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# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2020

## GENDER EQUALITY STUDIES AND TRAINING PROGRAMME



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

GRÖ  
GEST

• Gender Equality Studies  
• and Training Programme  
• Under the auspices  
• of UNESCO



UNIVERSITY OF ICELAND



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## Foreword

The year 2020 will be a memorable year. It started off like any other GEST semester with the welcoming of a new cohort in early January. In March, the University of Iceland was forced to close down due to COVID-19 restrictions and overnight, lectures were transferred to remote teaching. Yet, despite the adversity, the GEST fellows responded to an exceptional situation with professionalism and perseverance; in no other year did a higher number of student final assignments receive an honorary mention. After the graduation ceremony in late May, the GEST team had the difficult task of bringing the fellows back home. By the end of July, it had been mostly accomplished; only two students from Nigeria – where all international airports remained closed until mid-September – had to stay in Iceland over the summer.

Since the world-wide COVID-emergency continued through autumn and winter of 2020, it was decided to postpone the GEST-diploma programme until the autumn of 2021. Most of those fellows, who had already been admitted to the spring semester of that year, accepted the offer to take part in it at this later date. This means that in the academic year of 2021–2022, two cohorts will join the GEST programme, the first starting in August 2021 and the second in January 2022.

The COVID-situation did not prevent the GEST programme from reaching several milestones. Professor Cynthia Enloe, a long-standing lecturer at the programme, was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Iceland, which is the highest honour a university can bestow. In May, GEST launched its first online course within the internationally acclaimed edX higher education teaching platform; and late in the year, GEST sponsored its first book-length project – published by a leading international publishing house, Routledge – under the title *The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of the #MeToo Movement*, with contributions by 38 authors from around the world. The programme also inaugurated its podcast series with topics that range from cultural appropriation and revenge pornography to colonialism and the universal struggle against sexual violence.

While we work towards practical changes to systems predicated on discrimination that enable gender injustices, GEST's strengths lie in deeper reservoirs of solidarity and empathy. Justice goes beyond the legal to the epistemic and the emotional, where alliance-building is key. One of the main goals of the GEST programme is to offer a continued venue for such transnational collaborative work toward gender equality.

Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir

Director of GEST

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## 1. Introduction

The Gender Equality Studies and Training (GEST) programme, formerly one of the United Nations University Iceland programmes, now operates as a part of the GRÓ Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Societal Change, a UNESCO category 2 centre. The GEST programme is hosted by and integrated into the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Iceland. GEST's mission is to use a multidisciplinary approach to promote gender equality and social justice in low income, conflict and post-conflict countries through:

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

GEST presents activities consistent with the programme's mission and strategy including its main activity, an interdisciplinary postgraduate diploma programme in International Gender Studies, as well as research collaborations, and communication platform. In 2020, the GEST programme's operations and activities were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic but were rather adjusted than cancelled; the academic programme was completed online, seminars became webinars and publications were released. The following report demonstrates the GEST programme's main activities and contributions to its mission during the year 2020.

## 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. While the impact of the pandemic was minimal for completing the postgraduate diploma programme's main activities, the pandemic severely affected the implementation of the short courses held in-country. The following section reports on GEST's activities within the capacity of professionals and organisations.

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

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

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

#### 2.1.1. Fellows of 2020

Twenty fellows, fourteen women and six men, from eleven countries, participated in the GEST programme starting in January 2020. The selected fellows were funded by five different funding sources (see further in section 5.2.).

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF FELLOWS	FUNDING SOURCE
Afghanistan	1	Erasmus+/GRÓ GEST
Cameroon*	1	GRÓ GEST
Ghana	1	Erasmus+/GRÓ GEST
Malawi	3	GRÓ GEST
Malawi	1	Icelandic Red Cross/GRÓ GEST
Mozambique	1	GRÓ GEST
Nigeria	1	Erasmus+/GRÓ GEST
Nigeria	1	GRÓ GEST
Palestine	1	GRÓ GEST
Russia (Arctic)*	1	MFA Iceland Arctic
South Africa	1	GRÓ GEST
Sri Lanka*	2	GRÓ GEST
Uganda	3	GRÓ GEST
Uganda	1	Erasmus+/GRÓ GEST
Uganda	1	The Equality Fund/GRÓ GEST

\* marks countries that were represented in the GEST programme for the first time in 2020



Fellows from the 2020 cohort at Seljalandsfoss waterfall in May 2020

## 2.1.2. Postgraduate diploma 2020 - Curriculum

The 2020 postgraduate diploma programme in international gender studies consisted of six modules of five credits each, totalling 30 ECTS credits. Each module was coordinated by GEST staff. Classroom (and online) teaching was in the hands of coordinators and module lecturers, who were Icelandic and international specialists in their respective fields. Course assessment was based on short and long written assignments, presentations and class participation.

The credited modules were preceded by three days of orientation, introducing the new fellows to Iceland, the university and its systems, and the programme. In addition to the credited curriculum, the fellows were introduced to the gender scene in Iceland with field visits and visiting lecturers as well as participation in a number of other extra-curricular activities.

### The Effect of COVID-19 on the Postgraduate Programme 2020

The postgraduate programme in 2020 was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as two months into the programme, the University of Iceland closed its buildings due to COVID-19 restrictions. All lectures were transferred over to online teaching. Social distancing was introduced and restrictions on the number of people allowed to gather at a time made it difficult to complete field trips and visits. Throughout this period, the fellows continued their studies using online platforms. As the University of Iceland reopened at the beginning of May, the fellows had all managed to keep on track, completing their final assignments on schedule on May 10th.

The 2020 postgraduate programme included the following modules:

### Theories and Concepts of Gender

**13-31 January 2020**

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

**Other lecturers:** Dr. Abena Busia and Musa Hove

#### Description:

The purpose of this module was to introduce fellows to basic theories and concepts in gender studies in order to develop transnational understandings of established feminist theoretical traditions as well more recent feminist conceptualizing of global gender politics.

Through a combination of readings, lectures and in-depth class discussion, fellows would consider how unjust politics and constructions of gender and sexuality might be changed through transnational transfers and dialogues. Fellows would explore gender equality/justice for suppressed minority and oppressed groups from historical, intersectional, trans-national, and human rights perspectives. Discussion centred on how the issues, ideas, and debates engaged in by feminist theorists play out in specific contexts, particularly the contexts of “developing” nations, post-colonial, and conflict/post-conflict societies. Fellows were encouraged to think about and mentally map the differences (ethnic, racial, class, etc.) that matter in the societies and organizations they come from; they would reflect on the meanings and significance of these internal social differences and political struggles as viewed from

global and transnational feminist theoretical perspectives. They were asked to consider and apply the transnational feminist theoretical concepts they read about to those gender justice movements they were familiar with as well as those they would 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 were encouraged to develop theoretically informed views and transnational feminist perspectives.

### Gender and Development: Tools and Strategies

**10-28 February 2020**

**Module coordinators:** Milica Minić and Guðrún Eysteinsdóttir

**Lecturers:** Dr. Suzanne Clisby, Dr. Phoebe Kisubi, Dr. Elisabeth Klatzer, Tryggvi Hallgrímsson, Hjálmar Sigmarsson, Þórður Kristinsson, Sólrún Ólafsdóttir

#### Description:

This module was designed to encourage discussion on the connections between gender and development, its theory, policy and practice. Students explored the entanglements of gender (regimes) and various aspects of social change and learned how to use a critical theoretical approach to analyse contemporary processes of development. They would increase their

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understanding of the different configurations of inequality and how they impact projects' effectiveness and outcomes.

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

### Gender, Violence and Security

**4-6 February and 3-13 March 2020**

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

**Lecturers:** Dr. Cynthia Enloe, Dr. Oforiwa Abena Ampomah, Dr. Vinita Chandra

#### **Description:**

The aim of the course was to increase the fellows' ability to understand, discuss, and convey knowledge of gender dimensions of security, especially with regard to international legal obligations, UNSC resolutions, 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

**16 March-3 April 2020**

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

**Lecturers:** Kirstín Flygenring, Randi Stebbins, Claudie Ashonie Wilson, Dr. Tamara Shefer, Dr. Marlene Spanger

#### **Description:**

This module introduced students to the concepts connected to various types of migration. Students would get a fuller view of migration as it intersects with labour and gender by looking at international agreements and treaties, national laws and policies, 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 discussed in light of current theories, research, and agreements. Concepts and theories of comparative law was discussed as they relate to migration, jurisdiction, gender, and labour. Finally, the course covered immigration enforcement and its economic impact on migrant men and women.

### Gender, Environment and Climate Change

**20 April-12 May 2020**

**Module coordinator:** Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir

**Project manager:** Védís Ólafsdóttir

**Lecturers:** Dr. Auður H. Ingólfssdóttir, Dr. Joni Seager, Dr. Jón Geir Pétursson, Dr. Hafdis Hanna Ægisdóttir

#### **Description:**

The purpose of this module was to examine the role of gender in the context of environment with a focus on climate change. This module analysed the transformative potential of gender equality to advance environmental sustainability as well as resilience, vulnerability, mitigation and adaptation to global environmental change. Furthermore, the module outlined the main international commitments in regards to environment and climate change and suggested gender sensitive actions. Through the combination of readings, documentaries and lectures, fellows would understand the impact of climate change on gender, both in rural and urban environment as well as in different geographical contexts. The fellows would be equipped to provide examples of international commitments as well as possible everyday actions to enhance sustainable operations.

### Final Assignment

**15 January-20 May 2020**

**Module coordinator and main lecturer:** Randi W. Stebbins

**Lecturers:** Dr. Giti Chandra, Susan Muska, Dr. Toby Erik Wikstrom, Angela Rawlings

#### **Description:**

Fellows worked on an assignment of their choice throughout the duration of the programme under the supervision of expert supervisors. Each fellow was assigned a final assignment supervisor, who is an expert in the field in which the fellow was writing. Supervisors worked with respective fellows to offer direction on the final assignment throughout the semester. The purpose of the final assignment is 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 assignment may be an essay addressing a specific gender problem and identifying strategies and suggestions to counter it, a project proposal that outlines 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 the 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. As a part of this module, fellows attended sessions on academic writing, reference systems for literature review and research, introduction to the university library, professional development, and how to deliver professional presentations.

### 2.1.3. Final Assignments - The 2020 GEST Cohort

#### Masculinities in Disasters: Mitigating Post-Disaster Gender-Based Violence in TA Makhwira and Lundu in Chikwawa District, Malawi



**Fellow:** Alinane Kaimila  
**Country:** Malawi  
**Organisation:** The Malawian Red Cross  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Guðrún Sif Friðriksdóttir

**Description:** Gender based violence has been observed to rise during and after disasters. This has been attributed to negative masculinities stemming from unequal gendered roles and norms in society. With its deep-rooted patriarchal culture, negative masculinities are expected to be rampant and thus possibility of GBV should be high. However due to the stronghold of these patriarchal norms, it is also expected that women do not report cases of violence fearing backlash from the community which limits the responses to family violence as data remain unconvincing for policy makers and funding bodies to take action. The humanitarian response to this has primarily focused on providing gender sensitive immediate relief and protection for survivors in the relief phase of disasters and slight attention has been given to gender transformative prevention measures which tackle the root causes of this phenomena. This project targets disaster prone communities of southern Malawi which is hit every year with a flooding episode. The project will focus on two things. First, using gender transformative and participatory approaches targeting local and religious leaders, men and boys and women and girls to change the rigid institutions that guide the construction of negative masculinities. Second, strengthening the systems that support and record cases of violence in order to accumulate enough evidence to convince funding bodies and policy makers of the need to invest more in this problem.

#### Revenge Pornography in Uganda: Addressing the Crime of Intimate Disclosure



**Fellow:** Allen Asiimwe  
**Country:** Uganda  
**Organisation:** Makerere University / CivSource Africa  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Þórður Kristinnsson

**Description:** Image based sexual abuse is today heavily supported and facilitated by advanced technology, creating a cyberspace that is toxic to women, commonly known as revenge pornography. The name revenge pornography suggests that the women who appear in the sexual visual material deserve to be punished. It suggests that the perpetrator has been offended by the victim, and therefore has the right to share the victim's images or videos. In the case of Uganda, victims of this form of abuse see and obtain little protection, despite having legislation in effect such as the Anti-Pornography and the Computer Misuse Act. This project, through different media platforms, will launch a media campaign to counteract the narrative and bad practices of image based sexual abuse. This project will also create a safe space for women to discuss the issue of revenge pornography, facilitated by victims themselves. The project will also profile and document stories of victims of revenge pornography, creating a visual casebook with an aim of sharing victims' actual stories as opposed to the stories structure by their perpetrators. The visual casebook will provide an alternative voice, that has for too long been silenced. Lastly, the project will engage and lobby legislators to review the Ant-pornography and Computer Misuse Act to protect the plight of victims of revenge pornography and to recognize intimate disclosure with no consent, as a crime.



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## Palestinian Commemoration Politics: The Performative Roles of Women in the 'Palestinian Diaspora' TV Series

**Fellow:** Anas Hassuneh

**Country:** Palestine

**Organisation:** Birzeit University

**Final assignment supervisor:** Valur Ingimundarson

**Description:** The paper analyses gender roles within a Palestinian historical context, using the TV drama series 'The Palestinian Diaspora' as a case study. The focus is, specifically, on how women in pre-1948 Palestine and, subsequently, in refugee camps are presented in the series. Building on Maurice Halbwachs's and Sigmund Freud's respective theoretical frameworks in memory studies and on the works of Raevvyn Connell, Judith Butler and other feminist theorists, the paper shows how women's voices are silenced within the Palestinian national narrative and collective memory. It is argued that the TV series present a unique remembering model where women's gender roles intersect with their class positions and with specific historical events such as the 1948 and 1967 wars. By doing so, the series introduce a commemoration pattern where women become a part of Palestinian history as women, not only as mothers or daughters.

## Impact of Climate Change on Indigenous Women of Yakutia



**Fellow:** Anisiia Moyakunova

**Country:** Russia (Arctic)

**Organisation:** The Arctic Research Centre of the Academy of Sciences of the Sakha Republic

**Final assignment supervisor:** Auður H. Ingólfssdóttir

**Description:** The impact of global warming in the Arctic climate has serious consequences at the local, regional and global levels. Climate change affects men and women differently and in the remote places in the North, women have little education and are mainly engaged in household management, raising children, including food production. In case of natural disasters, such as floods, families have to relocate, and due to women's low education levels and limited experiences, they have limited livelihood opportunities. Men tend to access work more easily without having an education. But on the other hand, men are more often concerned about maintaining their social status and are reluctant to

move. This paper analyses the Russian climate policy, to understand what the Climate Doctrine is and its goals. In addition, the paper analyses how climate change affects the indigenous peoples of Yakutia, and what effects and indicators of climate warming can be seen now. Furthermore, it addresses the gender dimensions of global warming.

## Equipping Primary Teachers in Gender Responsive Pedagogy to Strengthen Quality and Equity in Schools at Imvepi Refugee Camp



**Fellow:** Brenda Apeta

**Country:** Uganda

**Organisation:** Pangea

**Final assignment supervisor:** Hanna Björg Vilhjálmsdóttir

**Description:** Schools are a symbol of hope for the future for girls and boys that have been forced to live in refugee camps in foreign countries. Teachers are key in creating a learning environment which nurtures the future of such a generation, however, patriarchal ideologies have affected the teachers' attitudes towards girls' ability to achieve, creating a gender gap in the learning experience. The lack of training in Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) (Fentie, 2017). perpetuates gender differences in the education system excluding girls from academically achieving to the best of their ability. The project intends to create gender awareness amongst teachers, teaching assistants, and head teachers in Imvepi refugee camp for the improvement of their attitude towards gender stereotypes and biases in their teaching and learning processes. Consequently, they will be able to critically reflect on their interaction with girls and boys, overcome their own and the learners' gendered attitudes and perceptions. This enables them to employ non-sexist and gender-sensitive instructional strategies, learning materials, and school management. This will eventually empower girls and increase their self-efficacy and reduce toxic masculine behaviour. In addition, teaching assistants will acquire confidence and motivation to be advocates for equal opportunities for girls in their communities at the refugee camp, improving the retention rates at primary and post-primary levels.

## The Construction of Non-Violent Dialogues through Visual Arts



**Fellow:** Daniel Radebe  
**Country:** South Africa  
**Organisation:** University of South Africa  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Guðrún Sif Friðriksdóttir

**Description:** Violence remains a long-term threat to South Africa's outlook. Gender-based violence, perpetrated by men on their spouses (women) and children as well as other males, appears to be on the rise, as reported contact crimes have spiked. Men and boys are the centre of conflict, either the perpetrators or the victims of violence. Research on gender inequality has demonstrated evidence of continued violence and asks: how constructions of masculine identities are the leading factors of the continuing violence? It is a challenge to work with boys with the aim of reshaping the care about each other's non-violent behaviour. The project's core goal is to use innovative approaches such as creative arts to speak to issues such as masculine identity, gender equality, consent, sex, abuse and construction of non-violent behaviours in the societies. The project will use artistic expression techniques to generate discourse, such as poetry, music, painting, photography and other expressive methods, to tackle topics such as gender discrimination, violent behaviour and gender distinctions.

## The Politics of Sexual Harassment in Students' Electoral Processes: A Case of Makerere University, Uganda



**Fellow:** Esther Namitala  
**Country:** Uganda  
**Organisation:** University of Makerere, Kampala  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Brynja Elísabeth Halldórsdóttir

**Description:** This research proposal is based on the findings from previous research examining the efficacy of institutional structures in addressing sexual harassment at Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda. While data on electoral gender-based violence at national and international level, there is a research gap in the context of electoral violence, particularly sexual harassment, at institutes of higher education. Exploratory in nature, this study seeks to investigate the prevalence of sexual harassment in student guild electoral processes, its impact on

student leadership as well as structural processes responding to sexual harassment in students' electoral processes. This research will take Makerere University as case study, using mixed methods of data collection, in an attempt to investigate the following questions: (1) What forms of sexual harassment occur in student guild electoral processes? (2) Under what circumstances does sexual harassment occur? (3) In what ways does sexual harassment affect students' leadership aspirations? Surveys, in-depth interviews, and observations will be employed to collect and analyse data. Secondary data records regarding sexual harassment from the university and online will be studied and analysed.

## Ghanaian Girls in STEM: A Paradigmatic Shift



**Fellow:** Gideon Adjei-Mawutor  
**Country:** Ghana  
**Organisation:** University of Ghana  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Thomas Brorsen Smidt

**Description:** The inclusion of girls into STEM fields has become a global conversation of which Ghana is partaking in. However, the androcentric posturing of science and its related fields have made it difficult, if not impossible for girls to get in. Many barriers stand in the way of girls' involvement. The mode of teaching and learning—a relic from colonial past and the persistence of cultural and gendered norms that prohibit girls are main reasons for this barrier. This paper seeks to explore these underpinning reasons for the exclusion of girls in STEM fields in Ghana.

## Combating Trafficking of Women and Girls: Labour Externalization from Uganda to the Middle East



**Fellow:** Ivan Bwowe  
**Country:** Uganda  
**Organisation:** Great Lakes Institute for Strategic Studies  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Randi W. Stebbins

**Description:** Every day, hundreds of Ugandan women travel to the Middle East in search of employment. Recruitment agencies promise the "heaven on earth": better pay, good working conditions and life changing opportunities. The

regulation of labour externalization by the Ugandan government gives many women false comfort that travelling to the Middle East to work is safe, but that is far from the reality. On arrival in the Middle East, the women are exploited and abused with little or no payment. Some women are repatriated by relatives or well-wishers while others are ignored by recruitment agencies and the government, left for the dead in a foreign country. This situation indicates human trafficking, which is criminal and recognised as violation of human rights. While ending labour externalization is impossible, securing the safety of migrant workers is possible. This project seeks to combat trafficking of women and girls in labour externalization from Uganda to the Middle East through strengthening labour externalization laws and ensuring the enforcement of the same, building a coalition of partners to combat this form of human trafficking, improving public awareness about the risks involved, supporting the criminal justice system in investigating and prosecuting human trafficking cases, comprehensive victim support and leveraging technology to trace migrant workers, enabling quick and easy reporting, holding government bodies and recruitment agencies accountable, collecting data and developing gender desegregated data.

### Sustainable Reintegration of Internally Displaced Persons: Formal and Vocational Education in New Kuchingoro Camp, Abuja, Nigeria



**Fellow:** Jameelah Yusuf  
**Country:** Nigeria  
**Organisation:** Merciful Hearts Foundation for Orphans and Widows, Abuja  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Geir Gunnlaugsson

**Description:** This project aims to develop the capacity of Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), displaced as a result of the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East Region of Nigeria, through formal and vocational education. The project focuses on women and children among the IDPs settling in the New Camp in Kuchingoro community of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria. Eighty percent of the women in this camp are unemployed, hence have no sustainable means of livelihood and are therefore dependent on the camp officials and non-governmental organizations (NGO), making them prone to exploitation. Over 60% of the school-aged children in this camp have no access to any form of formal education. There is admittedly a serious waste of valuable human capital among

the IDPs that ought to be addressed with utmost urgency by the Federal and State Government. Currently, there is no protection or any decent arrangement to the IDPs seeking safety in the FCT of Nigeria. The proposed project would provide accessible and equitable formal education to children of school age and vocational skills training for women, making them employable while reducing their dependency on the camp officials and NGOs, thereby reducing their susceptibility to abuse. This would facilitate their reintegration through sustainable means of livelihood to their host communities, or even their original communities when peace is restored.

### The Weaponization of the Feminist Discourse in Malawi



**Fellow:** Jessica Madalitso Mandanda  
**Country:** Malawi  
**Organisation:** Agricultural Communication Branch  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Giti Chandra

**Description:** Feminism in Malawi has met backlash in political spheres and social spaces. While there is a history of feminist activism in the country; misapprehension of feminist values, stereotypes and the conservative context of Malawi have led to the nourishment of anti-feminist movements. These movements have since evolved into using the feminist discourse, language and methodology in their stealth attacks on feminists in the country. This paper will illustrate the various ways in which feminist discourse has been weaponized against feminists, subsequently leading to their punishment, introduction of pseudo-legislation, and sedimentation of rigid social and gender norms. This discussion will be situated in feminist values, the global feminist movement and an exploration of the motivations of the anti-feminist movement.

## UNSCR 1325 and Beyond: A Needs-based Analysis of Women and Girls in the Dzaleka Refugee Camp



**Fellow:** Khwimani Mwasinga  
**Country:** Malawi  
**Organisation:** Jesuit Refugee Service  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Giti Chandra

**Description:** Refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons are subject to a range of complex and intersectional issues that emanate from conflict. International laws and instruments fill the gaps in the areas where domestic laws fail to either protect displaced persons or asylum seekers against human rights abuses. It is therefore essential to use any available strategy to ensure the protection of displaced persons especially women and girls who are usually at a greater risk. My thesis' focus is on the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 which addresses the unique impact of war on women but fails to implement specific and tailored strategies for women and girls in refugee camps in host countries to which they fled. The paper further builds a yielding relationship between the UNSCR 1325 with the Comprehensive Refugee Framework Response which is tailored for countries that host many refugees and how both frameworks complement each other as they address in their own capacity issues that the other overlooks. The paper analyses the development of the National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Malawi and explores linkages with the Dzaleka Refugee camp.

## Private Bodies, Public Space: How Women Navigate Violence in Gendered Spaces in Colombo, Sri Lanka



**Fellow:** Kinita Shenoy  
**Country:** Sri Lanka  
**Organisation:** International Finance Corporation (World Bank Group)  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Randi W. Stebbins

**Description:** Public space is often an obstacle course of gendered violence for Sri Lanka's women. Robust socio-economic metrics for women (maternal health, education, etc.), particularly in comparison to its sub-continental neighbours, haven't translated into gender equality. Women are largely invisible in political

representation, dwindling in workforce representation, and conspicuously absent from public space and life. The purpose of this paper is to question the depth of this inequality by asking a few simple questions. Where are Colombo's women? What structural and interpersonal violence do they face in public space? How does poverty or marginalization exacerbate these issues? To answer these questions, this paper explores the social and cultural construction of gender norms, especially those that require women to stay within the private, reproductive sphere of the home and punishes women that engage with public space for enjoyment or leisure, rather than in service of the capitalist patriarchy.

## Empowering the Youth to Combat Sexual Violence against Young Women and Girls in Rural Malawi Districts of Nkhatabay, Dowa, Machinga and Nsanje



**Fellow:** Limbikani Mkangadzula  
**Country:** Malawi  
**Organisation:** Ujamaa Pamodzi Africa  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Hjálmar Sigmarsson

**Description:** Decker et., al 2015, estimated that 1 in 4 (25%) sexually active young women in Malawi between the ages of 15 and 19 identify their first sexual encounter as forced. This is the highest rate in the sub-Saharan region (21%) and globally (15%). Sexual violence places young women at risk of early pregnancies, unsafe abortions, child marriages, stigma, risky behaviours, and sexual transmitted infections (STI) including HIV. This project aims to reduce sexual violence in four rural districts in Malawi and targets out-of-school young men and women aged between 15 and 25 who are usually sidelined in gender-based violence revention programmes. In this project, a range of approaches will be employed to impart knowledge and skills that will be used to counter patriarchal ideas, negative gender norms, and practices that promote sexual violence against young women and girls. These approaches include awareness campaigns, mentorship, and training sessions as well as the Empowerment Transformation Training (ETT) programme which uses standardized curricula for young women and young men. The boy's curriculum focuses on positive masculinities and questions young men's views and their attitudes towards gender stereotypes and sexuality. On the other hand, the girl's curriculum empowers young women with knowledge and skills to enable them to play an active role in challenging structural violence that

disempowers them. Through these activities, engaged young men and women will gain knowledge, confidence, and courage to counter societal expectations and negative cultural traditions that promote sexual violence. Young men and women who participate in the activities in this project will also be engaged as agents of change and they will implement awareness campaigns on VAWG and lobby for the elimination of harmful cultural practices even after completion of the main project activities.

### Spiralling into Poverty, One Debt at a Time



**Fellow:** Nadhiya Najab  
**Country:** Sri Lanka  
**Organisation:** Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA)  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Kirstin Flygenring

**Description:** Microcredit was initially promoted as a means of improving the conditions of individuals previously excluded from accessing financial services through investment in microenterprises. More recently however, it is observed that credit facilities which were meant to be invested in productive purposes, are in fact being used predominantly for consumption, as a means of survival in the face of trying circumstances, contributing to increased levels of indebtedness among its users - a majority of who are women. This essay seeks to understand the multiplicity of factors and circumstances that contribute towards the decision to borrow from microfinance institutes, as well as to understand the social and economic implications that result from increasing levels of indebtedness. The findings are broadly analysed within the context of Sri Lanka's Northern and Eastern Provinces, which were directly impacted by the armed conflict.

### Socio-Ecological Housing in Cameroon: Climate Change Resilience for Rural Communities by Lake Chad and Logone



**Fellow:** Nadia Damandi Tarang  
**Country:** Cameroon  
**Organisation:** Ministry of Public Works, Cameroon  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Erla Hlín Hjálmarsdóttir

**Description:** This project aims to provide safe, durable and friendly homes in the rural area of the Far North Region of Cameroon. In 2014, 74.3% of

people in the area lived below the country's poverty line estimated at 931 Francs CFA 1 per day (National Institute of Statistics [INS], 2015a). This is mainly due to structural underdevelopment and climatic hazards, which limit prosperity and the potential to rise out of poverty. Since 2012, floods and violence from the Boko Haram group affect frequently the local people. This situation has led to health, food and even housing-related problems. Several organizations, as well as the government, have mobilized to offer support through medical aid and the supply of necessities (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs [OCHA], 2019). However, access to sustainable housing is one of the crucial problems, which remains unsolved. This situation affects mostly women, which deal with poor living conditions and constantly have to rebuild their houses, as men frequently migrate to the city in search of better income. This project proposes using plastic bottles as construction material to build sustainable and ecological housing, allowing the rural population to be safer and reduce the risk of pollution in urban areas. The goal is not only to build houses, but rather to build the capacities of people, mainly women by providing green building techniques based on experience from other parts of the world, without changing their identity of cultures. Access to sustainable and safe houses will allow women to focus on other income-generating activities that promote employment and self-reliance.

### Women with Disabilities and Reproductive Rights: A Brief Illustration of the Picture in Uganda



**Fellow:** Shamim Nampijja  
**Country:** Uganda  
**Organisation:** National Union of Disabled Women in Uganda  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Kristín Björnsdóttir

**Description:** This paper explores the complex roles played by the state, primary caregivers, health workers and community residents who are key players in the assurance of sexual and reproductive health rights for women and girls with disabilities in Uganda. Women's sexual and reproductive health and rights are internationally acknowledged as fundamental human rights and the violation of the same is a barrier to gender equality. Disproportionate discrimination and violation in the security of these rights trouble women and girls with disabilities. Intersectionality exposes the innumerable oppressions undermining sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls with disabilities.

Intersections of disability on other social injustices simultaneously work with the key players to augment the fluid inequities tackled by women and girls with disabilities. These fluid inequities exhibited through the experiences of women and girls with disabilities prove that the right to sexual and reproductive health rights is yet to be secured for this section of women.

### Documentary Films as a Safe Space to Promote Gender Equity in Higher Education Settings in Mozambique



**Fellow:** Tânia Machonisse  
**Country:** Mozambique  
**Organisation:** Eduardo Mondlane University, School of Communication  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Halla Kristín Einarisdóttir

**Description:** This essay is inspired by the living experience of an African feminist woman and media practitioner who believes that media, especially documentary films, is an important safe space where marginalized and alternative agendas, such as gender equity and social justice, are addressed, presented, and normalized in the public sphere. In this paper, feminist film theory is used to conceptualize the debate on documentary films incorporating female media practitioners and their agendas into the media industry, the challenges that women face as professionals in a male-dominant profession, as well as the role of the academia in promoting and shaping a generation of media professionals that values women's leadership, and understands the power of media as a public pedagogy, committed to a democratic and inclusive society. Finally, this essay proposes the development of a media criticism syllabus that relies on the feminist pedagogy to introduce, reflect, and prepare journalism students at Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique to analyse and practice alternative agendas regarding gender equity and social justice.

### Gender Responsive Budgeting as a Tool for Advancing Gender Equality: Capacity Building of Provincial Employees in Afghanistan



**Fellow:** Zeba Sultani  
**Country:** Afghanistan  
**Organisation:** Kabul University  
**Final assignment supervisor:** Milica Minic

**Description:** This proposed project aims to increase capacity and accountability of provincial staff to integrate gender in planning, budgeting, and human resource development. This will be done through assisting and conducting a gender responsive budgeting training program for provincial managers. The training program, with its follow up measures, aims to 1) reduce gender bias during planning, budgeting, and recruitment of human resources in provinces, and 2) institutionalize and mainstream gender in provincial government organization. Currently, provincial staff are unfamiliar with the concept and importance of GRB, and there is an overall absence of local citizens' participation, especially women's participation in development projects, rendering transparent and participatory budgeting processes weak. Government of Afghanistan usually concentrates on central government institutions which are responsible for implementing GRB in provinces but are not technically equipped with GRB know-how. The project will provide the provincial staff with skills and competence to analyse and address gender issues and differential impact in budget, development projects and departments, and deal with them to advance gender equality in provinces. The project intends to pilot the staff of six provincial departments located in Bamyán, Daykondi, Wardak, Samangan, Helmand and Ghazni province during the period 2021-2023.



The 2020 GEST cohort at Reynisfjara in May 2020

#### 2.1.4. Extra Curricular Activities

The GEST fellows were invited to attend a number of extra-curricular activities parallel to the academic programme, hoping to further enrich their stay in Iceland. The activities included introductions to the gender scene in Iceland, such as visits to the supreme court and the parliament, Alþingi, as well as activities advancing their professional capacity, such as negotiations and to eliminate the imposter syndrome. The fellows also travelled two days around the main tourist attractions in Iceland, the Golden Circle and the south coast of Iceland.

## Meeting with the President of Iceland and Ms. Eliza Reid

As in previous years, this year's GEST cohort had a meeting with the president of Iceland, Mr. Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, and the first lady, Ms. Eliza Reid. Unlike previous years, the meeting took place at the University of Iceland. Two fellows, Kinita Shenoy and Shamim Nampijja, spoke on behalf of the fellows about their experience in Iceland, including the challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The fellows had the chance to engage in a dialog with the president and Ms. Eliza Reid before the meeting was concluded with a group photo.



The 2020 cohort met with the president of Iceland and Ms. Eliza Reid at the University of Iceland in May, 2020.



### 2.1.5. Graduation 2020

The Gender Equality Studies and Training programme (GEST) graduated the 2020 cohort on 22 May. This was the first cohort to graduate from GRÓ GEST. Twenty fellows from twelve countries, thereof for the first-time fellows from Sri Lanka, Russia (Arctic) and Cameroon, were awarded a postgraduate diploma in international gender studies from the University of Iceland. The twenty graduated fellows joined the other 132 GEST alumni in the GEST alumni network, bringing the total number of alumni to 152 and the network's reach to 25 countries worldwide.

The graduation ceremony was attended by Ms. Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, former president of Iceland and the patron of the programme; Mr. Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development Cooperation; Dr. Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of Iceland; Guðmundur Hálfðanarson, Dean of the School of Humanities, as well as GEST fellows, supervisors, staff, and other guests.

Never before did so many final assignments receive an honorary mention, with 11 of 20 assignments having earned a first-class grade with distinction.



### Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Awards

This year, for the first time and henceforward, the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir award for the best final assignment was presented in two distinct categories. The first category is for applied projects or project documents, in which the fellow addresses and provides practical recommendations for an issue in relation to gender equality in their home country. The second category is for essays or research proposals, which aim to contribute to the existing academic literature on a particular topic relating to gender equality or outline a proposal for a future Ph.D. project. In order to be considered for the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir award, the work has to address gender issues that are of concern in the fellow's home country. It must show evidence of sophisticated gender analysis with appropriate academic references, and it shall be well-structured and written.

In the category of applied projects and project documents, Brenda Apeta, from Uganda, was awarded for her assignment "Equipping Primary Teachers in Gender Responsive Pedagogy to Strengthen Quality and Equity in Schools at the Imvepi Refugee Camp". In the category of essays and research proposals, Nadhiya Najab was rewarded for her analysis of microfinance institutions, and the gendered social and economic implications that result from increasing levels of indebtedness. Nadhiya works for Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) where she has been involved in projects that offer service such as assistance in post-war resettlement and in finding livelihood opportunities.



Ms. Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, former president of Iceland patron of the GEST programme, Nadhiya Najap, Brenda Apeta the recipients of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir award and Prof. Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of Iceland

### Fellows' Return

Travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic had a severe impact on the fellows' return back to their home countries. Flights available were limited but by early July, sixteen of twenty fellows had returned home safely. By the end of July, all the fellows had returned home except for two fellows from Nigeria who remained in Iceland until the Nigerian international airports opened in mid-September.

### 2.1.6. Selection Process for the 2021 GEST Programme

The selection process in 2020 for the 2021 cohort was based on three parallel nominations processes; an open call, collaboration with universities through the Erasmus+ grant scheme, and a predetermined partnership agreement. The target group for the GEST postgraduate diploma programme is primarily junior professionals and researchers, working on gender issues for government ministries and agencies, civil society organizations and educational or research institutes in low/middle income countries, conflict and post-conflict societies.

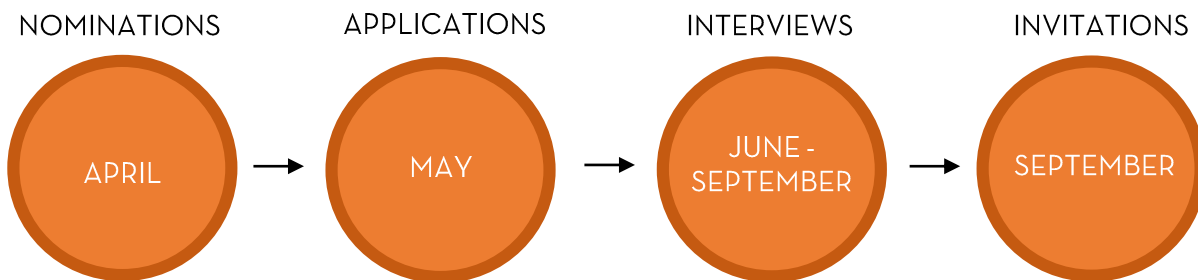
The GEST programme sought nominations for candidates who complied to the following criteria:

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

\*For Open Call candidates

\*\*For Erasmus+ Grant Scheme candidates

\*\*\* For Arctic candidates



### Open Call

The *open call* requires nominations of candidates from established institutions, government agencies, non-governmental organisations or higher education institutions. An open call was issued in March via GEST’s official website and social media outlets, and was disseminated among partners of GEST and the GEST alumni.

Despite anticipated global limitations and closings due to COVID-19, the GEST programme received 260 nominations for candidates who fulfilled minimum requirements for the programme. This counts for a 62.5% increase in the number of nominations from 2019. Over 200 nominees were individually invited to apply electronically on the GEST website and of these nominees, about 78% were female and 22% were male, from 61 countries.

### Erasmus+ Grant Scheme

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

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

Three candidates were selected through the Erasmus+ Grant Scheme for the spring semester of 2021 from the University of Ghana, Kabul University in Afghanistan, and Makerere University in Uganda.

### The Arctic

In 2019, Iceland assumed Chairmanship of the Arctic Council for the period 2019-2021 and parallel to the chairmanship, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs funded two candidates from the Arctic region to participate in the GEST programme during the period 2020-2021. Nine nominations were received from Canada, Russia and Norway of which a candidate from Yakutia in Russia, was selected to participate in the 2021 GEST programme.

### Final Selection

A total of ninety-eight applicants were invited to be interviewed, of which seventeen were male and eighty-one were female. The interviews were comprehensive about the candidates’ past experience and education as well as future plans. The evaluation process also included a written assignment. Based on a careful review and evaluation of all collected application materials, thirty-two fellows, four men and twenty-eight women, from nineteen countries, were selected to participate in the 2021 programme, with no waiting list. By the end of 2020, twenty-seven candidates were confirmed to attend the 2021 GEST programme in August 2021.

Country	Number of fellows	Funding source
Afghanistan	1	Erasmus+/GRÓ GEST
China*	1	GRÓ GEST
Egypt*	1	GRÓ GEST
India	2	GRÓ GEST
Iraq	1	GRÓ GEST
Kenya	1	GRÓ GEST
Kenya	1	Erasmus+/GRÓ GEST
Malawi	3	GRÓ GEST
Mexico*	2	GRÓ GEST
Mongolia*	1	GRÓ GEST
Namibia*	1	GRÓ GEST
Nepal*	2	GRÓ GEST
Nigeria	3	GRÓ GEST
Pakistan*	1	GRÓ GEST
Palestine	2	GRÓ GEST
Russia	1	MFA Iceland Arctic
Sri Lanka	1	GRÓ GEST
Timor-Leste*	1	GRÓ GEST
Uganda	2	GRÓ GEST
Uganda	1	Erasmus+/GRÓ GEST

\* marks countries that will be represented in the GEST programme for the first time in 2021

### Postponement of the 2021 GEST Spring Programme

The selection process for the 2021 GEST programme was finalised in September 2020. At the beginning of the autumn semester in 2020, operations at the University of Iceland were relatively normal. Iceland had been nearly COVID-19 free from mid-May until the end of July; classes were being held on campus, and with relatively few new viral infections, it appeared the new academic year would proceed normally. Shortly after, however, there was a significant upsurge in COVID-19 cases, causing a near complete lockdown of activities at the university and in the country at large. In light of these developments nationally, and after consulting with university officials, it became clear that predicted circumstances at the University of Iceland in spring 2021 would not allow the kind of quality learning experience that is integral to the vision and mission of the GEST programme. Furthermore, the global situation due to COVID-19 made travel planning particularly difficult. It was to be expected that a number of the invited fellows would be unable to travel to Iceland in January 2021, for pandemic-related reasons. It was therefore decided to postpone the GEST diploma programme until August 2021. Prospective spring 2021 fellows were invited to join the programme in August 2021 and a majority accepted the offer.

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## 2.2. Short Courses

The GEST programme has developed five-day long short courses targeted to be implemented in partner countries, especially for district level and front-line professionals. In recent years, Gender and Climate Change in Uganda (2019) and Teaching Gender to Youth (2019) have been implemented in Uganda and Malawi. These courses require thirty to fifty individuals to attend five-day long intensive courses on site. Due to the close proximity required for implementation of these courses, their further development and implementation has been severely affected in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Short courses have therefore been postponed until the situation improves.

### 2.2.1. Gender and Climate Change in Malawi

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

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

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

### 3.1. Ph.D. Scholarship Programme

The first formal GEST Ph.D. full scholarship was announced in January 2020. This Ph.D. grant opportunity was for research into a topic related to sustainability and gender equality in sub-Saharan Africa, in collaboration with Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda and intended for Ugandan nationals. Several applications were received and after a thorough review of all applications and interviews, the Ph.D. selection committee offered full, three-year scholarships for doctoral study at the University of Iceland to two successful applicants. In December, GEST alumna Stella Tereka (2016) was admitted to the Ph.D. programme at the department of Environment and Natural Resources at the University of Iceland. Stella's thesis' supervisor will be Dr. Jón Geir Pétursson and her research and studies will take place in both Uganda and Iceland. The second candidate to be enrolled in the department of Environment and Natural Resources at the University of Iceland is pending admission to the University.

In 2020, GEST alumnus Yeshiwas Degu Belay (2017), was admitted to the University of Iceland, to the Ph.D. programme in History, where he will study and research for his thesis on the topic of women peacekeepers in Ethiopia, under the supervision of Dr. Valur Ingimundarson. This is also with a full Ph.D. scholarship from GEST. Yeshiwas will divide his time between Iceland, Ethiopia and the Netherlands, where he has resided for the past several years.

### 3.2. IDEAS: Inclusive Digital Education Anti-Discrimination Alternatives

GEST joined as expert consultant in this ERASMUS+ funded collaboration with Centre for Gender Studies, Belgrade (Serbia), University of Karlova (Czech Republic), Colour Youth (Greece), Centre for Gender Studies (Croatia), and Research Centre for Culture, Politics and Identities (Serbia).

This project is a response to the problem of lacking accessible and free anti discriminatory educational content both in formal and non-formal education sectors, especially in the context of rising discriminatory policies and activities in Europe (and worldwide). The goal of the project is to develop a cross-cutting and innovative learning programme intended for adult learners. The programme will offer educational and human

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rights value-based content, re/presenting the positions of vulnerable and marginalized social groups (women, LGBTIQ, migrants, ethnic minorities) focusing on their multiple discriminations.

This programme will consist of a number of courses/modules and a series of interactive lectures, and workshops in an audio digital format of podcasts. GEST is a partner in this programme as expert consultants in podcasting and digital learning by conducting a day-long workshop on podcasting in Athens in 2021, and by creating five podcasts on the topic of gender and climate change.

### 3.3. QUEEN - Queer Refugee Research Network

The Queer Refugee Research Network (QUEEN) was established during a ReNEW workshop held in October 2019 at the University of Iceland. A specifically Icelandic chapter of QUEEN was established in early 2020 when GEST initiated the comprehensive research project **Queer Refugees in Queer Utopias: Inclusions and Exclusions**, which includes scholars from both social science, gender studies and anthropology at the University of Iceland, as well as scholars from the Netherlands. QUEEN received a three-year research grant for the project through the Icelandic Research Fund in 2020. The aim of the project is to generate knowledge on the social experiences of SOGIE refugees in Iceland, with an international focus towards Italy and Greece. It involves policy-relevant research that seeks to enhance political understanding of this specific group of refugees and improve their conditions. The project is led by GEST's project and research manager Thomas Brorsen Smidt as well as the principle investigator Guðbjörg Ottósdóttir from the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Iceland. Other team members are sociologist Árdís Kristín Ingvarsdóttir and anthropologist Linda Sólveigar- og Guðmundsdóttir, in addition to Maja Hertoghs from the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam.

## 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 number of 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. In early 2020, GEST introduced a new website in collaboration with the GRÓ Centre. Other new additions to GEST's communication platform include the GEST podcast and GEST's first online course (MOOC). The podcast and online course were well received, especially due to COVID-19 restrictions affecting activities such as conferences and public lectures. During autumn 2020, all public activities were hosted online, including the first GEST alumni online seminar.

### 4.1. Online Courses on the edX Platform

In May, GEST launched GEST's first online course within the edX network. EdX is a leading international online learning platform founded by Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have become a steady part of higher education. While there is a rich selection of MOOCs offered on topics in the humanities and social sciences, very few of these address questions of gender, and those that do are primarily taught from a Global North perspective. Joining edX was a step for GEST to improve the quality and outreach of transnational knowledge transmission and exchange, and to adapt to rapidly changing technological environments in higher education. GEST's ambition is to develop a full online educational programme on gender and development, available to gender equality practitioners, anywhere in the world.

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### 4.1.1. Gender and Intersectionality

The first course launched was on **Gender and Intersectionality** and was developed and taught by GEST Research Specialist Dr. Giti Chandra and GEST Project Manager Dr. Thomas Brorsen Smidt. The course was developed to introduce gender studies for those who have never been exposed to the subject, or for those already in the field who wish refresh their basic understanding of gender through a more visual experience. The course offers different resources in the form of literature, articles, images, audio, websites, and visual texts about gender in many different contexts, specifically using examples from popular culture, literature, and history, this course also provides critical readings, activities, and exercises to teach participants how to analyse religious texts and traditions, class divisions, racial inequality, sexualities, and nationalism through a gendered lens.

Since the launch of the course in May, over 6,500 online learners from over 100 countries have enrolled in the course. The course's website can be found [here](#).

### 4.1.2. Gender, Development and Post-Conflict States

In collaboration with experts from London School of Economics, Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), University of Cape Town and the University of Oslo, GEST is developing a transnational online course on gender, development and post-conflict states. This project is funded by the ERASMUS+.

The aim of this collaboration is to develop and disseminate two separate but interlinked online courses on the edX platform that address gender equality and social inclusion from a development and conflict/post-conflict perspective. This collaboration hopes to contribute to advancing approaches within digital learning, as well as bridging the global North/South divides, especially within the context of educational content for gender, peace and development. Transnational cooperation can inspire new innovative learning methodologies, increasing the chances of generating educational material that is accessible to a more global audience, directly addressing issues of knowledge hierarchies in online learning on gender equality and social inclusion.

## 4.2. Conferences, Seminars, Lectures

Since its establishment, GEST has contributed to conferences, seminars and lectures in the role of a host, collaborators, moderators or presenters. GEST has in partnership with RIKK hosted the GEST RIKK Lecture Series for many years, in addition to hosting seminars and individual lecturers. Due to restrictions in place due to COVID-19 by early March 2020, GEST activities were limited to being online from March to December. The online seminars have brought opportunities and this was especially clear in GEST's online events in November and December 2020 where a number of prestigious international scholars contributed online, without needing to commit to extensive travelling time to participate.

### 4.2.1. GEST RIKK Lecture Series

For the spring 2020, RIKK and GEST organized its annual joint lecture series, this time devoted to gender and climate change. The aim of the lecture series was to shed light on the gendered side of climate change and open the debate on how to make climate change and environmental policies gender sensitive. The first three lectures were held at the National Museum of Iceland, or until the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the rescheduling of the lectures. The lectures were eventually delayed and then moved to an online platform in the autumn of 2020. The lectures were either in English or in Icelandic; and the recordings can be found [here](#).



#### 4.2.2. GE-HEI - Gender Equality in Higher Education Institutions Webinar

In 2020, RIKK and GEST continued their collaboration with the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies (CIEG) of the Institute of Social and Political Sciences (ISCSP) at the University of Lisbon on the project GE-HEI - Gender Equality in Higher Education Institutions. The GE-HEI project hosted a webinar which took place on November 16, 17 and 19, where project and research manager Thomas Brorsen Smidt delivered a lecture on gender issues in Icelandic Higher Education.

#### 4.2.3. Online Seminar on Women Peace and Security for 20 years

GEST, in partnership with the Nordic Women Mediators Network (NWM) and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Iceland, organized an online seminar in three sessions on 26 November 2020, addressing the progress made within the Women, Peace and Security Agenda since the signatory of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2000. The NWM Icelandic members were the key speakers and moderators at the online seminar, and were joined by specialists such as Stella Samúelsdóttir and Íris Björg Kristjánsdóttir from UN Women in Iceland, Randa Siniora, General Director of Women Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WCLAC) in Palestine, Sylvia Thompson, Senior Manager at Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) in Yemen and a member of the Nordic Women Mediators Network–Norway, and Emma Leslie, Executive Director of Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies and a member of the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth.

#### 4.2.4. #MeToo: Thinking Ahead - Online Symposium

To celebrate the launch of **The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of the #MeToo Movement** (see 4.3.1.) GEST held an online symposium on 3 December 2020. The symposium was hosted by the book's editors: Giti Chandra, Research Specialist at GEST, and Irma Erlingsdóttir, Director of GEST. At the symposium, some of the book's contributors shared their perspectives on the developments since the spread of the #MeToo Movement in 2017, followed by a conversation among the speakers. The presenters included Angela Davies, Purna Sen, Marai Larasi, Freyja Haraldsdóttir, Jeff Hearn, Magdalena Grabowska and Cynthia Enloe. The recording from the launch can be found [here](#).

### 4.3. Publications

GEST publications are essential in contributing to GEST's mission of creating a platform for knowledge production and international dialogue. GEST's publications focus on contemporary transnational conversation contributing to the international gender movement, advocacy, and research.

#### 4.3.1. The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of the #MeToo Movement

In November, **The Routledge Handbook of the Politics of the #MeToo Movement** was published. The book was edited by Dr. Giti Chandra, GEST Research Specialist, and Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir, Director of GEST, and includes chapters from renowned scholars on gender, activism, and social media.

The book is an interdisciplinary handbook which identifies thematic and theoretical areas that require attention and interrogation, inviting the reader to make connections between the ways in which the #MeToo Movement has panned out in different parts of the world, seeing it in the context of the many feminist and gendered struggles already in place, as well as the solidarities with similar movements across countries and cultures.

With contributions from gender experts spanning a wide range of disciplines including political science, history, sociology, law, literature, and philosophy, this ground-breaking book will have contemporary relevance for scholars, feminists, gender researchers, and policy-makers across the globe.





### 4.3.2. Book Project: Gender, Memory and Oral Histories in Post-Partition Countries

Research specialist Dr. Giti Chandra, director Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir, and project manager Dr. Thomas Brorsen Smidt received a grant from the University of Iceland to begin preparations on the production of an edited book entitled **Gender, Memory and Oral Histories in Post-Partition Countries** (Icelandic: Kyngervi, minni og munnlegar frásagnir eftir upplausn ríkja).

The goal of this project is to collect and contextualize the work of prolific international scholars on the role of gender and oral histories in partition-related conflict in an edited volume, thus expanding partition studies and its history of gendered inquiry through oral histories beyond South Asia. Examples of partitions that later sparked considerable conflict, and in which gendered oral histories play an important role, include Palestine, Ireland, Korea, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and others.

## 4.4. 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.

### 4.4.1. Website

On 1 January 2020, GEST collectively with the other three GRÓ programmes, the Land Restoration, Fisheries and Geothermal Training programmes launched a new collaborative website, <http://grocentre.is>. The GEST programme also uses the new redirect <http://gest.org>. At the GRÓ website, visitors can navigate the four programmes, learn about their operations, news, alumni and publications. The website includes a comprehensive database of all staff, lecturers and alumni as well as publications. The website development has continued throughout the year 2020 and components of the website are yet to be released.

### 4.4.2. 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 Facebook group for the GEST Alumni where GEST shares news about the programme, scholarship opportunities, and news about the alumni.

### 4.4.3. The GEST Podcast

The GEST Podcast was launched in January 2020. The podcast's main host and coordinator is GEST's Project Manager Dr. Thomas Brorsen Smidt, and he is regularly joined by his colleague Dr. Giti Chandra, Research Specialist at GEST. In the podcast, Giti and Thomas engage in conversation with fellows and international experts affiliated with the GEST programme. The podcast topics range from cultural appropriation and revenge pornography to colonialism and the #MeToo Movement through a gendered perspective. The podcast also follows up with topics related to GEST's edX course on Gender and Intersectionality.

The podcast's website can be found [here](#).

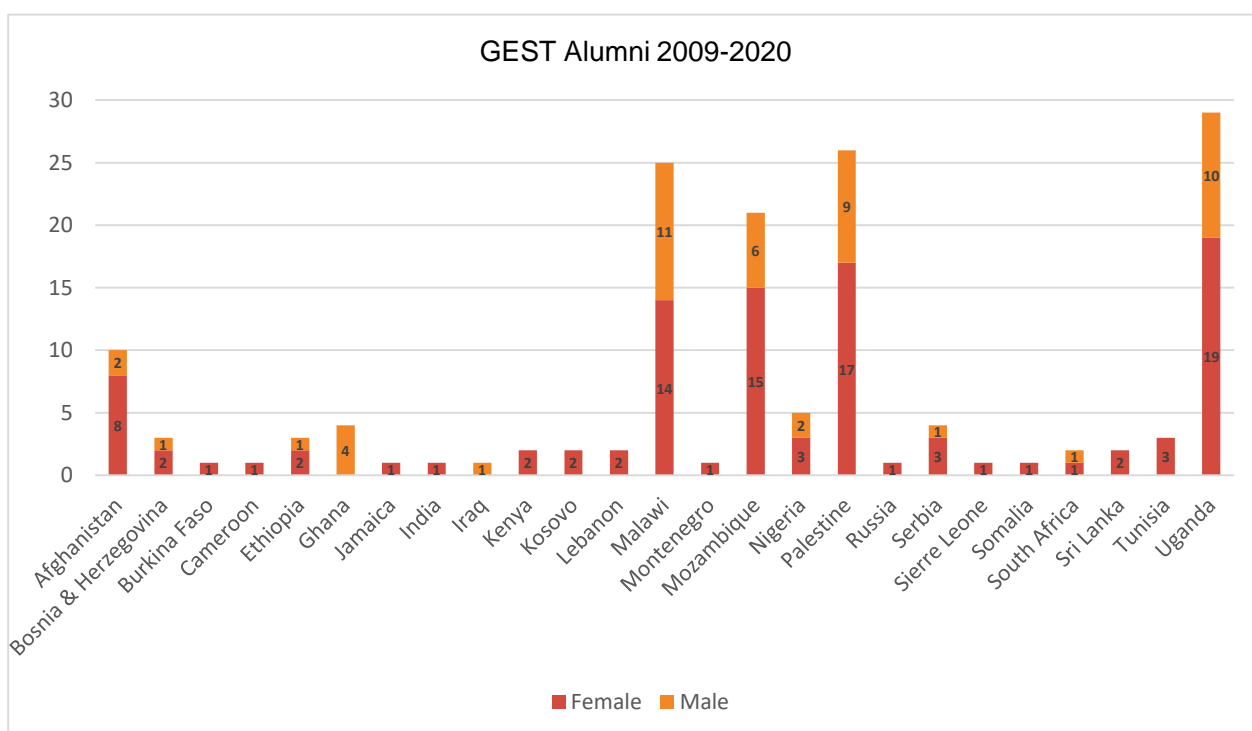


## 4.5. International Collaboration Networks

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

### 4.5.1. The Alumni Network

The alumni network consists of 152 individuals who have graduated from the GEST programme since 2009. The group of gender equality experts represent 25 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, to further extend the GEST alumni's learning, sharing and contribution to the GEST programme.



### The Alumni Fund

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

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

The first alumni fund recipient is Chinenye Anekwe, a Development Specialist at Solar Sisters, an NGO that has helped kickstart more than 5.000 women clean energy entrepreneurs. She was awarded a grant for the project **Business Booster Programme for 100 Rural Women Energy Entrepreneurs**. The grant will fund community sensitization programmes for 100 Solar Sister Entrepreneurs to double their local clean energy business enterprises through targeted activities conducted to improve their capacity, expand their customer base and increase their market visibility.

## Alumni Seminar 2020

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

The purpose of the seminar was to record and document a historical snapshot of how the gendered impact related to the global pandemic of COVID-19 unfolds in different national contexts. To assess and further understand the gendered impact of the COVID-19 restrictions, the GEST team called for research proposals from its alumni in October 2020. Six proposals were selected, and those responsible were asked to present their findings at the seminar. It took place in two sessions, which were moderated by GEST alumni, Brenda Apeta and Gideon Adjei-Mawutor. The following research proposals were presented:

**Gender Equality and COVID-19 in Contexts**  
GEST Alumni Online Seminar 2020  
with contributions from:

- Sophia Nabukenya** Uganda
- Nadhiya Najab** Sri Lanka
- Kondwani Mhone** Malawi
- Shamim Nampijja** Uganda
- Jessica Mandanda** Malawi
- Chinenye Anekwe** Nigeria

18 December 2020  
15-16 GMT and 17-18 GMT

- **Shamim Nampijja**

Analysis on the Impact of COVID-19: A Study on Women and Girls with Disabilities in Uganda

- **Kondwani MacDonald Mhone**

Impact of COVID-19 on Girls' Education in Malawi

- **Nadhiya Najab**

The Balancing Act: Gender Dynamics of Remote Working in Sri Lanka

- **Sophia Nabukenya**

Examining the Gendered Impact of COVID-19 on Access to Adolescent Friendly Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Information to Teenagers in Uganda. A Case of Kawempe Division- Kampala District

- **Jessica Mandanda**

Where is the Relief? Understanding the Urgency of Financial Relief and the Influence of Domestic Violence. A Study on Child Trafficking, Odd Jobs, and Domestic Violence during COVID-19 in Malawi

- **Chinenye Anekwe**

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Rural Clean Energy Women Entrepreneurs in Nigeria: A Mixed Method Study

The complete research reports are to be published on the GEST website in 2021.

### 4.5.2 Nordic Women Mediators

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

#### **NORDIC WOMEN MEDIATORS**

In early June, due to the pandemic, the NWM changed its annual meeting to a virtual meeting titled "Beyond the Pandemic: A Critical Time for the Meaningful Inclusion of Women in Mediation in Peace Processes". The Swedish national network organized the opening and closing events. Each national network contributed to the virtual

annual meeting by coordinating a discussion session for NWM network members, where the Icelandic NWM national network moderated discussions on militarized, securitized and repressive responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. GEST coordinated, as the operational partner for the Icelandic branch of the network, an online seminar on Women Peace and Security for 20 years in November 2020 (see 4.2.3.)

The next Nordic Women Mediators annual meeting is scheduled to take place in autumn 2021 in Iceland, with GEST and the MFA in Iceland being the main coordinators.

## 5. Management, Personnel and Finance

GEST agreement with United Nations University came to an end in 2019, and after time of uncertainty, an agreement was made with UNESCO for hosting the four programmes previously known as the UNU-Iceland programmes. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Iceland established the GRÓ Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Societal Change in collaboration with UNESCO, operating as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre. This has no effect on GEST's position within the University of Iceland, and it continues to be hosted by the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Iceland. GEST is integrated into the administrative structure of the University with access to services such as financial, IT, HR and housing. The following section lists up the new establishment of GRÓ, the new host agreement with the University of Iceland, as well as acknowledging the GEST team, including long term contributors to the academic programme, and GEST staff, permanent, fixed term and temporary.

### 5.1. GRÓ GEST

In late 2019, the United Nations University and the GEST programme parted ways. This was done in partnership with the other three UNU programmes in Iceland, the Geothermal Training Programme, the Land Restoration Training Programme and the Fisheries Training Programme. Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland Guðlaugur Þór Þórðarson and Director General of UNESCO Audrey Azoulay signed an agreement, establishing GRÓ - International Centre for Capacity Development – Sustainable use of Natural Resources and Societal Change, as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO. GRÓ is the first multidisciplinary Category 2 Centre in UNESCO's network and the centre's mission is to support capacity development in Africa, Asia and Central and South America in the centre's four areas of expertise and thus strengthen their abilities to attain international and national targets set with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### 5.1.1. University of Iceland Host Agreement

In July, the Rector of the University of Iceland, Jón Atli Benediktsson, and GRÓ Chairman Jón Karl Ólafsson signed a new host institution agreement for GRÓ GEST. 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.



Present at the signing of the new host agreement were from left: Guðrún Eysteinsdóttir, GEST Operations Manager; Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of Iceland; Guðmundur Hálfðanarson, then Dean of the School of Humanities, Irma Erlingsdóttir, Director of GRÓ GEST; Jón Karl Ólafsson, Chairman of GRÓ Board; Bryndis Kjartansdóttir, then Director of GRÓ Centre.

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## RIKK & EDDA

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

## 5.2. Institutional Partnership Agreements

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

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

In 2020, GEST engaged with the following Universities through the institutional agreements either with student or staff exchange:

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

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, planned staff exchange activities had to be postponed, except for GEST Director visiting Makerere University early 2020 and a faculty member of The University of Ghana visiting the GEST programme in February. Four Erasmus+ fellows participated in the 2020 GEST programme: from Makerere University, Lagos State University, The University of Ghana and Kabul University. A new Erasmus+ Institutional Agreement was signed with the University of Nairobi in 2020.

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

### 5.2.1. Makerere University, Uganda

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the University of Iceland and Makerere University was signed in February by the Vice Chancellor of Makerere University, Dr. Barnabas Nawangwe, with School of Women and Gender Studies Dean Dr. Sarah Ssali, and the honourable Unnur Orradóttir Ramette, Ambassador of Iceland to Uganda, on behalf of Dr. Jón Atli Benediktsson, rector of the University of Iceland and Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir, director of GEST. The MoU covers activities such as exchange of students and faculty, research and publishing collaboration, organizing of symposiums, short courses, conferences, and more.

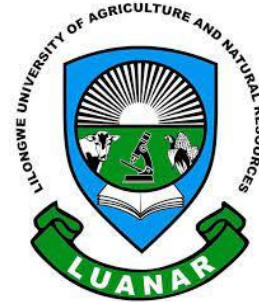


MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

The GEST programme at the University of Iceland and Makerere University's School of Women and Gender Studies (SWGS) in Kampala, Uganda, have collaborated for many years. Several master's students from SWGS at Makerere have completed the GEST diploma programme, as part of their master's programme and with support from the Erasmus+ grant scheme; a short course on Gender and Climate Change was developed and piloted in 2010-12 through a collaboration led by GEST and the School of Women and Gender Studies; and in 2020 a GEST Ph.D. scholarship was awarded involving collaboration between Makerere and the University of Iceland.

### 5.2.2. Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), Malawi

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the University of Iceland and Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources was signed in 2020 by the Vice Chancellor of LUANAR, Prof. George Kanyama-Phiri and Dr. Jón Atli Benediktsson, rector of the University of Iceland. The MoU was signed remotely, but the MoU covers activities such as exchange of students and faculty, exchange of academic materials and information, development of joint activities such as organizing of symposiums, short courses, conferences, and academic meetings, as well as the development of joint research activities. LUANAR is a long-standing partner with GEST and is currently engaged with GEST in developing a short course on Gender and Climate Change in Malawi.



### 5.2.3. Renewal of Memorandum of Understanding with the Icelandic Red Cross

The GRÓ GEST programme and the Icelandic Red Cross renewed their MoU originally signed in November 2018, expressing an interest in collaborating in developing gender equality projects and the sharing of expertise in the field of humanitarian and development work, in Iceland and internationally.

The past two years of collaboration included activities such as a specialist from the Icelandic Red Cross providing training as a part of the GEST postgraduate training programme, and the co-financing of a fellow from Malawi, Alinane Kaimila, a project officer with the Malawi Red Cross, to participate in the 2020 GRÓ GEST postgraduate diploma programme.



### 5.2.4. The Equality Fund and National Union of Disabled Persons in Uganda (NUDIPU)

In 2018, GEST received funding from the Equality Fund provided by the Ministry of Welfare in Iceland to support two candidates nominated by the National Union of Disabled Persons in Uganda (NUDIPU) to participate in the GEST postgraduate diploma programme. The first candidate participated in 2019, and the second in the 2020 programme, when Shamim Nampijja, an Information and Communication Technology Assistant at the National Union of Women with Disabilities of Uganda, completed the diploma programme.

## 5.2.5. The Arctic

In 2019, Iceland assumed Chairmanship of the Arctic Council for the period 2019-2021. With sustainable development as an overarching theme throughout the chairmanship, Iceland highlighted Sustainable Development Goal 5 on Gender Equality correlated to the priority of People and Communities of the Arctic. To contribute to this SDG, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs funded two candidates from the Arctic to participate in the GEST programme during the period 2020-2021. Based on seventeen nominations received for the 2020 programme, a candidate from Yakutia in Russia, Anisiia Moyakunova a researcher at Arctic Research Center at the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), was selected to participate in the diploma programme.

## 5.3. GRÓ GEST Personnel

The GEST programme relies on a team of dedicated local and international experts. This includes the GEST staff as well as experts contributing to the academic programme as lecturers, supervisors or module coordinators. In 2020, two of the long-standing team members, Prof. Cynthia Enloe and Director of GEST Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir were awarded for their commitment and dedication to the GEST programme.

### 5.3.1. Cynthia Enloe Awarded an Honorary Doctorate at the University of Iceland

Professor Cynthia Enloe, a long-standing lecturer at the GEST programme, Research Professor at Clark University, and a world-renowned feminist scholar, was awarded an honorary doctorate by the Faculty of Languages and Cultures at the University of Iceland in February 2020. An honorary doctorate is the highest order the University can bestow.

Prof. Enloe's teaching and research focus on the interplay of gendered politics in the national and international arenas and she has written extensively on the topics and intersections of feminism, women, militarized culture, war, politics, and globalized economics. She has conducted her research in Iraq, Afghanistan, the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, the Philippines, Canada, Chile, and Turkey.

Since 2010, Prof. Enloe has been a lecturer on gender, peace, and security issues at the GEST programme at the University of Iceland. During her stays in Iceland, she has held many lectures and participated in conferences pertaining to peace, security issues and gender equality and is very well known to our alumni and staff.

The GEST alumni shared a gratitude video in Cynthia's honour visible [here](#).



### 5.3.2. GEST Staff



**Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir** is the Director of GEST. She is also an Associate 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.

In December 2020, Irma was awarded by the Rector of the University of Iceland for her outstanding professional contributions to the University of Iceland. The award is for Irma's contributions to equality through her work in establishing the GEST programme and her contribution as the Director of RIKK.

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 2020, Giti coordinated the module Gender, Security and Violence and the module on Gender, Labour, and Migration. Giti continued to lecture in the programme, and contributed to Gender, Security and Violence, Gender Theories and Concepts as well as teaching academic working methods in the GEST programme and providing academic supervision of fellow's final assignments. In 2020, Giti, together with Thomas Brorsen Smidt, project manager, developed and released the first GEST edX online course, and is working on the second edX online course on Gender and Violence in Conflict and Post-Conflict States. Giti co-edited the #MeToo Handbook published by Routledge.

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.

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 Post-graduate Diploma in Public Administration from the University of Iceland.



**Dr. Thomas Brorsen Smidt** is a project manager at the GEST programme. In 2019, Thomas contributed to the academic programme by teaching in the first module, Gender Theories and Concepts. Thomas has led the coordination of research on SOGIE refugees as well as developing the content for GEST's first online edX course on Gender and intersectionality. Thomas hosts the GEST podcast which was released early 2020.

Thomas graduated with a Ph.D. in Gender Studies from the University of Iceland in 2018. His research interests centre on gender in relation to higher education and work-life balance issues as well as to feminism, sexual politics, migration and queer theory. Before joining GEST, he worked as a researcher in the cross-national research project GARCIA under the 7th European Framework programme.





**Védís Ólafsdóttir** is a project manager at the GEST programme. Védís contributes to the academic programme through the selection of fellows, orientation planning, evaluations, coordination of the ERASMUS+ partnerships as well as the module coordination of Gender, Environment and Climate Change. Administrative tasks include overall planning and reporting for the GEST programme. Védís oversees the communication of GEST via the GEST website and social media. Védís coordinates the short courses of Gender and climate change in Malawi and on behalf of the GEST programme she coordinates the Nordic Women Mediators network.

Védís has a BSc degree in International Business and Politics from the Copenhagen Business School, and an MA degree in Ethnology from the University of Iceland. She has worked internationally in educational, development, and humanitarian organisations in China, Malawi and Jordan.



**Anna Guðrún Aradóttir**, re-joined GEST late 2020 as a project manager. She contributes to the coordination of the admission process of fellows to the post-graduate diploma programme, communication to fellows, and supports with administrative tasks.

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



**Elín Björk Jóhannsdóttir** is a project manager at RIKK - Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference and EDDA Research Center, and contributes to specific projects at GEST. Elín returned to RIKK and GEST in 2019, and had previously worked with the institutions in 2016. In 2020, Elín organized the spring GEST/RIKK 2020 lecture series, and assisted with the application process.

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



**Dr. Guðrún Sif Friðriksdóttir** has been a supervisor for GEST students since 2018 and joined as the coordinator for the module Gender and Development in August 2020. Guðrún Sif assisted with other events, such as organisation of the Nordic Women Mediators event and events related to GEST alumni.

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

**Randi Stebbins** was the module coordinator for the Final Assignment in 2020 and taught in the module Gender, labour and migration.

Randi is an attorney, focusing on humanitarian immigration cases for victims of domestic violence and other violent crimes. She is the director of the University of Iceland's Centre for Writing.

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**Milica Minić** was the senior project manager at GEST until mid-2020 when she left to pursue her Ph.D. at the University of Iceland. In 2020, Milica coordinated the GEST module Gender and Development, and contributed to the modules Gender, Labour and Migration as well as the Final Assignment.

Milica holds an MA degree in Critical Gender Studies from the Central European University in Budapest, and an MA in Arts and Culture from the University of Utrecht. Milica has extensive experience in the field of gender and development, ranging from work in women's grassroots organizations to intergovernmental organizations such as UNIFEM.

**Brynja Huld Óskarsdóttir** is a communication specialist who joined GEST for three months during the autumn 2020. Her engagement included advancing GEST's communication strategy on social media as well as leading technical moderation at GEST's online events.

Brynja has extensive experience as a communication specialist with international organizations including NATO, Council of Europe, UN Women and Unicef. She has also contributed as a part time lecturer at the Department of Political Science at the University of Iceland.

**Nikkita Hamar Patterson** was the programme assistant for GEST until September 2020. Her tasks included administrative tasks and communication with the 2020 GEST fellows as well as overseeing and planning the recruitment of the 2021 GEST fellows.

Nikkita is an Icelandic-American doctoral student in English at the University of Iceland, focusing on the expansion of the study of extreme cinema. Nikkita has a BFA in Film and Video from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia (USA) and an MA in Literature, Culture and Media from The University of Iceland in Reykjavik.

**Radoslaw Fryc** was temporary personnel to GEST (two months) during the summer of 2020. His main task was to organise and transfer content to the GEST programme's new website and databases.

Radoslaw is a BA student in English at the University of Iceland and has previously completed a degree in French.

**Þórhildur Elísabet Þórsdóttir** was temporary personnel to GEST in June, in a concentrated effort to assist on organizing the return of the 2020 cohort fellows to their home countries, during the pandemic. Þórhildur is a BA student in History at the University of Iceland.