to introduce and ensure gender responsiveness in urban planning, design, and budgets, through the collection of gender disaggregated data in urban spaces and institutional capacity building on gender responsive urban development in Delhi, India. Further, it aims to enhance women's participation for gender informed urban planning and budgeting through the formation of Gender Smart Groups. To engender city plans and budgets, the tool of Gender Budgeting will be applied to the Smart City Mission policy of the Government of India. These processes will result in the preparation of gender responsive urban development guidelines, specifically for two policy areas: transport and sanitation. This will gender and strengthen the New Delhi Smart City Mission proposal and result in improved gender sensitive resource planning and management in urban policies and improving women's agency and participation in city development.

Palestinian Female Bodybuilders' Body Image



Fellow: Balqees Shaheen

Country: Palestine

Final assignment supervisor: Myriam Sfeir

ERASMUS+

Description: Women's participation in sports has always been socially criticized since it doesn't conform to the gender norms imposed on women. However, women have managed to participate in sports with respect to their cultures, for years now all over the globe. One of the most criticized sports for women is bodybuilding, and it's a sport that is not recognized for women in Palestine until recently. This essay aims to investigate the effect of social, gendered, positions on women's participation in bodybuilding in the Palestinian society, while analysing the ways in which gender norms shape the Palestinian female bodybuilders' perceptions of beauty and the ideal body, and its impacts on their choices of muscle training. The first part focuses on reviewing literature on social reactions towards female bodybuilders' bodies, including: general, negative, social reactions to women bodybuilding, and to different muscle groups in women's bodies, negative reactions against women's muscular bodies in bodybuilding competitions, and the female bodybuilders' attitude towards the ideal feminine body image. The research discusses available, global, literature on female bodybuilders' own attitudes towards the ideal feminine body image, and female bodybuilders adherence to the ideal body image. There is no literature on female bodybuilding in Palestine. Thus, this paper aims to investigate the social attitudes and personal attitudes towards Palestinian female bodybuilders in relation to the ideal body image, as it explores the reasons behind Palestinian women's participation in bodybuilding, their perception of the ideal body, and the challenges they face.

More than Primadonnas of the Women's Movement: Placing young women at the center of sexual and reproductive health and rights advocacy initiatives in Zimbabwe



Fellow: Diana Motsi

Country: Zimbabwe

Final assignment supervisor: Yvonne K. Fulbright

Description: Adolescent girls and young women in Zimbabwe encounter challenges in accessing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) due to resource constraints, legal and policy gaps, and societal attitudes influenced by religion and culture. Tremendous efforts have been made to transform the SRHR landscape such as with civic society actively promoting change through strategies such as the *Adolescent Sexual Health* and the *Sexual Health and Rights* initiatives. These have been central in outlining SRHR outcomes and addressing issues of accountability and transparency of the government in alignment with the regional SRHR guidelines such as the SADC SRHR Strategy.

Zimbabwe's women's movement has been instrumental in promoting SRHR. It has played a significant part in the praxis of gender equality in the country, advocating for the rights of women, their dignity and freedom contributing greater developments within SRHR. Over the past few years, young voices have started to emerge which have been critical to building up new feminist energy. From running the social media streets and physical streets, these young women have been at the forefront of denouncing rape culture and child marriage and starting uncomfortable conversations both online and offline. By creating loose feminist organizations and collectives, feminism has furthered into larger spaces. However, due to shrinking civic space, these women have not obtained a full chance to cultivate their movement and to utilize their capacity to demand and improve Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

This project intends to place young women at the centre of SRHR advocacy in Zimbabwe through complementing their efforts to reshape SRHR outcomes, aimed at re-politicizing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and the body agenda. Furthermore, to strengthen intergenerational networks, prioritizing young women's meaningful inclusion in the women's movement space, and expanding feminist digital activism.

Gendered and Trauma-Informed Child Protection Services: Resource guide for social workers working with violence against children cases



Fellow: Enjoulina Laurensia Kole

Country: Namibia

Final assignment supervisor: Geir Gunnlaugsson

Description: Namibia has a high prevalence of violence against children, as was revealed in the study Violence Against Children in Namibia (2019). This study shed light on patterns and trends of children's experiences of emotional, physical, and sexual violence. It further reveals information about the child victim's relationship with the perpetrators, and that violence often occurs in assumed 'safe spaces', challenging governments in its efforts to prevent such abuse.

Current efforts to address violence against children in Namibia appear to be limited to administrative measures, with social workers receiving training on legal frameworks, mostly focused on the national case management system, forensic report writing. Social Workers also attend child witness trainings which enable them to write trauma impact reports and support child victims during court cases. This project proposes a transformative intervention which will change the way Social Workers understand and interact with clients who have experienced violence by including an intersectional gender analysis and an intersectional trauma-informed approach.

Incorporating an intersectional gender analysis involves recognizing and addressing the different socially constructed roles of girls, women, boys and men, and how they intersect with power dynamics, leading to conditions of discrimination and vulnerability. This approach serves both as a preventative measure against violence and a tool to dissect gender-related factors contributing to violence against children.

This project aims to improve Namibian child protection services for victims of violence by developing manuals for intersectional gender analysis and trauma-informed practices, facilitating training for Child Care and Protection directorate staff. Once integrated, Social Workers can conduct awareness sessions with parents and children, eliminating violence against children, and encouraging the reporting of abuse, especially if perpetrated in safe spaces by known perpetrators.

Women's Activism in Kosovo Manifested through Protests



Fellow: Erza Kurti

Country: Kosovo

Final assignment supervisor: Linda Gusia

ERASMUS+

Description: This paper provides a historical overview of feminist protests in Kosovo, during the period from 1990 till 2022, delineating three distinct generations of feminists. The first generation is amidst a war; the second generation of feminists was the first to refer to themselves as such while discussing feminist theories; and the third is the ongoing generation, who are perceived as

more radical.

During the war in Kosovo under the aggression of Serbia from 1998-to 1999, the women's movement was focused on the liberation and freedom of the country, seeking international attention to intervene in Kosovo. The next two generations were concentrated on women's rights, using intersectionality lenses to raise attention. They protested for different issues, mainly violence in its various forms including economic, emotional, domestic, rape, sexual assaults, etc. The intersectional lens made them raise issues of LGBTQI rights and international injustices.

This paper shows that post war, protests were mainly organized by women's rights NGOs, and how the feminist movement changed with the collective "MARShojmë S'festojmë" [We March, We don't Celebrate]. The collective has brought the three generations into the same movement, highlighting their differences and the similarities. This paper also analyses the high cost of activism in a patriarchal society and the solidarity between activists in Kosovo, as one of the important discussions in the feminist movement. Besides the cost on different levels, especially the burnout, emotional damage, and depression, is the solidarity of women's activists or sisterhood that keep activists active in the movement. Finally, the research analyses how the feminist movement is improving year by year and how the protests are becoming more radical with each new generation of the feminist movement.

A Gendered Perspective of the Socio-Cultural and Political Factors in the Prevention of Violence Against Women During Elections: The localisation of the Kenya National Action Plan II on UNSCR 1325



Fellow: Grace Nyamwathi Waweru

Country: Namibia

Final assignment supervisor: Bjarney Friðriksdóttir

ERASMUS+

Description: The Kenya National Action Plan II is grounded on the four pillars of women's participation and promotion, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery toward achieving peace, which are embedded in UNSCR 1325 international instrument that focuses on women in relation to peace and security. However, there is still a challenge in promoting peace and protecting women from violence during elections. To effectively implement the localization of this action plan at the community and grass root levels, it is important to use a gender lens to analyse the socio-cultural and political factors in promoting peace and preventing violence against women during elections; these include patriarchal structures, social status, militarization, and ethnic and political parties' conflicts. Using a gender lens to discuss the socio-cultural and political factors is an effective tool in understanding some cultural practices that have been normalized in the local communities and that lead to conflict and violence against women; for example, patriarchy. In addition, it will result in sustainable development because the information collected is helpful in suggesting better methods and approaches that promote peace and prevent violence against women during elections.

Exploring Sexual Harassment at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences



Fellow: Hasina Ndeketa

Country: Malawi

Final assignment supervisor: Vinita Chandra

Description: This paper sets out to explore sexual harassment in Malawian Universities by utilizing the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences (MUBAS) as a case study. The focus on the university came from a sexual harassment scandal that occurred in 2020 at the university. As such the paper aimed to investigate the policy framework on sexual harassment at the university and the possible reasons behind harassment, and to suggest appropriate strategies for battling harassment. The paper utilizes secondary data that includes MUBAS policies, research reports on sexual harassment in Malawian universities, newspaper articles on the sexual harassment case study, and conversations between the involved parties of the sexual harassment cases. Historical Materialist Analysis Methods and Text analysis methods are employed in data analysis. The results of the analysis reveal sexual harassment occurs due to institutionalized patriarchy that exists through ineffective policies, the existence of social norms that perpetuate female students' experience of sexual harassment, and poverty among students. Suggested strategies include increased student involvement in policy formulation, promotion of collective feminist consciousness as well as government, and establishment of effective funding methods for poor students.

Male Voices against Teenage Pregnancies (MATEP) in Kamuli, Uganda



Fellow: Joseph Nyende

Country: Uganda

Final assignment supervisor: Þórður Kristinsson

Description: In Uganda, teenage pregnancy is very common especially in the Eastern districts e.g., Kamuli and Buyende, and is linked to violence, especially when the teen is a child, and the number of reports has increased in the first two years of the Covid-19 outbreak. There have been numerous efforts in Uganda, particularly in Kamuli, to curb teenage pregnancies, but none of them have been successful without involving the men and boys who perpetrate such violence. To solve this problem, a new strategy is required, and this project puts offenders and would-be perpetrators at the forefront of raising their voices against adolescent pregnancies in Kamuli district.

This strategy will focus on men and boys in order to create a network of champions against teen pregnancy at the individual, group, and community of practice levels. Capacity building of men and boys to be gatekeepers and prevent teenage pregnancies in their homes and communities will be one of the project's strategies, as will community

mobilization and awareness through a community-based response aimed at addressing social and tradition norms that promote teenage pregnancies including toxic masculinities, gender inequalities, and the use of sexual and reproductive health and family planning services; campaigns and advocacy involving other stakeholders, such as women's organizations, to advocate for an ordinance with harsh penalties for men and boys who impregnate teen girls. Men and boys should be involved in the prevention of teenage pregnancies as part of the solution to the rising teen pregnancy rate.

Namibian Women in Security and Peacekeeping



Fellow: Lahya Itedhimwa Shikongo

Country: Namibia

Final assignment supervisor: Amanda Chisholm

Description: United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 is an important component of Namibia's security and peacekeeping strategy. As initiator of the resolution at the Security Council, Namibia has claimed a certain level of leadership over the agenda, and has demonstrated this by the increased numbers of women in the security sector; by developing the National Action Plan (2019-2024), and by launching an International Women's Peace Centre.

However, there is limited understanding of how these women are recruited, trained and integrated into the sector, particularly given the highly militarized masculine norms that underpin this industry. Understanding these practices can show how Namibia values women in this sector, and demonstrate the country's standpoint on the women, peace and security agenda. Through limited interviews and document analysis, I find two main themes on how Namibia approaches recruitment, training and deployment. First, that Namibia has taken a gender-blind approach in recruitment practices, and second, that the implementation is not sufficiently resourced. In order to improve the implementation of the WPS agenda, it is important to consider how these factors might be changed. Moving from a gender-blind approach requires that the challenges women face in joining and progressing in this masculine sector are addressed. This can be done through appropriate and timely policies, properly staffed gender units, and an approach that embraces feminine values. When women's experiences and perspectives are sufficiently addressed, there is scope for a gender-balanced security and peacekeeping environment.

Promoting Micro-Entrepreneurship & Increasing Enterprise Success Rate Among Rural Women in Punjab, India: A 1-year pilot project proposal by PAHAL NGO



Fellow: Liakatbir Singh Veghal

Country: India

Final assignment supervisor: Kirstin Flygenring

Description: Businesses led by women, particularly informal micro-enterprises supporting the livelihood of 1-2 families, face a higher risk of failing compared to those businesses led by men. Existing initiatives by governments, banks and NGOs focus on limited skill training within constrained time frames, often overlooking the gendered nuances crucial for sustained micro-enterprise success.

This project seeks to placing the gendered aspects at the core of the intervention, providing a holistic support to women in micro entrepreneurship, including skill training and finding market allies. The intervention emphasizes empowerment through activities such as by creating networks of women within the villages, and the formation of informal collectives across villages. These collectives enhance bargaining power for bulk material purchase, facilitate joint market visit for innovative solutions to procurement. By raising awareness about the gendered nature of time and work, it can support better decision making in terms of time management. Simultaneously, the project aims to cultivate alliances within the market, including stakeholders in transportation and transaction of raw materials and the finished products. Trust-building measures include ensuring product quality aligns with dynamic market requirements.

Conducted as a one-year pilot project, the initiative targets the promotion of 30 micro-enterprises across 30 villages in Punjab, with potential for future extension. This project will complement the numerous existing initiatives that aim at promoting women micro-entrepreneurs, and will help their enterprises sustain for longer periods of time, leading to more financial independence for women, and increased confidence in questioning the traditional patriarchal gender norms.

Toward African Feminist Articulations of Joy and Healing: Lessons from afrocentric self and collective care interventions



Fellow: Maame Adwoa Amoa-Marfo
Country: Ghana
Final assignment supervisor: Sóley Tómasdóttir
ERASMUS+

Description: Due to the varied stresses African feminist activists and practitioners face, the sustainability of their work and, more crucially, their own mental and emotional wellbeing are often put at risk. While there are several international and regional conventions and mechanisms aimed at their protection in the course of their work, these measures often instrumentalise them and view them solely in their capacity as activists, erasing their full humanity. African feminist led self and collective care interventions have sought to adopt a lens that more wholly recognises and addresses their varied needs. The purpose of this study is two-fold: to analyse how well two existing Afrocentric self and collective care interventions are tailored to African feminists and to assess their impact on activists and practitioners. This is done in order to identify lessons on key themes and best practices to guide future programming aimed at self and collective care. The study finds that the interventions translated a decolonial and gendered approach in both theme and practice. It also finds that they had positive impacts for African feminist activists in their personal and professional lives with carry-over effects for those with whom they were connected.

Challenging the Gender Norms at Early Ages in Cairo, Egypt



Fellow: Mai Tarek Sayed Mohamed Shalabi
Country: Egypt
Final assignment supervisor: Brynja Elísabeth Halldórsdóttir

Description: The project aims to change the gender norms among Egyptian adolescents in Cairo towards greater gender equality. This will be done through raising awareness and building the capacity of students regarding gender-based violence and other gender-based topics, giving them the skills needed to deal with such issues. Besides helping teachers to adopt gender sensitive approaches in dealing with and teaching these issues, the project will provide them with methods and new teaching styles. The trainings and capacity building component will be followed by a gender revisioning of the gender norms and roles embedded in textbooks. The project intends to pilot in three schools in Cairo after doing the Baseline.

Introducing Intersectional Discrimination in Anti-Sexual Harassment Training in India



Fellow: Mohamed Altamash Khan
Country: India
Final assignment supervisor: Giti Chandra

Description: The Sexual Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act 2013 a hard-won victory for the Indian feminist movement, established mechanisms to address work place sexual harassment. In 2015, the University Grant Commission's (UGC) expanded its scope to include students in higher education through the UGC (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal of Sexual Harassment of women employees and students in Higher Education Institutions) Regulation 2015, emphasizing the need for safe educational campuses.

While the law mandates training and workshops to raise awareness of sexual harassment and gender discrimination, it falls short in recognizing the intersection of caste, class, race, and sexuality, with gender. The law primarily addresses sexual harassment faced by a woman in the workplace i.e., it protects women as an isolated category (Baudh, 2021 & Crenshaw, 1989).

This project addresses the 'Missing Intersectionality in the Law', highlighting that the word 'caste' has been missing from the discourse. This project aims at introducing intersectional discrimination in anti-sexual harassment training by developing a comprehensive training handbook, used to train different groups of students, employees, and people involved in due process. Train the Trainers (ToT) workshops will be conducted for gender trainers nationwide, enabling them to visualize and apply the conceptual framework of intersectionality in their understanding of anti-discrimination. By building rapport with formal workspaces and educational institutes, the project aims to include intersectional discrimination in the Anti-Sexual Harassment policies of these institutions.

Challenging Transnistrian Authorities' (non)Response to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)



Fellow: Natalia Rezneac

Country: Moldova

Final assignment supervisor: Randi W. Stebbins

Description: Intimate partner violence (IPV) is widespread in Transnistria. In this separatist region in the Republic of Moldova, women victims of IPV do not have access to a legal framework that would protect them from aggressors, although there has been a government in Transnistria for 30 years now. Because the Transnistrian authorities do not recognize IPV as a social problem, it remains hidden, and the number of abused women is increasing every year. Due to the fact that abusers go unpunished, Transnistrian authorities encourage this increase in the amount of violence against women (VAW) cases and further normalize misogyny against girls and women.

Only Civil society addresses IPV as a social issue in Transnistria. Through the services provided, NGOs help women break the circle of violence. But this effort is too little without the involvement of the authorities. As IPV is not criminalized, NGOs can't extend their services and are left alone to tackle this issue. In the absence of a law, police officers, for example, cannot evict the perpetrator or have the means to ensure that victims will be safe when at imminent risk. While other countries and regions have made progress in gender equality, the Transnistrian government does not assume responsibility and is completely ignorant towards women's safety.

In seeking a solution to an urgent problem, a change is needed immediately, and this project aims to create a bridge between different stakeholders, including civil society and the local communities in Transnistria. This union will become a joint force that will act together to change the narrative around violence against girls and women, which will subsequently lead to the adoption of an IPV law. By having a law, women's lives will be improved, and Transnistria will become safer for local women and girls.

Counting Dead Women: Towards a Femicide Observatory in Kenya



Fellow: Nicole Nyambok Wasuna

Country: Kenya

Final assignment supervisor: Milicia Minić

Description: Despite the 2010 promulgation of a constitution that guarantees equal rights of the sexes and criminalises discrimination based on gender, Kenya very much remains a patriarchal society where girls and women are not safe from gender-based violence. Femicide remains a stark reminder of the subordinate position that women occupy in society. Not only does it brutally rob girls and women of life, it also takes away any potential for positive societal transformation in the aftermath, as the reactions to their killings are often nonchalant at best and disparaging at worst. This is a result of cultural and social mores that consider domestic violence as an inevitability of social and romantic interactions between women and men, rendering women highly vulnerable to abuse, and ultimately accepting their deaths as an inevitable outcome. Despite the high number of femicides reported in the media in Kenya, there is still a gap in collection and collation of data. There is also a dearth of research on femicide, its root causes and effects, as well as strategies and approaches on how to reduce the phenomenon in the country. Kenya has a long way to go in terms of identification, investigation, and prosecution of femicide cases. There also exists a knowledge and expertise gap within the police force and the judiciary on the investigation and prosecution of domestic violence and femicide. This project therefore aims to address the existing research gaps in the literature and country-specific policy responses on femicide. It also aims to provide specialized and targeted training to the police, the media, and the judiciary on handling (investigating, prosecuting, and reporting) on femicide cases in a way that respects the dignity and honour of the deceased and their loved ones and transforms the way of institutional operations in order to identify and mitigate the likelihood of fatal outcomes for other women at risk.

Transformation Project Homonationalism: EU integration, Ana Brnabić, and (Euro) pride



Fellow: Nikola Maljović

Country: Serbia

Final assignment supervisor: Valur Ingimundarson

ERASMUS+

Description: This paper contributes to the field of instrumental legal theory by using the intersectional theory of homonationalism to examine LGBT politics in Serbia. Homonationalism has been defined as a historical change of perception, involving a transition from a heteronormative to a homonormative nation. The paper explores whether homonationalism as “a

Western tool” of decolonizing sexuality can be applied to the case of Serbia, whose “undecided” ideological orientation toward the East or West had led to nationalist efforts to mix modernist cultural impulses with traditionalist ones. Taking into consideration increased nationalist sentiments among the non-normative sexualities of Serbia, it also investigates possible explanations for such intolerance. From a theoretical perspective, the purpose is both to examine the concept of homonationalism as well as its manifestations and implications for the LGBT community in Serbia. The interdisciplinary methodological framework combines qualitative methods of analysis with legal theories. It will be argued that the process of the homonationalisation of Serbian society is entering its final phase, with sharpened debates over same-sex partnerships in the media space and in mainstream LGBT activism. Moreover, the question is asked whether a reconfiguration of Serbian homonationalism is taking place through the derogation of its secular and modern assumptions. This paper makes the case that instrumental legislative approaches in Serbia have resulted in the political de-subjectification of the LGBT community, and in an increase in nationalism. Finally, the EU integration process, the case of the lesbian Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabić, and the staging of EuroPride are analysed as the most potent manifestations of homonational dynamics in Serbia.

Towards Inclusive and Equitable Education: Reforming Ghana’s re-entry policy



Fellow: Owusuwaa Owusu-Brempong

Country: Ghana

Final assignment supervisor: Eva Harðardóttir

Description: Low inclusivity and inequitable access to education in Ghana has led to limited opportunities for schoolgirls, high cases of pregnant girls and a consequent increase in girls dropping out of school. Using Ghana’s re-entry policy as a tool, the project aims to mobilise discussions on structural patriarchy within culture and power relations that exist to normalize and naturalize socially encoded roles that disadvantage girls, and how these may be reinforced in the

school space, in addition to how Ghana’s political settlement contributes to inefficient educational and equality legislation.

The project is designed to engage at the policy, community, and school space. This is due to the fact that, despite these spaces being independent structures, work at the identified spaces feeds into each other. The project aims to transform the identified spaces towards the achievement of equal worth, dignity, and development of schoolgirls, through the facilitation and development of an equality plan as part of the re-entry policy at the policy level, the establishment of gender and equality councils, and the development of a gender responsive pedagogy at the school level which will consequently interrogate the status quo i.e., patriarchal structures at the community level.

Violence Against Palestinian Women in Israel: Intersections of patriarchy, militarism and discrimination



Fellow: Razan Wazwaz

Country: Palestine

Final assignment supervisor: Hildur Fjóra Antonsdóttir

Description: This essay aims to unpack violence against Palestinian women citizens of Israel by analysing how multiple and intersecting forms of oppression exacerbate violence against women, and at the same time, create barriers that hinder their access to support and protection services to end violence in their lives. The essay also explores the intersections of patriarchy, discrimination, and militarisation through two interviews with directors of Palestinian feminist organisations, and how these organisations provide protection services to survivors of violence.

The essay will also focus on militarization and how it exacerbates violence against Palestinian women in Israel. It will draw on literature reviews from previous research that has been conducted on violence against women in Israel, and other contexts where women are part of marginalized and minority groups.

Chichewa Spoken Word Poetry as a Capacity Building and Awareness Tool for Reducing the Prevalence of Gender Based Violence at Soche Technical College in Malawi



Fellow: Robert Chiwamba

Country: Malawi

Final assignment supervisor: Abena Busia

Description: This project is a response to findings of a situational analysis on the status of Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) of students and Gender Based Violence (GBV) in Technical and Vocational Colleges (TVCs) in Malawi, commissioned by Skills and Technical Education Program (STEP) in 2017. It will use Soche Technical College (SOTECO) as a pilot site for implementation. If successful, the project will be rolled out to all TVCs in Malawi. The analysis (STEP, 2017) found that there is a high prevalence of GBV in TVCs. The project seeks to use the power of art; recorded spoken word poetry to be precise to reach, mobilize, move, express and wrestle with social norms that reinforce high prevalence of GBV in TVCs. Recorded spoken word poetry is a powerful tool for packaging and disseminating messages in a way that appeals to human consciousness. Messages that are packaged in this way trigger questions. Answers to these questions may influence one to re-examine his or her behaviour. The project will involve the production of GBV related recorded spoken word poetry, facilitation of recorded poetry listening sessions, recorded poetry listening sessions, discussion, and change agents training, recruitment and organising at SOTECO. The three-year project is built on the premise that information is power; i.e. having information on GBV is an important step towards finding solutions to it. The project will use the SASA approach to project implementation. Developed in Uganda but widely used in Sub-Saharan Africa, SASA is a community mobilisation approach to fighting GBV that sees change as a process that involves four stages; Start, Awareness, Support and Action (SASA). In addressing GBV at SOTECO, the project will contribute to the government of Malawi's efforts towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) of quality education and gender equality respectively by 2030.

The Legal and Judicial Construction of Gender in Sexual Crimes in Sri Lanka



Fellow: Sandani Nayantha Yapa Abeywardena

Country: Sri Lanka

Final assignment supervisor: Auður Tinna Aðalbjarnardóttir

Description: The core values of equality, impartiality, and justice underlie the legal system. This study interrogates the extent to which these values are protected in the statutes and case law on sexual violence, specifically, rape, grave sexual abuse, and sexual harassment in Sri Lanka through an examination of how the relevant substantive and evidentiary laws, as well as judgments delivered by the Superior Courts on sexual crimes during the period 2020-2021 constructs gender. This study utilises Critical Discourse Analysis as a methodological framework and frames the findings on the legal and judicial construction of gender through Judith Butler's discourse theory of gender performativity. The study argues that the law constructs a binary understanding of gender, and only recognises violence that is inflicted on specific bodies. The study further challenges the perceived neutrality of evidence laws by demonstrating how gendered presumptions and gender-based stereotypes underlie laws on character evidence and credibility. The study further argues that gendered presumptions underlie the judicial evaluation of the evidentiary principles of corroboration, and prompt complaint, while there is some evidence of the Superior Courts of Sri Lanka making progressive strides gender-sensitive evaluation of witness credibility. Therefore, several recommendations are made at three levels: ministerial, judicial, and legal, to guarantee the constitutional right to equality through legal reform, enhance judicial capacity for gender-sensitive judicial reasoning through training, and ensure gender-sensitive legal representation in Court.

Harmonizing the Narratives on the Concept of Gender in the Context of Trans-Feminist Solidarity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro



Fellow: Selma Alispahić

Country: Bosnia and Herzegovina

Final assignment supervisor: Ásta Kristín Benediktsdóttir

Description: The concept of gender has long been used in feminist theory and practice as a powerful emancipatory tool and critical response to essentializing views that aimed to justify social inequalities between women and men. The idea that the subordinate and inferior status of women in society is not “natural”, but rather socially constructed made the feminist struggle possible and its goals achievable, while the emergence of the performative theory of gender provided additional tools for challenging and subverting oppressive gender norms. However, essentializing and naturalizing views on sex and gender have persisted, most prominently in the form of anti-gender movements and trans-exclusionary radical feminism (TERF), and they continue to forcefully attack the conceptual basis for achieving gender equality. In the face of such challenges, asserting and strengthening trans-feminist solidarity is of paramount importance. By relying on the constructivist and performative theories of gender and qualitative methodology, the essay examines the interpretations of the concept of gender within the trans-feminist community and explores the possibilities of a shared understanding of gender as a key prerequisite for common political projects and actions. While pointing out the political contradictions that arise out of differing interpretations of gender, the main goal of the essay is to contribute to amplifying trans-feminist cooperation and support in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Montenegro.

Countering Digital Gender Based Violence in Pakistan: Creating feminist internet spaces



Fellow: Sonal Dhanani Bahadur

Country: Pakistan

Final assignment supervisor: María Rún Bjarnadóttir

Description: Violence against women and non-binary people in Pakistan, as in other parts of the world, is regulated and socially implanted. Patriarchal culture is a vital parameter in this respect since it shapes the common attitude on which Pakistani guidelines, morals, laws, and community behaviours are based, and most of these put women and non-binary people in a second rate position in comparison to men. With the development and growing usage of technology has extend this toxic patriarchal behaviour onto social media platforms, resulting in digital hate and violence against women and non-binary people.

This project addresses the consequences of gender-based violence (GBV) on digital platforms in Pakistan and aims to bridge the awareness gap by equipping women and non-binary people with tools to counter digital violence, raise awareness, and empower them to create and claim digital spaces. Through these trainings we aim to create 'feminist' internet spaces in Pakistan, where everyone has agency over their speech and their freedom to access knowledge.

Recognizing violence against women as a significant obstacle to gender equality, the project emphasizes the need to ensure the internet is a safe space for all. Without proactive measures, digital technology could perpetuate attacks, suppression, and marginalization of women. Collaboration between businesses, governments, women's rights activists, and the civic tech community is crucial to combat online violence. The project facilitates this collaboration through trainings, policy dialogues, and the creation of women's network spaces, aiming to unite diverse stakeholders in creating a safer and empowering online environment for everyone.

2.1.4. Extra Curricular 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. After two years with a limited number of field visits, this semester fellows had the opportunity to participate and attend several field visits and lectures.

During the academic programme, the fellows receive visits from several guest lectures on campus. Every year, Kristín Ástgeirsdóttir, a historian and a long-term member of the Icelandic Women's movement, shares the history of the



The GEST 2022 cohort with Naimo Fivasko in the front centre

movement in Iceland. They also attended an introduction to the Queer Association of Iceland, Samtökin 78. A presentation by the inspiring Somalian-Icelandic activist Najmo Fiyasko about her own story and her feminist activism and advocacy online was very memorable for the fellows. Danijela Vukovic-Calasan of the University of Montenegro visited GEST supported by GRÓ GEST Erasmus+ partnership, and lastly the First Lady of Iceland, Ms. Eliza Reid visited the fellows and talked about her new book *Secrets of the Sprakkar: Iceland's Extraordinary Women and How They Are Changing the World*.

Off-campus the cohort visited *Konukot* shelter for homeless women in Reykjavík, where they learned about the project as well as the ideology of the Root - Association for Women Welfare, the principles of

harm reduction and housing first, which is also Reykjavik municipality's policy concerning homelessness and substance use problems. The fellows also visited *Stígamót*, counselling centre for survivors of sexual violence. At *Stígamót*, the fellows met with organisation's spokesperson, Steinunn Gyðu- og Guðjónsdóttir, who shared with them the history of the organisation as well as their awareness campaigns. They also led themselves on a writing retreat/relaxation weekend at the university's Laugarvatn campus – only an hour outside town but a world away in terms of nature, calm, and quiet.

In May, the fellows visited the Icelandic president, Guðni Th. Jóhannesson at Bessastaðir, the residence of the Icelandic president. After being welcomed by the president, two fellows, Mohamed Altamash Khan from India and Maame Adwoa Amona-Marfo from Ghana, spoke on behalf of the GRÓ GEST fellows. Robert Chiwamba of Malawi recited a poem, dedicated to his experience in Iceland, and Aarti Lila Ram presented and gave the president an ajrak, a scarf of indigenous fabric from Sindh in Pakistan, traditionally considered a sign of respect and honour.



The fellows of 2022 with the president of Iceland, Mr. Guðni Th. Jóhannesson

South-East Iceland Field Trip

The fellows went on the yearly four-day field trip to the south coast of Iceland during a weekend in May. The visit was directly linked to GEST's academic module on Gender, Environment and Climate Change. The visit was hosted by Dr. Þorvarður Árnason, who is the director of University of Iceland's Research Center at Höfn in Hornafjörður. During their drive east to Höfn, the fellows visited major sites along the way. These included *Reynisfjara* (known as „the Black Sand Beach“), the waterfalls *Seljalandsfoss* and *Skógafoss* and *Jökulsárlón* glacial lagoon. At Höfn, the fellows attended lectures organised by Dr. Árnason, introducing to the dramatic changes that have occurred at the Icelandic glaciers. The fellows were also introduced to the relationship of the community to the land, and its landscape. The fellows visited the glacier *Fláajökull*, an outlet glacier of Vatnajökull, Iceland's largest glacier, where they could come very close to the glacier outlet.



The fellows with Dr. Þorvarður Árnason from the Höfn Research Centre



The GRÓ GEST fellows at Höfn in south east of Iceland. Vatnajökull, Iceland's largest glacier is visible in the back.

2.1.6 Graduation 2022

Final Seminar

The final seminar for the postgraduate programme took place on the 16th of May. At an open forum, each fellow presented the design, analysis, and results of their final assignments to their peers and others interested. All the final assignments had to do with issues relevant to gender equality in their home countries and included research papers, research proposals and project proposals. The 2022 final assignments addressed diverse topics such as women's protests in Kosovo, feminist self-care in Africa, Namibian women peacekeepers, Palestinian female bodybuilders, countering gender-based violence through poetry, challenging gender norms among pre-schoolers, and many more.

Graduation Ceremony

The formal graduation ceremony for the GRÓ GEST fellows of 2022 took place at the university's Aula, in the Main Building. The ceremony started with welcoming remarks by Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir, director of GRÓ GEST followed by speeches to the fellows by Dr. Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of Iceland and Martin Eyjólfsson, Permanent Secretary of State of Iceland. Ólöf Garðarsdóttir, Dean of the School of Humanities and Nína Björk Jónsdóttir, Director General of GRÓ Centre distributed diplomas and certificates to the graduating fellows. Other distinguished guests included lecturers, supervisors, friends and several family members of fellows who came to Iceland for the occasion.



*To the left: Dr. Ólöf Garðarsdóttir, Dean of Humanities hands fellow Robert Chiwamba his certificate.
To the right: Diana Motsi recites her poem „Revolutionary“.*

Fellow Diana Motsi from Zimbabwe presented her powerful poem titled “Revolutionary” and Maame Adwoa Amoah-Marfo from Ghana addressed the guests on behalf of the cohort. The ceremony was followed by a reception, after which GEST staff and fellows enjoyed a celebratory dinner.



The 2022 GEST graduated fellows with GRÓ GEST staff, GRÓ General Director, and Dean of Humanities and the Rector of the University of Iceland

Recipients of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Award

The Vigdís Finnbogadóttir award was presented to two fellows, for the best final assignments in two distinct categories: an applied project or project document on the one hand and a research paper or proposal on the other.

In the category of applied projects and project proposals, Nicole Wasuna was awarded the prize for her project proposal “Counting Dead Women: Towards a Femicide Observatory in Kenya”. The project addresses existing gaps in the literature and in country-specific policy responses on femicide. It formulates and provides specialized and targeted training to the police, the media, and the judiciary on femicide cases in a way that respects the dignity and honour of the deceased and their loved ones. It transforms institutional operations at the national level and, in so doing, lays the foundation for a future free of violence for women in Kenya.



Two fellows received the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir award for the best final assignment, Nicole Wasuna to the left for the best project proposal and Sandani N. Yapa Abeywardena for the best research

In the category of research and research proposals, Sandani N. Yapa Abeywardena received the award for her paper on “The Legal and Judicial Construction of Gender in Sexual Crimes in Sri Lanka”. The study interrogates the supposed core values of equality and impartiality in the Sri Lankan justice system in how it deals with sexual crimes. By examining judgements delivered by the Superior Courts on the offences of rape, grave sexual abuse, and sexual harassment in cases between 2020 and 2021, the study analyses and ultimately reveals how judges construct gender in the interpretation of the laws on gender-based violence, and the laws of evidence on victim-credibility.

Selection of the 2023 Cohort

The selection process in 2022 for the 2023 cohort was based on two parallel nominations processes: an open call, and an Erasmus+ call in collaboration with partner universities through the Erasmus+ grant scheme. The deadline for nominations was in March for the open call and in April for the Erasmus+ call. The interview process was completed in June and invitations to the 2023 programme were sent out in July.

The selection process was highly competitive. The GEST programme received over 200 nominations from over 40 countries in the open call. In the Erasmus+ call GEST received nominations from Birzeit University, the University of the West Indies, and Pristina University.

A total of 25 candidates were selected for the 2023 programme and received an invitation for the fellowship. The final cohort consisted of 23 fellows, 16 women and 7 men, from 16 countries, including two Erasmus+ students: from Pristina University and the University of the West Indies.

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 Ph.D. scholarship programme, research networks and academic projects.

3.1. Ph.D. Scholarship Programme

There are currently two GRÓ GEST PhD fellows, Stella Tereka, a 2016 GEST alumna from Uganda, enrolled in the interdisciplinary doctoral programme in Environment and Natural Resources and Yeshiwas Degu Belay, a 2017 GEST alumnus from Ethiopia, enrolled in the Faculty of History and Philosophy in the School of Humanities.

In September, GRÓ GEST welcomed Stella back to Iceland but she had begun work on her PhD research at the height of the Covid-19 epidemic. Stella’s main supervisor is Dr. Jón Geir Pétursson, Professor in Environment and Natural Resources at the University of Iceland. Stella’s focus in her PhD research is on gender and climate change. Her research examines the gendered dimensions of climate change and aims to identify effective approaches and strategies to

support gender transformative climate proofing in agriculture and natural resources sectors in Uganda. She conducts her research under the joint supervision of Dr. Jón Geir Pétursson, Dr. Auður H. Ingólfssdóttir, GRÓ GEST contributing lecturer, and Dr. Patrick Byakagaba, Associate Professor at Makerere University.

Stella has submitted the first of her PhD papers for publication. Her paper, Gender perspectives on rural household water governance under changing climate in Uganda, was furthermore accepted to the 2nd International Conference on Geographical Science for Resilient Communities, Ecosystems and Livelihoods under Global Environmental Change (GORILLA) held in December 2022 in Kampala, Uganda.



Professor Jón Geir Pétursson, Stella's main supervisor to the left, Stella in the middle and Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir, director of GRÓ GEST to the right

3.2. GEST RIKK Collaboration

Throughout the existence of GEST, the programme has collaborated closely with RIKK – Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference at the University of Iceland. In 2022 the following projects took place or were underway:

3.2.1. Decolonizing Nordic Higher Education

This research project received a three-year grant from the Icelandic Research Fund. The project's principal investigator is GEST's Research Specialist, Dr. Giti Chandra, and the project's research and results will directly influence GRÓ GEST's diploma programme.

3.2.2. IDEAS: Inclusive Digital Education Anti-Discrimination Alternatives

The IDEAS (Inclusive Digital Educational Anti-discriminatory AlternativeS) Podcast was published in 2022. 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). GEST project manager Dr. Thomas Brorsen Smidt participated in the project, supplying his expertise in podcast production. The podcast offers knowledge from a feminist and politically engaging perspective. It presents women's studies, gender issues, and theoretical options, speaks of social reproduction, body, sexuality, LGBTQI, and minorities' rights, warns of climate changes, and rethinks the political.

On October 26, the first module of the IDEAS podcast became available online on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Deezer, Castbox and Podcast.rs. A new module was released every week for the remainder of the year. GEST's contribution to the podcast was five episodes on Gender and Climate Change in the format of interviews with GEST-affiliated experts.



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. Since then GEST has continued to develop MOOCs focused on gender equality. In August 2022, GEST's second MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) Gender, Violence and Post-Conflict States was launched on the edX platform.

Understanding the gendered dynamics of violence in conflict and post-conflict situations is crucial to anyone considering a career in international development, or just anyone who wants to learn more about the core theories, case studies, and policy frameworks necessary for understanding the interplay between gender and violence in conflict and post-conflict contexts. As such, the course is also directed at GRÓ GEST's main target group, namely professionals (or future professionals) working for government and civil society organisations in low income countries and post-conflict societies undergoing reconstruction.

The course was developed with funding from Erasmus+ and in collaboration with experts from the University of Oslo, University of Cape Town, London School of Economics, and PRiO (Peace Research Institute Oslo). To date, a little over 300 people have enrolled in the course.

GEST's third MOOC, and the second one to be supported by Erasmus+, on Gender and Development, was in production during the year. Production on the fourth MOOC, titled Men, Boys, and Masculinities, was also begun in 2022.

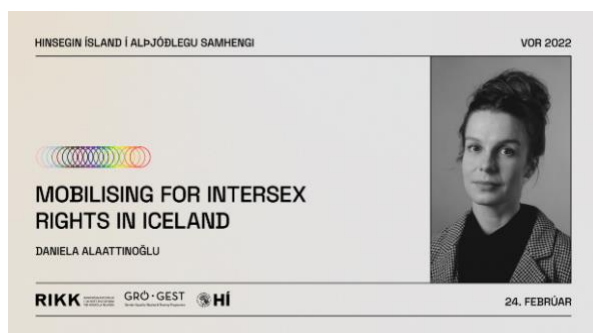


4.2. Conferences, Seminars, Lectures

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

The **GEST-RIKK noon lecture series** was held as usual during spring semester, and fellows attended noon lectures twice. This time the theme of the series was Queer Iceland in an International Context, and the lectures presented in English were: *Mobilising for Intersex Rights in Iceland* by Daniela Alaattinoglu, Icelandic Research Fund Postdoctoral Researcher at the Faculty of Law, University of Iceland, and *Queer Femininity in the films of Kristín Jóhannesdóttir* by Guðrún Elsa Bragadóttir, lecturer in film theory at the University of Iceland.



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.

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.

4.4. International 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 GRÓ GEST Alumni and Activities

The alumni network consists of 195 individuals who have graduated from the GEST programme since 2009. The group of gender equality experts represent 34 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. After a couple years of limited travel, the GEST staff sought to reconnect with the GEST alumni in 2022 through meetings in partner countries as well as continuing the alumni project development initiative with the support of the successfully piloted alumni fund.

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 applicant and be ultimately responsible for implementing the project.

The first seed fund grant was successfully awarded in 2020, contributing to an excellent project led by Chinenye Anekwe in Nigeria. After having renamed the alumni fund to the GRÓ GEST March 8 Alumni Fund, the second grant was awarded in 2022 to Claudia Pamela Chavarría Machado, GEST alumna of 2021, and Iniciativa Ciudadana y Desarrollo (INCIDE) Social in Mexico City. Pamela serves as Research and Development Coordinator at INCIDE for the project Community response to access to the right of women to live free from violence in Mexico City. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is one of Mexico's most prevalent types of violence 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 solutions, and the services and programs for victims and survivors of IPV have been unable to consider the efficiency of working with communities.

Ms. Machado's project proposes to place victims' needs at the centre of building a community-based response (CBR) while aiming for structural changes. CBR is a welcome new approach, with the goal of not only providing options for women to exit violent relationships, but also to being a part of a transformative process where communities engage and participate in working together to change the presentation of violence as something normal.



Uganda - Alumni Meeting

The GRÓ GEST director, Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir, and project manager Anna Guðrún Aradóttir, visited Uganda in June 2022, as part of ERASMUS+ staff exchange with Makerere University. During the visit to Kampala, GRÓ GEST representatives invited the **Ugandan GEST alumni** to an alumni network event at the Icelandic Embassy in Kampala. The Ugandan alumni chapter is GRÓ GEST's largest country chapter, consisting of 32 alumni. The meeting was attended by 17 alumni who represent different sectors, such as government agencies, international and local NGOs, and educational institutions. Two alumni gave extensive presentations: Stella Tereka, 2016 GEST alumna and a current GEST PhD fellow at the University of Iceland, presented early findings from her PhD research, and 2021 GEST alumna, Namutebi Bernah Namatovu, presented her work as the country manager of Aspire Women Development Initiative, an NGO that promotes the rights of girls, women, and female youth with disabilities to live a dignified life. The meeting created a platform for the alumni to strengthen their connections and share their professional experiences, as well as strategizing the way forward for the Ugandan alumni chapter. As an alumni network, they are currently in the process of forming a formal association which can facilitate their common goal: advancing gender equality in Uganda.



Ugandan GEST alumni with Iceland Head of Mission in Uganda and GRÓ GEST representatives at the Icelandic Embassy in Kampala, Uganda

Kosovo - Alumni Meeting

During her ERASMUS+ staff exchange to Prishtina GRÓ GEST's operations manager, Guðrún Eysteinsdóttir, reconnected with the **Kosovar alumnae** at an informal alumni meeting. To date, three fellows, all of them women, have attended the GEST programme with the support of Erasmus+, two in 2019 and one in 2022. The three alumnae are all currently working in civil society organizations/NGOs. They gave the GEST visiting representative an exceptionally warm welcome to Kosovo and Prishtina which included introductions to Kosovar culture through cinema and more, in addition to attending the alumni meeting.



GRÓ GEST alumnae in Kosovo with GRÓ GEST representative during an informal gathering

Ghana - Alumni Meeting

In Accra, GRÓ GEST project managers Dr. Thomas Brorsen Smidt and Anna Guðrún Aradóttir, hosted an informal alumni meeting for the **Ghanaian alumni** group during their ERASMUS+ staff exchange at University of Ghana. The Ghanaian alumni consists of six people and continues to grow. Four alumni were available to attend the gathering, in addition to the fellow who is joining the 2023 programme from Ghana. The Ghanaian alumni work within academia, civil society, and government, and were all dedicated to formalizing their alumni chapter and look forward to its continued growth.



GRÓ GEST alumni in Ghana with GRÓ GEST representatives

Palestine - Alumni Meeting



GRÓ GEST alumni in Palestine with GRÓ GEST director

In Palestine, GRÓ GEST's director invited Palestinian GEST alumni to an alumni gathering in Ramallah during her ERASMUS+ staff exchange at Birzeit University. The Palestinian alumni network is one of the largest of the GEST alumni country chapters, consisting of 29 alumni in Gaza, the Westbank and Jerusalem. Only a few were available to attend the meeting as travelling is challenging in the area. Nevertheless, the meeting was very informative and inspiring.

4.4.2 Nordic Women Mediators Network

GRÓ GEST's director participated in The Nordic Women Mediators annual meeting that was held in Helsinki in November this year. Representatives from the five Nordic networks came together to discuss recent changes in the security environment in Europe and globally, and the challenges and opportunities for mediation and Nordic cooperation through the Nordic Women Mediators Network. At the meeting, a website for the five networks was formally launched. Earlier this year, GRÓ GEST, in collaboration with Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) Centre on Gender, Peace and Security, Norway, and CMI Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation, Finland, received funding from NIKK on behalf of the five networks. A GRÓ GEST project manager has been developing the website in collaboration with other networks during the year. The website enhances the visibility of the networks' mission to advance the inclusion and meaningful participation of women in all phases of peace processes, as well as the members themselves who consist of over hundred women professionals across the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.

4.5. International Collaborations

Through its work, GEST has established institutional partnership agreements with higher education institutions as well as organisations. After two years of almost no travel, the GRÓ GEST staff was happy to be able to visit its alumni, partners, and collaborators to reconnect and strengthen its collaborations.

4.5.1. Erasmus+ 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.

Makerere University, Uganda

In June, the GRÓ GEST director, Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir along with a GRÓ GEST project manager, Anna Guðrún Aradóttir, and GRÓ GEST long term lecturer and project supervisor, Dr. Jón Geir Pétursson, visited Makerere University in Uganda. The collaboration with the **School of Women and Gender Studies** at Makerere dates to 2010. During the visit, collaboration between the two institutions was strengthened through discussions for short course development, student and faculty exchange, and a co-supervisor from Makerere University being identified for GEST PhD fellow Stella Tereka.



GRÓ GEST director Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir, with the faculty of the School of Women and Gender Studies at Makerere University



GRÓ GEST director Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir, Stella Tereka PhD fellow and her PhD supervisor Dr. Jón Geir Pétursson presented at a seminar in Makerere University.

Additionally, GRÓ GEST representatives interviewed candidates from Uganda for the 2023 GEST diploma programme.

During the visit to Kampala in June, GRÓ GEST's director, along with a GRÓ GEST PhD fellow, participated in a seminar at Makerere University facilitated by the Dean of the School of Gender and Women Studies at Makerere. The seminar was organized in two sessions. In the first session, The GEST PhD fellow from Uganda, Stella Tereka, gave a presentation on the early findings of her PhD research. She was introduced by her main PhD supervisors, Dr. Jón Geir Pétursson, Professor in Environment and Natural Resources at the University of Iceland. Her project is a novel study of Uganda. Importantly, it follows and expands on

earlier GEST engagement on gender and climate change with partners in Uganda, with a focus on policy- relevant capacity building and training on the subject.

In the second session, Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir, Director of GRÓ GEST and Professor at the University of Iceland, gave a presentation on the Icelandic women's movement and gender equality in Iceland from a global perspective. She offered insights into the feminist struggles in Iceland, and showed how gender equality has, in the last decade, become a central part of Iceland's foreign policy.

The seminar took place in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Makerere University and was in a hybrid format. It was attended by around 100 guests in total, including students from women and gender studies and from environmental sciences, professors, GEST alumni, among others.

University of Phristina, Kosovo

GRÓ GEST's operations manager, Guðrún Eysteinsdóttir, visited the University of Prishtina, Kosovo, in December. The **Program for Gender Studies and Research** at the University of Prishtina and GEST have been Erasmus+ partners since 2019 but this was the first opportunity for in-person meetings. The GEST representative presented the programme to several faculty members and sat in on classes. The two programmes concluded to not only continue their Erasmus+ partnership but hopefully also to expand their collaboration to include further projects in the future.



GRÓ GEST operations manager and GEST alumnae with the faculty of the Gender Studies and Research at the University of Phristina..

Birzeit University, Palestine

In November, the GRÓ GEST director visited Birzeit University, Palestine, which has been an Erasmus+ partner with GEST since 2016. She met with representatives from the **Institute of Women's Studies**, gave a lecture on gender equality in Iceland in class for MA students, and introduced the GEST postgraduate diploma programme.

University of Ghana



The faculty of CEGENSA with the GRÓ GEST project managers

Two GRÓ GEST project managers, Dr. Thomas Brorsen Smidt and Anna Guðrún Aradóttir, visited the **Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy (CEGENSA)** at the University of Ghana, as a part of an ongoing Erasmus+ partnership between the two institutions, in November. The two university departments introduced each other to their work and discussed synergies and possibilities for collaboration. Among other things, this resulted in informal agreements to nominate qualified MA students and staff from University of Ghana to the GEST programme in collaboration with CEGENSA, and to involve CEGENSA staff in both teaching and supervision of future GEST fellows.

University of Western Cape, South Africa

GRÓ GEST's director Irma Erlingsdóttir visited the University of Western Cape, South Africa, in December. The purpose of the visit was to strengthen the collaboration with the **Department of Women's and Gender Studies**, to explore possibilities of future research collaboration, and student and faculty exchange, in addition to giving a lecture for MA students. An ERASMUS+ institutional partnership agreement with the University of Western Cape was recently renewed after being inactive for a couple of years. The director met with the department's faculty, including partners Kopano and Tamara Shefer who will be contributing to the fourth GRÓ GEST MOOC on Men, Boys and Masculinity.



The GRÓ GEST director with UWC faculty

Lebanese American University, Lebanon



GRÓ GEST's director Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir visited the Lebanese American University in Beirut, Lebanon, in November as a part of the ERASMUS+ staff/scholar exchange programme. This visit allowed the director to reconnect with partners at the Arab Institute for Women, where she held a public lecture on Gender and LGBTQI+ politics in Iceland. Furthermore, she introduced the GRÓ GEST postgraduate diploma programme for MA students at LAU, and discussed synergies with other departments at LAU.

4.5.2. Collaboration with UNESCO

In 2020, GEST joined the other Icelandic former United Nations University (UNU) programmes in GRÓ, Centre of Capacity Development, Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change. The GRÓ Centre operates as a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO. Since the affiliation with UNESCO, GRÓ GEST has sought collaboration with UNESCO programmes, national commissions and country offices.

The 6th Meeting of the Informal Network of European National Commissions for UNESCO

GRÓ GEST was invited to join the 6th Meeting of the Informal Network of European National Commissions for UNESCO for a special session on gender equality in May 2022 in Reykjavík, Iceland. GEST academic coordinator, Dr Thomas Brorsen Smidt, and GEST fellows Ms. Sandani N. Yapa Abeywardena and Ms. Lahya Shikongo, presented GEST work and activities, as well as the beginning and future collaborations with UNESCO. Ms. Abeywardena who is an Attorney-at-Law at the Chambers of Justice Shiranee Tilakawardane in Sri Lanka spoke about the curriculum of the GEST programme and how it has influenced her work. Ms. Shikongo who is the Chief Foreign Relations Officer at the Ministry of International Relations and Cooperation in Namibia introduced the structure of the Final Assignment in the GEST programme linking it to her own research on Namibian women in security and peacekeeping.



GEST fellows Sandani Yapa Abeywardena and Lahya Shikongo present the GEST programme

UNESCO in Ghana

GRÓ GEST representatives visited the Ghana National Commission for UNESCO, and the UNESCO Ghana Country Office, while in Accra in November.

At the meeting at the UNESCO Ghana Country Office, GEST representatives introduced the GEST programme and learned about gender related projects supported by the country office in Ghana, as well as learning about the two UNESCO category 2 centres in Ghana. Representatives from the country office were determined to share the open call for nominations to the GEST postgraduate diploma programme among its network and relevant partners in civil society.

GRÓ GEST representatives also met with the Secretary-General of the Ghana National Commission for UNESCO and a Programme Officer at the commission offices at the Ghanaian Ministry of Education. The secretary-general last visited Iceland in May this year at the international meeting for UNESCO's country representatives in Reykjavik. At the meeting in Accra it was reaffirmed that the Ghana Commission for UNESCO is committed to supporting gender equality efforts in Ghana. The Secretary-General also expressed great interest in collaborating with GEST in locating excellent junior professionals in the area of gender equality for the GEST postgraduate training programme, as well as supporting GEST's existing Ghanaian alumni network in their future activities.



Representatives of UNESCO in Ghana with GRÓ GEST project managers

UNESCO in Palestine

The director of GRÓ GEST, Dr Irma Erlingsdóttir visited UNESCO's National Office for Palestine in Ramallah during her stay in November. She was introduced to the Office's projects and activities – from promoting the rights to education and freedom of expression to safeguarding cultural and natural heritage sites. She met with Nohra Bawazir, the Head of Office, Ushio Miura, a programme specialist, and Keane Amanda, a communication specialist. At the meeting, Dr. Erlingsdóttir introduced the GEST programme and gave an overview of the projects that former Palestinian GEST fellows initiated and developed during their studies in Iceland. The UNESCO representatives expressed a strong interest in collaborating with GEST, including assisting the programme staff in identifying partners and candidates, establishing partnership through common projects and the sharing of best practices and information.

5. Management & Personnel

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 campus community.

5.2. GEST Personnel

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

5.2.1. GEST Staff



Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir is the director of GEST. She is also a Professor at the University of Iceland, the Director of RIKK — Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference and the Director of the EDDA Research Center on critical contemporary research at the University of Iceland, which focuses on the politics of equality in the humanities and social sciences.

Irma holds a Ph.D. from Sorbonne University and is a specialist in critical theory, contemporary literature and gender. She has published 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 2022, Giti coordinated the module Gender, Security and Violence, Gender, Labour and Migration and the Final Assignment. She also taught in the modules Gender, Security and Violence, Gender Theories and Concepts. In 2022, Giti, together with Thomas Brorsen Smidt, project manager, continued to develop the GEST edX online courses, focusing on the second edX online course on Gender and Violence in Conflict and Post-Conflict States.

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 2022, 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 and the academic coordinator at the GEST programme. In 2022, 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. He also supported Giti with the module coordination of Gender, Violence and Security as well as Gender, Labour and Migration. In 2022, Thomas 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 contributed on behalf of GEST to the IDEAS project.

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.



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.



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 and the four-day field visit. Administrative tasks included overall planning and reporting for the GEST programme. Védís oversaw the communication of GEST via the GEST website and social media. Védís was on leave from her position from May-December 2022.

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.



Dr. Guðrún Sif Friðriksdóttir is a project manager at GEST and RIKK. In 2022, she was the module coordinator for the module Gender and Development: Tools and Strategies.

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.

Ragnhildur Helga Hannesdóttir was a part-time project manager at GRÓ GEST from September 2022 working on administrative matters in support of the incoming cohort of 2023. Ragnhildur holds a BA degree in Anthropology from the University of Iceland and is currently working towards an MA in the same field, having previously also completed a Post-graduate diploma in Global Studies at UI.

Nikkita Hamar Patterson has both taught and worked in administration at the GRÓ GEST programme. In 2022 she lectured in the module Theories and Concepts of Gender in January, and was a part-time project manager from June – August working on the admission process for 2023. Nikkita is a Ph.D. candidate in English at the University of Iceland School of Humanities; she holds an MA degree in Literature, Culture and Media also from UI and a BFA in Film/Digital Video from University of the Arts in Philadelphia, PA, USA.