

# GLOBAL SOUTH

Development Magazine

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Child Marriages in  
South Asia

The shrinking space  
for press freedoms  
in Burundi

Consequences of  
Climate Change in  
Central Asia

# Women of the Revolution

In the Aftermath of the Arab Spring

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## Letter to the editor

### Less vulgar, more development news!

I had a concern on the Argentine story. I felt it was not in good taste for a development magazine. While we all welcome the growth of the movement in Argentina, I would have preferred to see from the story, how the developments in the gender issues have helped improve governance and delivery of basic rights in Argentina.

I have heard on the BBC

news how farmers in Argentina have changed from cattle keeping to soya farming and these are the kind of development stories that will resonate elsewhere in the globe, I presume.

I also found some of the almost nude pictures from the gay parade quite out of taste for the GSDM content. Please shield us from such in the future.

However, all in all, congrats on your good work!

**Irene N. Mwangi**  
Nairobi, Kenya

### Congo crisis, greed and then war and peace

It is most unfortunate that Congo (DRC) has to be assessed along the lines of "War & Peace".

Can exploitation and orchestrated rebellions not be exchanged for prudent business practice, good governance and peaceful development of the middle and lower social society in the DRC?

Is our international greed for taking as much as possible as cheaply as possible from places like

**GLOBAL SOUTH**  
Development Magazine



Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe and the DR Congo so big that we cannot overcome and manage Africa prudently?  
**A.J. Meintjes**

### More innovative stories needed!

I am a regular reader of your magazine and most of the issues presented are interesting. However, as a development publication, it would be great if you could also focus on positive technological developments that can help the developing world.

I'm thinking of spending a few months in Africa as an intern and when I go there, I don't want to go there just to

see the problems, take photos of malnourished kids and upload on facebook and share with friends. I want to go there and share my experience and knowledge and innovative ideas that I have learned at university and through magazines like yours.

There is a lot of negativity, criticisms and frustration going on in the world, so maybe it's time to spread some hope and positivity and innovative ideas and stories.

**Paul**  
Berlin, Germany

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In April 2012 UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, announced the appointment of Angelina Jolie as his Special Envoy. Ms Jolie has taken part in more than 40 field visits for UNHCR during her ten years of time as a goodwill ambassador. Photo: UNHCR/ J.Tanner



Rice Farmers at Work in Bhutan: Farmers thresh their rice harvest in a field near Punakha, Bhutan. Photo: UN Multimedia

# Sri Lanka - not enough action on impunity

"there has been some progress in economic development and resettlement in the northern conflict zone, but many problems still exist"



COLOMBO, July 2012 - Sri Lankan parliamentarians in favour of acting on the recommendations in a report into the final stages of the country's civil war by the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) are slowly gaining ground over those who are not, says a presidential peace process adviser.

The government's initial reaction to the LLRC recommendations was positive, presidential adviser and parliamentarian Rajiva Wijesinha told IRIN, but others saw the report, released just over six months ago, as a call for regime change and were "highly critical".

"However I now think we have equilibrium again, and the more positive forces in government seem likely to go ahead [with implementing the recommendations]," Wijesinha said, noting that many of the LLRC recommendations fell within the existing framework of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights.

"We have wasted far too much time in defending ourselves against gratuitous attacks, when a simple general appreciation of the LLRC would have taken us forward more quickly. But we have to realize that other countries play games in terms of their own interests, and we have to be sensible enough to ignore these and move forward in the interests of pluralism and peace," he said. Sri Lanka's president Mahinda Rajapaksa formed the commission in May 2010 to investigate the final period of a decades-long civil war between the government and separatist rebels from the Tamil ethnic group. After an 18-month inquiry, the commission submitted its findings to parliament on 16 December 2011.

Human rights groups questioned the group's impartiality and along with the UN Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability called for an independent inquiry, which the government rejected.

Among dozens of recommendations, the LLRC called for a special commissioner to investigate alleged disappearances and criminal proceedings; an amendment to the Registration of Deaths Act, which allows a next of kin to apply for a death certificate if a person is missing due to

"subversive" activity; an independent advisory committee to examine the detention and arrest of persons in custody to address concerns about indefinite detention without due process under an anti-terrorist law; and addressing grievances from minority communities, including Muslims in the north and Tamils.

## Tasks

Since then there has been some progress in economic development and resettlement in the northern conflict zone, but many problems still exist, said Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, executive director of the Centre for Policy Alternatives, a Sri Lankan think-tank.

"Progress also made with the rehabilitation of LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, the separatist movement] cadres, although there are reports that even after being released they are being questioned and face issues with regard to re-integration in the community," said Saravanamuttu.

Not enough has been done to reach a political settlement between the sometimes antagonistic ethnic groups of Tamils and Sinhalese, demilitarizing the north, punishing impunity, and improving governance - such as putting in place legislation that ensures the right to information - and establishing independent commissions to investigate the conflict, Saravanamuttu noted.

The LLRC called for independent investigations into the UK's Channel 4 television broadcasts in 2011 and 2012, which examined alleged war crimes, and also into civilian massacres spanning a decade in the north's Trincomalee District, including the 2006 murder of 17 workers of the French NGO, Action Against Hunger. Saravanamuttu said these investigations should start immediately.

Thavarajah Rasiyah, 63, in Jaffna District in the northern Sri Lanka, told IRIN that residents in the former war zone have been promised much, but seen little. "Lot of talking and not much improvements". . . "Lot of talking and not much improvements". . . "Lot of talking and not much improvements".

Selva Sivaguru, 43, in neighbouring Mannar

District, said Tamil people were exhausted by conflict and would like to find normalcy rather than more politics. "These political games have pushed the country through 30 years of conflict. I hope this will not be repeated."

The executive director of the National Peace Council, Jehan Perera, told IRIN, "While the government asserts that it is implementing the recommendations, it has not been specific as to what it is implementing," and progress has been very limited so far.

The government does not seem keen on implementing governance recommendations that would interfere with the highly "personalized" powers of current leaders, he added.

## "Resistance"

The government is also inclined to justify its resistance to implementing the LLRC recommendations on the grounds that the international community is interfering in Sri Lanka's internal affairs," Perera said.

The ruling government has largely discredited reports of human rights abuses from international NGOs.

The LLRC recommendations included a mourning period prior to the country's independence day celebrations on 4 February to express solidarity and sympathy with conflict victims, but nothing took place, said Ruki Fernando of the Christian Alliance for Social Action, a local NGO. Rather, pro-Sinhalese victory parades rolled out.

Fernando said there were a number of critical issues needing urgent attention, including the continued existence of a large number of "high security zones" still controlled by Sri Lankan military forces in the north, which prevent large numbers of people returning to their places of origin.

Other matters needing urgent attention were alleged attacks on the media, reports of religious harassment, issues of language discrimination, and cases of abuse of personal freedoms, including the abuse of civil liberties and human rights.(IRIN)

## Aid must work better for Afghans in the next decade



July 2012, Development gains made in Afghanistan over the last decade are in danger of being thrown away if levels of aid fall away in conjunction with the withdrawal of international troops in 2014, Oxfam warned.

Ahead of a vital donor conference in Tokyo this month, Oxfam is calling on governments represented at the summit to maintain levels of aid to the country and ensure this aid reaches the Afghan men, women and children who need it most.

The agency is warning that decisions about aid levels and spending come at a critical time for Afghanistan, the country's single biggest donor, the USA, having already dramatically cut development aid by nearly half in 2011, from \$4.1bn to \$2.5bn.

The withdrawal of international combat forces by the end of 2014 is likely to hit the already weak Afghan economy even harder with 97 percent of the country's gross domestic product related to the international community's presence. The World Bank has estimated that aid to Afghanistan could drop by as much as 90 per cent by 2025.

Oxfam has urged donors to follow the example of countries such as the UK, Germany and Australia, who have pledged to maintain or even increase aid levels in the coming years - or see the gains that have been made undermined or even reversed.

Almost \$60 billion of aid has been given to Afghanistan since 2001. Over that period life expectancy in the country has risen dramatically from 47 to 62 years for men and 50 to 64 years for women, with basic health care now accessible in more than 80 per cent of districts. There have also been significant gains in education with more than 2.7 million girls enrolled in school compared to just a few thousand under the Taliban. However, Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Far too much aid has been poorly spent and too often tied to military objectives or projects designed to win hearts and minds in the short term, rather than supporting long-term development goals.

"Any significant cuts in support could have dire consequences on Afghan people and we cannot let this happen. While the past 11 years have seen substantial progress, millions of Afghans still lack adequate healthcare, schools, jobs, or law and order. A good hard look at the way aid is spent in Afghanistan is long overdue. Donors need to work harder to address the needs of women and girls, involve local communities in development projects, increase anti-corruption efforts, and ensure projects are designed to be smart, fair and sustainable," said Oxfam's Louise Hancock, head of policy and advocacy in Afghanistan. (Source Oxfam)

## Worries over new Egyptian policy on medicines

CAIRO, July 2012 - A decision by the Egyptian Health Ministry to peg local medicine prices to international ones is causing concern. "This is a catastrophic decision," Karima Al Hefnawy, a member of local NGO the Independent Right to Health Committee, told IRIN. "Egypt is a low-income country, which means that linking local medicine prices with international ones will cause suffering to the poor."

Only about 30 percent of Egyptians have health insurance, according to a recent estimate by the NGO. Hitherto, medicine prices were set by the ministry, sometimes at much lower prices than the manufacturing cost, leading some suppliers to go out of business.



Another local NGO, The Medical Association, says of the US\$10 billion spent on health last year, only about a third came from the government. The government has allocated \$4 billion, or 4.8 percent of Egypt's total budget in fiscal year 2012-2013, to the health sector. This, experts say, means that individuals will continue to foot most of the health bill in the new fiscal year.

Chairman of the Health Ministry's medicine sector Mohsen Abdelaleem rejected the concerns, saying the higher prices would allow more pharmaceutical companies to stay in business, making medicines more widely available. (IRIN)

## UGANDA: New LGBTI clinic faces fierce government criticism

July 2012, Uganda, Gay rights activists have opened Uganda's first clinic for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people in the capital, Kampala, where it will provide testing, counselling and treatment for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Despite the high level of HIV among MSM, the government has not included the group in its national strategy to fight HIV because homosexual activity is illegal in Uganda. A bill before parliament seeks even more stringent punishments for people engaging in homosexual acts and those perceived to be "promoting" homosexuality.

The clinic was opened on 19 May 2012 by Bishop Christopher Senyonjo - one of the country's few religious leaders willing to speak for gay rights - and is managed by a local gay rights lobby group, Ice Breakers Uganda (IBU).

## Rise in sea level can't be stopped, scientists say

Rising sea levels cannot be stopped over the next several hundred years, even if deep emissions cuts lower global average temperatures, but they can be slowed down, climate scientists said in a study on Sunday.

A lot of climate research shows that rising greenhouse gas emissions are responsible for increasing global average surface temperatures by about 0.17 degrees Celsius a decade from 1980-2010 and for a sea level rise of about 2.3mm a year from 2005-2010 as ice caps and glaciers melt.

Rising sea levels threaten about a tenth of the world's population who live in low-lying areas and islands which are at risk of flooding, including the Caribbean, Maldives and Asia-Pacific island groups.

More than 180 countries are negotiating a new global climate pact which will come into force by 2020 and force all nations to cut emissions to limit warming to below 2 degrees Celsius this century - a level scientists say is the minimum required to avert catastrophic effects.

But even if the most ambitious emissions cuts are made, it might not be enough to stop sea levels rising due to the thermal expansion of sea water, said scientists at the United States' National Centre for Atmospheric Research, U.S. research organisation Climate Central and Centre for Australian Weather and Climate Research in Melbourne.

"Even with aggressive mitigation measures that limit global warming to less than 2 degrees above pre-industrial values by 2100, and with decreases of global temperature in the 22nd and 23rd centuries ... sea level continues to rise after 2100," they said in the journal *Nature Climate Change*.

This is because as warmer temperatures penetrate deep into the sea, the water warms and expands as the heat mixes through different ocean regions.

Even if global average temperatures fall and the surface layer of the sea cools, heat would still be mixed down into the deeper layers of the ocean, causing continued rises in sea levels.

If global average temperatures continue to rise, the melting of ice sheets and glaciers would only add to the problem.

The scientists calculated that if the deepest emissions cuts were made and global temperatures cooled to 0.83 degrees in 2100 - forecast based on the 1986-2005 average - and 0.55 degrees by 2300, the sea level rise due to thermal expansion would continue to increase - from 14.2cm in 2100 to 24.2cm in 2300.

If the weakest emissions cuts were made, temperatures could rise to 3.91 degrees Celsius in 2100 and the sea level rise could increase to 32.3cm, increasing to 139.4cm by 2300.

"Though sea-level rise cannot be stopped for at least the next several hundred years, with aggressive mitigation it can be slowed down, and this would buy time for adaptation measures to be adopted," the scientists added.

The study is available at [www.nature.com/nclimate](http://www.nature.com/nclimate) (Reporting by Nina Chestney; Editing by Pravin Char)



Burundi, a country praised in recent years for its free and dynamic press and active civil society, is witnessing a worrying deterioration in media freedom.

# The shrinking space for press freedoms in Burundi

**JAMES BELGRAVE**  
GSDM Burundi

Burundi, a country praised in recent years for its free and dynamic press and active civil society, is witnessing a worrying deterioration in media freedom. Reporters Without Borders' annual Press Freedom Index reveals a startling trend in this country located in the heart of the African Great Lakes region: between 2008 and 2011 Burundi slipped 36 places from 94th to 130th (of 178) in the global rankings for press freedom. In recent years, harassment and the arbitrary arrest of journalists have been on the rise, and analyses by various experts and NGOs point to a situation which is only set to worsen this year as the space for press freedom in the country continues to diminish.

2010 saw the arrest of several journalists, most notably Jean-Claude Kavumbagu, who, in July, was arrested for publishing an article in which he questioned the state's ability to respond to a potential terrorist attack by the Somali Islamist militia Al-Shabaab (the Burundian military presence in Somalia makes the country a target). He was detained for ten months pending trial and released in May 2011 having been found guilty of 'threatening the national economy'. According to Human Rights Watch, this sentence is a 'negative

precedent given that no journalist in Burundi has ever been convicted for such a crime', and the outcome has caused concern for both national and international human rights activists.

Following the Gatumba bar attack in 18th September 2011, in which more than 37 people were killed when gunmen burst into a bar and shot indiscriminately at the crowd (see article in GSDM N.7), the government imposed a month long news blackout preventing the media from publishing, commenting or analyzing information relating to the attack. The ban was broadly complied with by local media, but set a dangerous precedent given the lack of clear and reliable information surrounding the Gatumba attack.

Being a journalist in Burundi is now a hazardous profession which entails significant risks. A recent Human Rights Watch report (which was itself banned in the country), points out that the Gatumba attack took place in the context of a broader pattern of intimidation and harassment of independent Burundian journalists' and states that the news blackout may have amounted to a violation of freedom of expression.

"harassment and the arbitrary arrest of journalists have been on the rise, and analyses by various experts and NGOs point to a situation which is only set to worsen this year as the space for press freedom in the country continues to diminish"

On the 28th of November 2011 a journalist working for Radio France International (RFI) and Bujumbura-based Bonesha FM, Hassan Ruvakuki, was arrested on charges of 'acts of terrorism'. He had conducted an interview with a member of a rebel group in neighbouring Tanzania. On the 21th of June 2012, he was sentenced to life imprisonment. Reporters Without Borders described the trial as a 'politically orchestrated travesty'.

Later that month, in response to the difficult situation faced by journalists, four of the major independent radio stations asked the public to sound their car horns for 15 seconds at 12:20pm to protest against political violence and the muzzling of journalists. Having witnessed this protest first hand, I can confirm that it was met with popular support and those fifteen seconds were some of the noisiest I have experienced in more than 18 months in Bujumbura.

Both Human Rights Watch and Reporters Without Borders agree that the government is openly hostile to independent media and both local and international experts assert that journalists who report on human rights abuses and on the political situation have been targeted with repeated summons and threats of arrest. Yet another example is that of the chief editor of Radio Publique Africaine, a leading independent radio station based in Bujumbura, who was summoned eight times to the public

prosecutor's office in 2011 for questioning regarding the radio's programmes.

The media, however, is very active in calling for press freedoms and the release of arrested journalists, and on the 18th of June this year six of the biggest independent radio stations organized a media synergy through which they simultaneously broadcast the same editorial message, calling on the Government to cease their harassment and unwarranted arrest of journalists and to uphold its constitutional obligations, respect the law and ensure that freedom of expression is guaranteed in Burundi.

The fundamental issue is that the Government of Burundi is highly sensitive to criticism, and the current media crackdown is taking place against a backdrop of a deteriorating political and security situation in which the Government accuses journalists of siding with the opposition and/or rebel movements and consequently treats them as enemies.

The Government would do well to remember the key role that the open and free press and civil society in Burundi played in peacebuilding efforts following the end of the war in 2008, and ensure that such advances in basic human rights are not undone in an attempt to silence their political opponents. (Note: Photos used in the text were taken by the author.)

"The fundamental issue is that the Government of Burundi is highly sensitive to criticism, and the current media crackdown is taking place against a backdrop of a deteriorating political and security situation in which the Government accuses journalists of siding with the opposition and/or rebel movements and consequently treats them as enemies"



# Conga mining project in Peru: legality and viability are not enough



**RICARDO MOREL**  
GSDM Peru

“Conga [mining project] will go ahead with or without social license” – announced Peru’s Prime Minister in early June, after more than a year of intense disputes between the national government and the regional government over the viability of the US\$4.8 billion mining project in Cajamarca, northern Peru. The case of Conga project continues to dominate the national headlines while remaining indefinitely suspended with no clear indication of how this conflict will be resolved.

In the past two decades the Peruvian economy has experienced continued economic growth. This has been boosted by the rise of the mining industry, which comprises more than half of the national GDP. Paradoxically, this achievement has been followed by a considerable increase of social conflicts, mainly related to extractive industries, which operate in territories that serve as a source of livelihood and cultural meaning for local communities. This dynamic has gradually delegitimized the political system, diluted confidence in the central government, and created a governance deficit.

After 21 years of neo-liberal governments, left-leaning leader Ollanta Humala took office in July 2011 amidst huge popular support. His message of

preferring water over gold during his campaign won a large number of supporters and raised hope for change among rural communities.

At that point, the Regional President of Cajamarca, Gregorio Santos, who publicly supported Humala’s campaign, had a flexible position towards mining, acknowledging the economic benefits it brought to the region. The Conga mining project’s viability faced no major problems, however, the idyll did not last long. A series of errors committed by the Executive and the mining company transformed Santos into their main opponent, making Conga the first litmus test for Humala’s left leaning government.

### The political scenario

Peruvian law dictates that a mining project with an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) approved by the Ministry of Energy and Mines is legally viable. However, the legality of an approved EIA is not enough to put forward a project. Legitimacy needs to be upheld by all stakeholders, especially in a highly fragmented scenario where the central government –which concentrates all decision-making powers over mining policy– is distanced from the local and regional governments,

"After 21 years of neo-liberal governments, left-leaning leader Ollanta Humala took office in July 2011 amidst huge popular support. His message of preferring water over gold during his campaign won a large number of supporters and raised hope for change among rural communities."

World Water Day Demonstration on Proposed Conga Gold Mine Site, Cajamarca Region, Peru © **Diego Cupolo**



as well as the civil society. This is particularly true when mining activities occur in remote communities where extractive industries tend to operate.

Regional and local governments lack capacity and power to regulate activities that might raise conflict behaviours in their own territories. Consequently, all regional and local grievances regarding mining operations travel directly to the capital city of Lima. Even at the national level, it is the Ministry of Energy and Mines – an institution generally seen as biased towards the private sector – which has the final word when approving the viability of projects, without necessarily having to consult with other relevant Ministries regarding the issues of environment or social development.

**Brief chronology of the conflict: Succeeding errors**

Cajamarca, a traditional farming and stockbreeding region, experienced the mining boom when Yanacocha –run mainly by US-based Newmont Mining Corporation– started operations over two decades ago. Newmont’s mining activities in Yanacocha, the world’s second largest gold mine, have built up a negative reputation due to environmental disasters and a record of strong clashes with local communities. Despite this local (and even national) perception of the firm, Newmont decided to attach the Conga project to Yanacocha brand, thus transmitting Yanacocha’s stigmas to the yet-to-be-born Conga mine.

In March 2011, Newmont announced in New York that not only Conga but also Quillish –another Yanacocha-brand project suspended since 2004 due to strong opposition– would start operations in 2016. This was later confirmed by President Humala who, in October 2011, after returning from the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Conference in Hawaii, personally gave the green light to the Conga project.

The decision generated surprise among the local population, but particularly with Santos, who trusted his, friend-now-President, Humala and had not been informed beforehand. Santos saw his power undermined. As NGOs and defence fronts started mobilizing, Santos saw an opportunity to gain political relevance by joining the assault. Later that month, the regional government of Cajamarca turned radical by stating that the Newmont’s CEO should declare Conga unviable.

Soon opposition supporters from all over the region began to mobilize. In the midst of intense popular pressure, former Prime Minister and current presidential spokesperson, Salomon Lerner, appeared in a press conference alongside Newmont’s Operations Vice-President to declare the suspension of Conga’s activities. Having a high-ranking government official appear with a Newmont Executive on national television only served to increase distrust for the government.

Opposition continued and, in response, the government declared a state of emergency in Cajamarca, mobilizing police forces and closely watching opposition leaders. By the end of 2011, the situation became unbearable. Prompting the resignation of Prime Minister, Lerner was replaced by former Minister of Interior, Oscar Valdes.

Prime Minister Valdes called for an international technical assessment of Conga’s EIA viability. As the report was delivered in April 2011, President Humala introduced a series of new conditions to the project, such as increasing labour and protecting natural water sources. Yanacocha was not previously consulted on these changes, but eventually agreed to the new terms.

Still, since mid-June roadblocks have been occurring in different parts of Cajamarca, generating shortage of food supply and other resources.

**Lessons learned**

Conga, as a project, and Cajamarca, as a region, could be a milestone in Peru’s history if the right bridges are built. The Government could strengthen the decentralization process, giving more participation to the regional government in EIA processes, mining concessions, right to prior consultation, and wealth distribution. In general, the idea is to get regional governments more involved by increasing their responsibilities and, thus, making them part of the national political machinery.

Mining companies need to improve their strategy by prioritising the strengthening of relationships before starting operations. Not only should these efforts be focused on creating inroads with local communities but also should concentrate on bringing local and regional governments, as well as NGOs, into the political fold. In essence, if dialogue and transparency are not present across all fronts, history will repeat itself. Peru needs to add legitimacy to legality and sustainability to viability.

"Conga, as a project, and Cajamarca, as a region, could be a milestone in Peru’s history if the right bridges are built"

"Mining companies need to improve their strategy by prioritising the strengthening of relationships before starting operations"



PHOTO CORNER

**Education in Tanzania**

Despite significant achievement through massive investment under the government’s Primary Education Development Plans (I&II) for over 8 years coupled with numerous interventions by NGOs both local and National, the state of education in some rural parts of Tanzania is still appalling. Learning outcomes not convincing and the learning-teaching environment is still far from being improved.

Facing the situation like the pictured one at Mwamagembe Primary school in Kishapu district, Shinyanga region in Tanzania, one may wish to pause and ask a number of questions: what is wrong? Have, as a country and global community been able to identify let alone address the root cause of the education challenges? Even more importantly, how do we get out of such alarming learning environment hampering quality education for all?

Pictured is Oxfam’s Education Programme Officer, Mary Soko who visited the school to monitor progress of the WASH facilities that Oxfam sponsored.

Photo by Lingson Adam/ GSDM West Africa



# Women of the Revolution!

## In the Aftermath of the Arab Spring

Women in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya played a prominent role in bringing down entrenched dictatorships, however, there are fears that previous gains made by women might be reversed due to rising social conservatism and religious fundamentalism in the post-revolutionary scenario.



Photo: Gigi Ibrahim

After 18 days of angry protests in Cairo's Tahrir Square, president Hosni Mubarak resigned on February 11, ending 30 years of autocratic rule. Hundreds of thousands of people gathered and chanted slogans against the regime until it finally toppled. Obviously, anger, frustration and a deep rooted desire for change fueled the revolution, but many believe it was Asmaa Mahfouz's YouTube video that did the magic and compelled people to turn up to Tahrir Square and oppose dictatorship.

The 26 year old university student made a video and posted on YouTube announcing her intention to go to the square on 25 January, she challenged Egyptians to take to the street, saying, 'If you think yourself a man, come with me on 25 January. Whoever says women shouldn't go to protests because they will get beaten, let him have some honor and manhood and come with me on 25 January. Whoever says it is not worth it because there will only be a handful of people, I want to tell him, 'You are the reason behind this, and you are a traitor, just like the president or any security cop who beats us in the streets.'

In Yemen, another woman, Tawakel Karman, led the pro-democracy campaigns, camping out for months in

front of Sana'a University, calling for Yemen's President, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to step down. Karman became an international face of peaceful revolution and was awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize.

While Asmaa Mahfouz of Egypt and Tawakel Karman of Yemen were actively organizing protests and participating in them directly, the Tunisian Lina Ben Mhenni took a different approach. Through a blog, Mhenni reported the protests throughout Tunisia, at times becoming the only source of information to activists within Tunisia and also to the outside world.

These three names mentioned here are just representative examples of hundreds of thousands of women that made the Arab Uprising possible. Through satellite television and on social networking sites we saw how vigorously these women organized themselves and bravely challenged tyranny and dictatorship. The world hasn't certainly forgotten that. But the danger is that due to a surprising rise of conservatism and fundamental religious ideologies after the revolutions in the region, women might be forgotten and oppressed in their own lands, by the regimes that are built on the same women's sweat, blood and toil.



"The world hasn't forgotten women's contribution in the Arab Uprisings, but the danger is that they are being forgotten in their own lands by their own regimes"





Photo by Clinton Verley



**Tawakel Karman, 33, Yemen**  
**'Mother of the Revolution'**

Tawakel Karman became the international public face of the 2011 Yemeni uprising that is part of the Arab Spring uprisings. She has been called by Yemenis the "Iron Woman" and "Mother of the Revolution. She is a co-recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize, becoming the first Yemeni, the first Arab woman, and the second Muslim woman to win a Nobel Prize and the youngest Nobel Peace Laureate to date.

Karman is a Yemeni journalist, politician and senior member of the of Al-Islah political party, and human rights activist who heads the group "Women Journalists Without Chains," which she co-founded in 2005. She gained prominence in her country after 2005 in her roles as a Yemeni journalist and an advocate for a mobile phone news service denied a license in 2007, after which she led protests for press freedom. She organized weekly protests after May 2007 expanding the issues for reform. She redirected the Yemeni protests to support the "Jasmine Revolution," as she calls the Arab Spring, after the Tunisian people overthrew the government of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in January 2011.



**Asmaa Mahfouz, 27, Egypt**  
**the woman who organized Egypt's historic demonstrations**

Asmaa Mahfouz is an Egyptian activist and one of the founders of the April 6 Youth Movement. She has been credited by journalist Mona Eltahawy and others with helping to spark mass uprising through her video blog posted one week before the start of the 2011 Egyptian revolution where she said, *'If you think yourself a man, come with me on 25 January. Whoever says women shouldn't go to protests because they will get beaten, let him have some honor and manhood and come with me on 25 January. Whoever says it is not worth it because there will only be a handful of people, I want to tell him, 'You are the reason behind this, and you are a traitor, just like the president or any security cop who beats us in the streets.'* The video went viral and hundreds of thousands of people appeared on the 25 January protest. She is a prominent member of Egypt's Coalition of the Youth of the Revolution and in 2011, she was one of five recipients of the "Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought" awarded for contributions to "historic changes in the Arab world."



Photo: David Sasaki

**Lina Ben Mhenni, 29, Tunisia**  
**The Revolutionary Blogger**

During the rule of former Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Lina Mhenni was one of the few bloggers to blog using her real name rather than adopting a pseudonym to protect her identity. Her blog, as well as her Facebook and Twitter accounts, were censored under the Ben Ali regime. Mhenni began posting photos and video of protests of those injured throughout Tunisia. In an effort to make the government responsible for its actions and to the people who were harmed in these uprisings, she visited local hospitals and took pictures of those harmed by police.

In January 2011, she covered the early weeks of the Tunisian Revolution from Sidi Bouzid Governorate in the interior of the country. Mhenni was the only blogger present in the interior cities of Kasserine and Regueb when government forces massacred and suppressed protesters in the region. Her reports and posts provided uncensored information to other Tunisian activists and the international media.

Mhenni's blog, *A Tunisian Girl* (<http://atunisiangirl.blogspot.com>), is written in Arabic, English, and French. Mhenni has been awarded the Deutsche Welle International Blog Award and El Mundo's International Journalism Prize.

# Women's political participation in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings



CATRIONA KNAPMAN  
GSDM Middle East

Despite women's full and dynamic participation in the 2011 revolutions, their participation in the evolving democracies in these countries has been marked with difficulties and complications.

Each country has demonstrated its own unique approach to these issues. However they are linked by the common threat of under-representation of women in public life and political participation.

In Tunisia, ideas of equality were already prevalent in law and society, which has been reflected in a reasonable representative presentation of women. Indeed quotas assured 50% inclusion of women on electoral lists and ultimately 24% representation in the Constituent Assembly, which translated into 58 out of 217 members, or 26.7% women parliamentarians. A woman is also deputy speaker in this body. While the number do not represent full equality, it is equitable to most Western democracies in terms of women's political participation. Indeed, it is a higher number of women MPs than in the UK, which has 22%.

Tunisia has also not suffered the same problems regarding safety and attacks of women protesters as have been seen in Egypt. Yet, there are fears of an Islamic resurgence from some parties. They are concerned that the majority presence of the Islamist party 'Ennahda' in the Constituent Assembly will mean the creation of laws which impose the sharia at the expense of women's freedoms. These fears are still to be confirmed.

In Egypt, this under-representation has been seen in both the streets and political bodies. The Parliament, elected in November 2011, had a mere 10 women

representatives out of 508, or 2% women. In global terms, Egypt has one of the lowest percentages of women parliamentary representatives in the world, according to Inter-Parliamentary Union (<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>).

The election of the first Constituent Assembly also saw only 6 women chosen for the 100 member panel. This first Assembly was abandoned due to protest regarding its representation of not just women, but of the full diversity of Egyptian society. The replacement committee, elected in June 2012, included 7 women out of the 100 new members, which was hardly much of an improvement.

The Egypt's streets, this issue is also prevalent. Various stories tell the tale of harassment and attacks on women in public life. The 2011 International Women's Day march was marked by harassment of women protestors. Imposed virginity testing was recorded as taking on women protestors by human rights organisations. During protests in early June 2012, women were reportedly being attacked in and near to Tahrir Square by large groups of men. Reports stated that the women were sexually assaulted by mobs of men.

Egyptian women's group, Nazra Institute for Feminist Studies claims that: "(t)he attack on the women was calculated and organized so as to scare women away from the public sphere, to punish women for their participation, and to keep them at home to avoid the premeditated attacks against them."

These attacks show that women's place in public protests as well as public life is

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being itself attacked and undermined. While the women organisations continue to fight, the continued dominance of the military in Egypt and the increasingly tense and uncertain political situation is rendering women's participation more and more complex.

In Libya, women have also faced challenges as well as an unstable environment. Following the revolution, rape committed against women by armed forces became a key issue. Stories emerged of honour killings being carried out by families against women who had been raped, demonstrating a strong patriarchy system.

While United Nations Security Council mandate 1325, highlights the important role women play in peacebuilding, only one woman is a member of the National Transitional Council, Dr. Salwa Fawzi El-Deghali. In terms of political representation, provision has been made to include a quota of at least 10% women in the new Parliament, to be elected in July.

Yet women groups are fighting back. Many have been organising training and support for women political activists and Parliamentary candidates. There are also

lobbying campaigns around Constitutional and legal change. Women4Libya is demanding that certain funds are earmarked for women's issues. Others have been involved in graffiti campaigns to paint women's faces onto the walls of the streets. In Egypt, one organisation, called Harassmap is recording and mapping incidents and testimony of harassment against women.

It seems that the struggle for women's rights continues in post-revolution Middle East. Prejudices from certain readings of Islam appear to influence the attitudes and acceptance of women's participation in public and political life. The prevalence of a strong patriarchal system also has its effect in limiting the progress of women in post-revolution North Africa.

However, it can seem overly easy to assume that the culprit of women's exclusion in the Middle East originates from women. In this sense it is worth noting how other societies included and excluded women, following revolutions.

As post-revolutionary new democracies in the Middle East and North Africa slowly move forward, the question of women's equality and participation remains

"Yet women groups are fighting back. Many have been organising training and support for women political activists and Parliamentary candidates"

"In Egypt, one organisation, called Harassmap is recording and mapping incidents and testimony of harassment against women"

somewhat stuck. The stance of women's groups and movements remains defiant, yet answers must be untangled from a sticky web of social, political and religious politics. What is certain is that these new democracies offer a platform which ensures that this debate will continue to be discussed for a long time into the future.

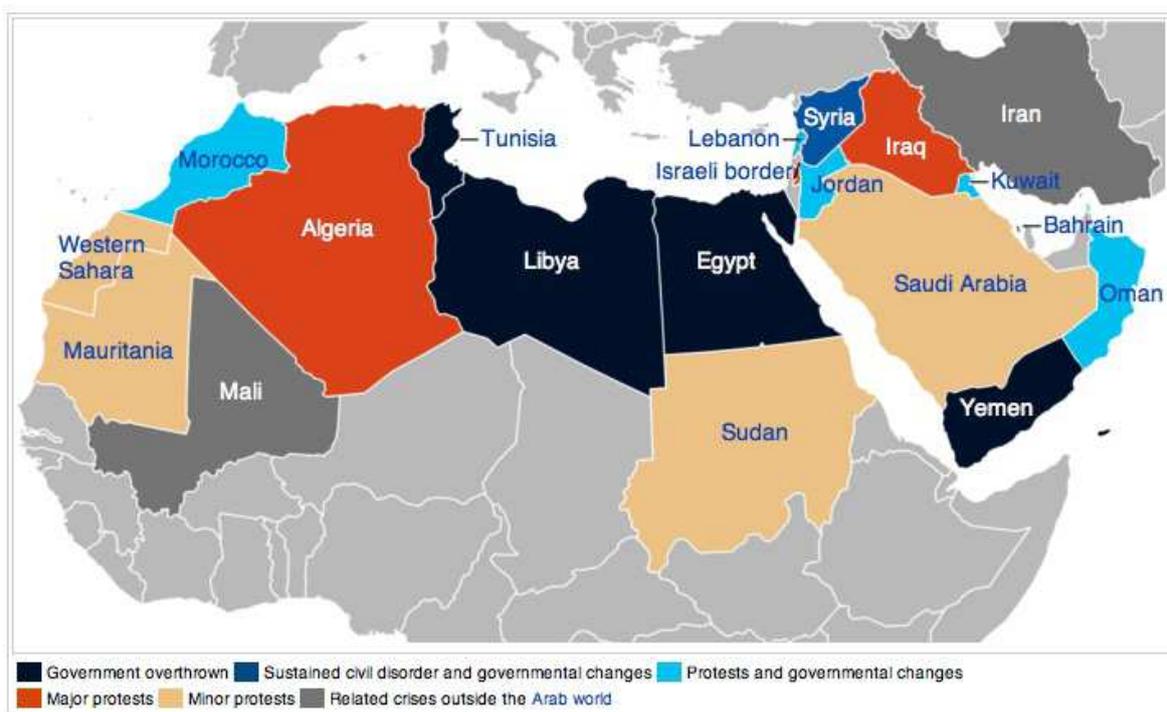


### Mohamed Bouazizi

Mohamed Bouazizi was a Tunisian street vendor who set himself on fire on 17 December 2010, in protest of the confiscation of his wares and the harassment and humiliation that he reported was inflicted on him by a municipal official and her aides. His act became a catalyst for the Tunisian Revolution and the wider Arab Spring, inciting demonstrations and riots throughout

Tunisia in protest of social and political issues in the country. The public's anger and violence intensified following Bouazizi's death, leading then-President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to step down on 14 January 2011, after 23 years in power.

The success of the Tunisian protests inspired protests in several other Arab countries, plus several non-Arab countries.



Source: Wikimedia Foundation



# Birth of a New World and the Way Beyond the Revolutions

**TAWAKEL KARMAN**

*Tawakel Karman is a Yemeni journalist, politician and senior member of the of Al-Islah political party, and human rights activist who heads the group "Women Journalists Without Chains," which she co-founded in 2005. She has been called by Yemenis the "Iron Woman" and "Mother of the Revolution" and is also a co-recipient of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize. In this edition we present a few excerpts from her Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech where she talks about the success of the Arab uprisings and the future of freedom and democracy in the Arab world.*

The revolutions of the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria, and the movement towards revolutions in other Arab countries, such as Algeria, Morocco, Bahrain, Sudan and others, in terms of motivation, driving power and objectives, did not take place on isolated islands cut off from all the rapid and astonishing changes which our world is witnessing. The Arab people have woken up just to see how poor a share of freedom, democracy and dignity they have. And they revolted. This experience is somewhat similar to the spring that swept through Eastern Europe after the downfall of the Soviet Union. The birth of democracies in Eastern Europe has been difficult, and victory emerged only after bitter struggle against the then-existing systems. Similarly, the Arab world is today witnessing the birth of a new world, which tyrants and unjust rulers strive to oppose. But in the end, this new world will inevitably emerge.

The Arab people who are revolting in a peaceful and civilized manner have, for so many decades, been oppressed and suppressed by the regimes of authoritarian tyrants who have indulged themselves deeply in corruption and in looting the wealth of their people. They have gone too far in depriving their people of freedom and of the natural right to a dignified life. They have gone too far in depriving them of the right to participate in the management of their personal affairs and the affairs of their communities. These regimes have totally disregarded the Arab people as a people with a legitimate human existence and have let poverty and unemployment flourish among them in order to secure that the rulers, and their family members after them, will have full control over the people. Allow me to say that our oppressed people have revolted, declaring the emergence of a new dawn in which the sovereignty of the people, and their invincible will, will prevail. The people have decided to break free and walk in the footsteps of civilized

free people of the world.

All ideologies, beliefs, laws and charters produced by the march of humanity through all stages of its development, as well as all divine messages and religions, without exception, oblige us to support oppressed people, be they groups or individuals. Supporting an oppressed person is not only required because of his need for support, but also because injustice against one person is injustice against all mankind.

What Martin Luther King called "the art of living in harmony" is the most important art we need to master today. In order to contribute to that human art, the Arab states should make reconciliation with their own people an essential requirement. This is not merely an internal interest, but also an international one required for the whole human community. The dictator who kills his own people does not only represent a case of violation of his people's values and their national security, but is also a case of violation of human values, its conventions and its international commitments. Such a case represents a real threat to world peace.

Many nations, including the Arab peoples, have suffered, although they were not at war, but were not at peace either. The peace in which they lived is a false "peace of graves," the peace of submission to tyranny and corruption that impoverishes people and kills their hope for a better future. Today, all of the human community should stand up with our people in their peaceful struggle for freedom, dignity and democracy, now that our people have decided to break out of silence and strive to live and realize the meaning of the immortal phrase of Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab: "Since when have you enslaved people, when their mothers gave birth to them free?"

When I heard the news that I had got the Nobel Peace Prize, I was in my tent in the Tahrir Square in Sana'a. I was one of millions of revolutionary youth. There, we were not even able to secure our safety from the repression and

"the Arab world is today witnessing the birth of a new world, which tyrants and unjust rulers strive to oppose. But in the end, this new world will inevitably emerge"

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future"

oppression of the regime of Ali Abdullah Saleh. At that moment, I contemplated the distinction between the meanings of peace celebrated by the Nobel Prize and the tragedy of the aggression waged by Ali Abdullah Saleh against the forces of peaceful change. However, our joy of being on the right side of history made it easier for us to bear the devastating irony.

Millions of Yemeni women and men, children, young and old, took to the streets in 18 provinces demanding their right to freedom, justice and dignity, using nonviolent but effective means to achieve their demands. We were able to efficiently and effectively maintain a peaceful revolution in spite of the fact that this great nation has more than 70 million firearms of various types. Here lies the philosophy of the revolution, which persuaded millions of people to leave their weapons at home and join the peaceful march against the state's machine of murder and violence just with flowers and bare breasts, and filled with dreams, love and peace. We were very happy because we realized, at that time, that the Nobel Prize did not come only as a personal prize for Tawakkul Abdel-Salam Karman, but as a declaration and recognition of the whole world for the triumph of the peaceful revolution of Yemen and as an appreciation of the sacrifices of its great, peaceful people.

And here I am now, standing before you in this solemn international ceremony. Here I am, in this unique moment, one of the most important moments of human history, coming from the land of the Arab Orient, coming from the land of Yemen, the Yemen of wisdom and ancient civilizations, the Yemen of more than 5,000 years of long history, the great Kingdom of Sheba, the Yemen of the two queens Bilqis and Arwa, the Yemen which is currently experiencing the greatest and the most powerful and the largest eruption of Arab Spring revolution, the revolution of millions throughout the homeland, which is still raging and escalating today.

This revolution will soon complete its first year since the moment it was launched as a peaceful and popular revolution of the youth, with one demand: peaceful change and the pursuit of free and dignified life in a democratic and civil state governed by the rule of law. This state will be built on the ruins of the rule of a repressive, militarized, corrupt and backward family police rule, which has consistently brought Yemen to the

edge of failure and collapse during the last 33 years.

Our peaceful and popular youth revolution is not isolated or cut off from the revolutions of the Arab Spring. However, with all regret and sadness, I should note that it did not get the international understanding, support or attention of the other revolutions in the region. This should haunt the world's conscience, because it challenges the very idea of fairness and justice.

I would like to emphasize that the Arab Spring revolutions have emerged with the purpose of meeting the needs of the people of the region for a state of citizenship and the rule of law. They have emerged as an expression of people's dissatisfaction with the state of corruption, nepotism and bribery. These revolutions were ignited by young men and women who are yearning for freedom and dignity. They know that their revolutions pass through four stages which can't be bypassed: toppling the dictator and his

family, toppling his security and military services and his nepotism networks, establishing the institutions of the transitional state, and moving towards constitutional legitimacy and establishing the modern civil and democratic state.

Thus, the revolutions of the Arab Spring will continue through the efforts of youth, who are ready and prepared to launch each stage and to fully achieve its objectives. Today the world should be ready and prepared to support the young Arab Spring in all stages of its struggle for freedom and

dignity. The civilized world should, immediately after the outbreak of the revolutions, commence the detention and freezing of the assets of the figures of this regime and its security and military officials. In fact, this is not enough, since these people should be brought to justice before the International Criminal Court. There should be no immunity for killers who rob the food of the people.

The democratic world, which has told us a lot about the virtues of democracy and good governance, should not be indifferent to what is happening in Yemen and Syria, and happened before in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya, and happens in every Arab and non-Arab country aspiring for freedom. All of that is just hard labor during the birth of democracy, which requires support and assistance, not fear and caution.



"Millions of Yemeni women and men, children, young and old, took to the streets in 18 provinces demanding their right to freedom, justice and dignity, using nonviolent but effective means to achieve their demands"

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## WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND THE ARAB SPRING

Successful uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt in 2010-2011 have sparked movements against dictatorships across the Middle East, North Africa, and the Gulf region. These movements call for democratization, new constitutions that protect equality, free speech and assembly, and fair elections. Women have been an integral part of these revolutions, organizing and marching alongside men. Now, as countries in the region are in the process of building new governments, women's activists know they must fight to play a substantial role.

Today, just as before the Arab Spring,

women's rights groups in the Arab world are fighting for rights set forth in the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the most comprehensive women's rights treaty, and are using it to demand government action. Written in 1979 and entered into force in 1981, CEDAW has been ratified by 187 nation-states, including every Arab country except Somalia and Sudan. However, each Arab state has ratified the treaty with substantial reservations that undermine the treaty's spirit.

CEDAW is a critical tool in the fight to advance women's rights in a democratizing Arab world. Across the region, women have been using CEDAW to pressure governments to take meaningful steps to advance women's rights, and to push new

governments to live up to their countries' commitments under the treaty and withdraw all reservations. Many governments in the region need to take further steps to align national laws with existing international commitments under CEDAW. However, while many area governments have yet to live up to CEDAW's principles, women's rights activists continue to leverage governments' desire to appear to be in compliance with CEDAW as a way to advance their cause. (Source: Women's Learning Partnership)

CEDAW is a critical tool in the fight to advance women's rights in a democratizing Arab world.

# Sierra Leone: Are more women in parliament enough?

Legislating Equality Ahead of Sierra Leone's 2012 Elections



A woman in the village of Njama in Kailahun District, Sierra Leone



**IOULIA FENTON**  
GSDM Assistant Editor

Sierra Leone is a country marred by political and social instability. It was not until 2002 that it saw an official end to its brutal 11-year civil war, in which tens of thousands were killed, hundreds of thousands were displaced and numerous youth were abducted as child soldiers. The struggle still continues as weak security, legal and political institutions threaten stability in this fragile state that ranked bottom of 177 in UNDP's 2005 Human Development Index, a composite statistical analysis measuring quality of life and standard of living. Despite the impressive abundance of agricultural and natural mineral resources, Sierra Leone has a deep aid dependency problem, relying on donors for most of its basic service provision and government spending. This requires the country to meet donor criteria, such as placing more females in the highest echelons of the country's democratically elected and decentralising certain government operations, to qualify for funding.

Sierra Leone has an estimated population of 6 million, 51-53% of whom are women. Yet, political representation at the turn of the century was dreadfully low. Out of 124 parliamentarians,

less than 5% were women (six in total with two additional female Cabinet Ministers and Deputy Ministers). Like many other African countries, Sierra Leone is pushing for passage of the The Gender Equality Bill ahead of its November 2012 election. It is a legislation currently awaiting a parliamentary vote to be passed into law that aims to stipulate mandated quotas, reserving at least 30% of parliament and local council seats for women. This is proportion called for at the 1995 UN Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women that put "gender mainstreaming" as a top donor priority on the global development map.

More women in parliament is, in part, the right idea. But putting more pant suits on political seats does not go far enough, according to Ms Khadija Bah, who has a long and distinguished career as a senior policy advisor and gender mainstreaming specialist at the World Bank, United Nations, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the like. For her, gains through higher representation in numbers are only superficial if they come about as a result of quotas and other forms of legislated equality. She posits that the problem with quotas lies in the fact that the appointed women have little

"Despite impressive abundance of agricultural and natural mineral resources, Sierra Leone has a deep aid dependency problem, relying on donors for most of its basic service provision and government spending. This requires the country to meet donor criteria, such as placing more females in the highest echelons of the country's democratically elected and decentralising certain government operations, to qualify for funding."

or no experiences in the process to make any significant change: “[these women] don’t know anything about the process, they can barely write - all they do is go meeting to meeting to conference to conference without making a change... They would not be good candidates to run on their own for parliament”.

This truly is the crux of the matter since, for many, ‘gender mainstreaming’ in the form of quotas can be detrimental to the cause. They are an imposition of sorts and only serve to reinforce the men’s view that women’s place is anywhere but politics because they are not competing on merit. These statutes are also threatening and confrontational, leaving some observers unhopeful that the Sierra Leone Gender Equality Bill will ever be passed. Officially, on paper, the Government of Sierra Leone

subscribes to the Beijing call for at least 30% of female representation in politics. Yet, despite this and the apparent widespread popular female support for the Bill, it is not well received by those currently in power, as one male Parliamentarian noted, “Why would I support a law that would aim to de-seat me?”

This reasoning can be seen to be a major hurdle for many gender mainstreaming efforts. Ms Bah, for example, has seen her fair share of failures, stating that “Gender work is not taken seriously, it is sidelined and done just because without it there would be no donor money”. In her experience working in Sierra Leone and over twenty other African countries, the gender focal point is rarely more than a receptionist or a specialist of another topic who has been saddled with being the “gender girl”.

Replacing gendered parliamentary quotas and other imposed ‘quantitative’ measures with the selection and nourishment of women who can actually do the job well is what Khadija Bah would prefer. But the road is long and she is realistic that greater physical numbers do serve as good starting points. However, to really make a difference, she would see Sierra Leone and Africa “do away with gender altogether”. Instead, she believes, they should focus on social inclusion, being mindful of the differences in the needs of men and women and pitching the two sexes as allies rather than enemies towards shared goals. It is not enough, for example, to have parliament seats or higher education places reserved for women. To save gender equality from becoming little more than lip service paid to keep the donors content, a transformation on the societal level is needed to create lasting change. Providing women time off and pay sufficient enough to support women’s reproductive duties at home and ensuring an equal level of training that will allow women to succeed by their own virtue would be a good start.

A two-pronged approach of increasing the presence of women in the public sector and building their capacity is already underway in Sierra Leone since the mission to achieve higher female representation in government has been given significant boosts by a few notable organisations that have championed the cause. The 50/50 Group is one such example. It was set up by a handful of Sierra Leonean women in 2000 under the leadership of Dr. Nemata Majeks-Walker and has now risen to the self-professed heights of “a movement for Women’s Empowerment and a force to reckon with”.

“I have always believed in women’s rights and that women have a role to play in politics and the government”, said Dr Majeks-Walker in an interview. For over a decade, she made women’s participation in the political process of Sierra

Leone her absolute highest priority, calling for a zipper style of representation: one man, one woman, with the ultimate goal of following in the footsteps of their African neighbours - Liberia and Malawi - by electing their first female president.



The 50/50 group was formally launched in the Sierra Leone House of Parliament six months before the 2002 general elections. Through advocacy, lobbying and grass roots training work, it can boast an impressive list of achievements in the run up to the elections: it has trained a network of over 60 trainers based

across Sierra Leone, published a training manual, trained over 2000 women in campaign, communication and advocacy skills and the role of women in Parliament and produced a women’s manifesto. At the end of the 2002 elections, of the 165 women who stood for election, 18 were successful. There was a 50 per cent increase in female candidates running in the ministerial and deputy ministerial categories, but most impressive of all, the elections recorded the country’s very first female presidential and vice-presidential candidates.

Despite these improvements, according to UN Women, today, “female political participation rates [in Sierra Leone] remain abysmally low”. Out of 124 parliamentarians, only 17 are women (14%) and only 18.9 per cent of councillors in the local government are female, with less than 10 per cent involvement in top civil service positions and virtually zero representation at the level of chairperson or the ranks of Paramount Chiefs, Ministers, foreign service and alike. And the women who do succeed are not without their critics. Most tend to be from the ranks of the well-educated, urban middle and upper classes, leaving open the question of whether they can truly represent the needs of the majority of Sierra Leone’s rural and poor women.

There is a third and crucially important part of social transformation that needs to accompany greater representation and capacity building of women. For Ms Bah, the term ‘gender’ itself has become a problem.

“It comes with a lot of baggage,” she said “when people hear the word ‘gender’ they see it as women taking over men, whilst the concept is too abstract to operationalize and thus is stuck at the institutional level, without trickling down to the social level. Therefore, legislation without enforcement and social transformation will not help women,” she continued, “if, instead, we focus on issues of social inclusion, such as talk about inequalities different groups like women, youth, the disabled and so on experience, we can do a whole lot more”.

It is true that some progress in absolute numbers of female representation in the politics of Sierra Leone has been achieved and the November 2012 elections promise to be the most feminised in history. How much this is having a real impact on female empowerment and greater equality in access to opportunities remains debatable and the critics are many. Certainly larger scale changes across societies and cultures would need to take place before true equality is achieved, however, greater numbers are a sure step in the right direction. After all, as Khadija Bah said: “You cannot build a house from the roof up and you cannot promote women if the women are absent”.

“for many, ‘gender mainstreaming’ in the form of quotas can be detrimental to the cause. They are an imposition of sorts and only serve to reinforce the men’s view that women’s place is anywhere but politics because they are not competing on merit”

“It is not enough, for example, to have parliament seats or higher education places reserved for women. To save gender equality from becoming little more than lip service paid to keep the donors content, a transformation on the societal level is needed to create lasting change”



**CAROLYNN LOOK**  
GSDM country profiles

12 PM, Mexico City. A street vendor prepares some of the most delicious (and spiciest!) tacos in the world, based on centuries of rich culinary tradition. At the same time, in Juárez, a woman working at a factory goes on her lunch break. Simultaneously, in Chiapas, an indigenous farmer harvests some of the world's best coffee beans. But what unites these vastly different people in their gigantic nation? What lies behind this country that was once one of the most developed ancient civilizations, and is now such a key figure in contemporary Latin America?

The flourishing Aztec Empire came to its brutal end when Hernán Cortés of Spain conquered it in 1521 after only two years of battle. On their search for gold and other riches, the Spanish unintentionally brought with them an epidemic of smallpox that wiped out more than half of the Aztec population, and left the remaining portion with a deepened respect for the Christian God, resulting in the widespread acceptance of Catholicism and Spanish reign. The ensuing period of colonial rule was responsible for much of the identity, culture and architecture of Mexico today.

In 1810, however, Mexico was the first Latin American country to declare independence from Spain. A Mexican priest named Miguel Hidalgo spoke out against colonial government in the small town of Dolores due to the events of the Peninsular War. Roughly a decade of bloody battles

followed, until the Spanish resistance finally gave in and recognized the Mexican Empire's independence in 1821.

Two years later, an internal revolt established the United Mexican States along the lines of a Republican Constitution, but the following decades were marked by severe economic instability and constant internal political strife. When civil war finally broke out, three new governments declared independence: the Republic of Texas, the Republic of the Rio Grande, and the Republic of Yucatán.

It was perhaps Mexico's disunity and instability that made it the weaker player in the 1846 Mexican-American War, which caused it to lose more than half of its land to the U.S. Also, Mayan uprisings in 1847 established relatively independent enclaves that lasted until the 1930s. The fragile nation attempted to create unity under another constitution in 1857, but the internal differences led to yet another war, which was eventually won by the Liberals in 1861 who wanted a federal, secular state. France put Mexico under military occupation in the 1860s, establishing the Second Mexican Empire, ruled by Maximilian of Austria. His clergy, however, soon joined sides with the Liberals, forcing him to surrender and be executed.

From 1876 to 1911, Mexico was ruled almost the entire time by Porfirio Díaz, who invested a lot into the arts and sciences and had many economic achievements, but

was also responsible for widespread inequality and political repression. A likely fraud that led to his fifth re-election finally sparked the Mexican revolution in 1910, a war that killed roughly 900,000 people and ended with the establishment of the 1917 Constitution, the same that governs Mexico today.

Mexico was governed by revolutionary heroes in subsequent years, but these were soon replaced with the creation of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), which ruled Mexico for 71 years. This large portion of time in Mexico's history saw many economic and social reforms, miraculous economic growth, but also later on faced severe social inequality and brutal crisis, culminating in the 1982 oil crisis and the neoliberal reforms that linked the nation to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), resulting in an opposition movement started by the Zapatistas that continues today to fight against the injustices of neoliberalism and globalization.

In 2000, for the first time, the PRI lost a presidential election against Vicente Fox from the PAN, followed in 2006 by Felipe Calderón, who only narrowly defeated the leftist candidate López Obrador, raising speculations about electoral fraud once more. Obrador contested, but lost the 2012 election to Enrique Peña Nieto, the candidate of the Institutional Revolutionary Party and the Green Ecologist Party of Mexico.

Mexico has a history marked by

## Country Profile | Mexico

exploitation, internal disputes, and countless corrupt governments that kept replacing each other since the nation's independence. It is its current events, however, that will determine which path the country will follow in the future. With governments that have in recent decades catered largely to U.S. interests and forgotten the needs of their people,

governments that have manipulated electoral processes and the media to put certain candidates in a favourable light, and governments that have failed to combat one of the worst and most violent drug cartel wars ever seen, it is important that the Mexican people do not remain silent.

Right now, however, is a very hopeful and

exciting time for Mexico: with the recent birth of a powerful student movement against media manipulation, and the rising interest in the alternative government pledged by López Obrador (following the leftist trend of other Latin American countries), the country seems to be on the verge of a great change.

### KEY INDICATORS



A religious procession in San Juan Chamula, Chiapas. Photo: Luis Gutiérrez Arias

**Capital:** Mexico City

**Population:** 114,975,406 (July 2012 est.)

**Area:** 1,964,375 sq km

**Geography:** Shares borders with the USA, Guatemala, and Belize, as well as with the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean Sea and Pacific Ocean. Climate varies from tropical to desert, and the terrain is mostly mountainous. Volcanoes and earthquakes pose destructive natural hazards to the center and south of the country.

**Official language:** Spanish, indigenous languages (Mayan, Nahuatl and other regional languages) spoken by 6.5% of population

**Ethnic groups:** Mestizo 60%, Amerindian 30%, White 9%, Other 1%

**Religion:** Roman Catholic 76.5%, Protestant 5.2%, Jehovah's Witnesses 1.1%, other 0.3%, unspecified 13.8%, none 3.1%

**Human Development Index:** 0.770; rank 57 out of 187



### EDUCATION

- Compulsory and free until secondary school
- Adult literacy 93.4%
- Roughly equal among men and women
- Doesn't cover the needs of the entire population, universities are overcapacitated

### ROLE OF WOMEN

- Violence and murder of female factory workers in Ciudad Juárez without due justice
- Very low employment of women (41.3%, vs. 82.5% of men in 2004)
- Misogynistic attitude towards women leads to domestic violence

### CHILDREN

- In rural areas may suffer from malnutrition
- Walk long distances to get to school

### FREEDOM

- Abuses, kidnappings, and killings by drug cartels are a serious threat to the population, with more than 60,000 deaths in 5 years
- Security threat against journalists: at least 9 have been killed and scores of others have been attacked and intimidated
- Media manipulation and electoral fraud have severely inhibited legitimacy of government

### ECONOMY

- GDP growth: 3.8% (2011); GDP per capita: \$15,100 (2011); one third of per capita income in the US)
- Income distribution highly unequal
- Mixture of modern and outmoded industry and agriculture, increasingly dominated by the private sector
- 37.5% of GDP goes to public debt
- 2-3% of GDP made by migrant remittances

### ENVIRONMENT

- Mexico City: one of the most polluted cities in the world
- Lack of waste disposal facilities
- Severe water pollution
- Deforestation
- Rapid urbanization
- Reliance on oil industry for national economy and extremely low investment in renewable energies

# Tips from the Field - Positive youth development through sports



"Sports competition is one of the few traditions shared by every culture in every country on the globe. From cricket to soccer to table tennis, sports have captured the hearts of nations, world over, and if harnessed the right way can be used as an extremely powerful agent for change, especially in schools"



**NOAH MARWIL**  
GSDM Latin America

In 2000, with the announcement of the second Millennium Development Goal (universal access to primary education), the world began to see a meteoric rise in international educational development efforts. Organizations and government alike feverishly began building schools, training teachers and developing curriculum to meet the UN's ambitious challenge. As of 2012, there has been moderate success in achieving goal number two, and although 61 million children worldwide still do not have access to education, coverage is indeed growing.

However, what many have not taken into consideration is that, although a child may have access to education, it does indicate that he or she is attending class or truly learning. There is much more to education than a classroom, a teacher and a few books, and the world would be remiss to settle for such superficial gains. For this reason, GSDM is proud to present the first in a series of tips from the field, showcasing effective techniques proven to improve worldwide education and affect deep, lasting change.

## **This quarter's tip**

Sports competition is one of the few traditions shared by every culture in every country on the globe. From cricket to soccer to table tennis, sports have captured the hearts of nations, world over, and if harnessed the right way can be used as an extremely powerful agent for change, especially in schools.

## **Theory of Change**

The goal of scholastic sports programming is to incentivize parents and children alike to participate in the formal education system and provide students with the life skills necessary to become productive and civically responsible members of society. Building safe athletic facilities to run sports related

programming helps students to learn job skills, increase socialization, and/or re-enter the formal education system. In addition providing coaches and mentors for children who do not receive this level of support in the household can raise self-esteem and build confidence.

The core of effective sports programming does not focus on sports training per se, but rather the application of sport lessons to personal skill development essential to employment training. In order to be a fair and respected competitor, one needs to understand, practice, and promote the core values of respect, teamwork, leadership, discipline, communication, confidence, self-esteem and continued self-improvement. These are not just life skills, but employability skills as well.

In addition, after school activities mitigate gang violence through participation in organized activities, as well as promote physical well-being, combat discrimination, and build a sense of security. Additionally, sports can play an important role in the healing and rehabilitation process for all children affected by crisis, discrimination, and marginalization.

## **Evidence of Efficacy**

Engagement in team sports has been associated with higher self-esteem and greater academic achievement and unrelated to antisocial behavior. No moderation by gender, race/ethnicity, or school context is observed (Mahoney, 103).

Adolescents need opportunities for physical activity, development of competence and achievement, self-definition, creative expression, positive social interaction with peers and adults, a sense of structure and clear limits, and meaningful participation in authentic work (Quinn).

Groups of interconnected members encourage youth to take on responsibilities

and master challenges. When "healthy" opportunities to belong are not found in their environments, youth will create their own (often less healthy) alternatives (Roth, 2000; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2000, 70).

Sports and play can promote physical well-being, combat discrimination, build confidence, and a sense of security, as well as play an important role in the healing and rehabilitation process for all children affected by crisis, discrimination, and marginalization (McCarthy, 2007).

## **Who is doing this?**

A Ganar is a youth sports work-force development program run by Partners of the Americas. Started in 2005, it currently operates within 14 countries in the Caribbean and Latin America and has trained over 4,000 youth. They have seen great success over the past years, with roughly 70% of program participants graduating from secondary school, and 70% of those either finding employment, returning to study or starting a business within one year. They have also made gains in partnering with the private sector organizations to increase funding and training other organizations to implement their methodology.

Soccer without Borders uses soccer as a vehicle for positive change, providing underserved youth a toolkit to overcome obstacles to growth, inclusion, and personal success. They have grown greatly over the past 6 years and have been successful in growing a major following.

Love Futbol, a Guatemala based NGO, has focused their efforts on creating greater village cohesion by gaining buy in from communities to participate and contribute to their soccer field construction projects. By using their projects as a community rallying point, they have been able to bring together fractured communities that were once plagued with derision and competition.

# Taking the Pulse: Argentines frustrated with economy and government



**SARAH FERST**

## Economy

The Argentine economy is crumbling right before everyone's eyes, a fact most visible to any inhabitant or visitor to the country through its skyrocketing prices. Last month, for instance, the Buenos Aires subway fare jumped from \$1.10 pesos to \$2.50 pesos, more than doubling in one shot (there are about 4.5 pesos to the US dollar). Local businesses were also affected. The cost of breakfast in one central hostel went up from \$60 to \$75 pesos between February and April 2012, a rise of 25%. Meanwhile, restaurants have not been able to continually reprint menus to keep up with fluctuating prices and now hand-written new prices over whited out old ones, an amateur touch over otherwise professionally produced Cartas. There is simply no denying the country-wide increases of everything from basic food staples to luxury treats, yet the Argentine government is adamant that there is next to no inflation.

According to *The Economist*, practically no one believes the inflation figures announced by the Argentine government (about 10%). This is compounded by the fact that there are so many varying inflation rates floating around in the news. A financial services firm, known as State Street, for example, announced a 24.4% inflation rate with the cumulative rate since 2007 as 137%, whereas the government claims a cumulative rate of only 44% for the same time period (*The Economist*). A more trustworthy estimation comes from a survey of various sources conducted by the Torcuato di Tella University in Buenos Aires that concluded that the real inflation rate as of February 2012 is likely to be somewhere between 25% and 30%.

## Citizens on Government

The average Argentine is not pleased with the economy and the government's reaction to the global financial crisis. Many people are nervous and scared, remembering the shock of the last economic crash in 2001. Given the rough ten-year cycle of past economic crashes, many feel as though another crash is right around the corner.

In addition to ongoing financial strife, Argentines are also struggling with a number of political issues, such as the war over the Malvinas (Falkland) islands in 1982. Two decades later, the conflict is still present in

every day Buenos Aires. Not only does it remain a popular topic of news and conversation, but also the city is littered with anti-British graffiti, imploring the Anglo occupiers to leave the contentious island. Some think that one of the political groups spearheading the graffiti campaign, Quebracho, is being paid by the government to write these messages. Of course, this cannot be validated beyond hearsay and conjecture.

Disdain for the British is as Argentine as beef and yerba mate. Many Argentinian schools villainize the English in the retelling of the conflict, propagating a culture of agoraphobic dislike for the isle-nation. It is not an uncommon story for the English to become the subject of ridicule when traveling through Argentina, and it is therefore recommended for Brits to hide their nationality when asked.

## Big Brother

Propaganda is visible practically everywhere in Buenos Aires. Street photos of President Kirchner, known as Cristina, next to photos of Eva Peron, known as Evita, often compare these two women in an angelic light. Evita was known for helping the poor, and was loved by her countrymen in an overwhelming way. It seems as though Christina may be trying to project a similar image. Unfortunately, there still exists a strong anti-Peronist sentiment among Argentines and many worry that Christina is straying too far towards Evita's proletarian sympathies.

The government is controlling in everyday life, enough so that a new law has recently been ratified to restrict the amount of foreign books imported into the country. For every foreign book imported, a book written by an Argentine author must be exported. The government claims not restricting freedom of speech, but rather protecting its citizens from the over usage of lead ink in foreign print materials, a thinly veiled attempt to hide its protectionist activities.

All indicators seem to be pointing towards the same common thread; the economic and political climate in Argentina is becoming stormier with each rise in inflation and restrictive political legislation. The status quo in Buenos Aires is not sustainable and, if left unchecked, could mean a repeat of the 2001 crash.

"The government is controlling in everyday life, enough so that a new law has recently been ratified to restrict the amount of foreign books imported into the country"

"All indicators seem to be pointing towards the same common thread; the economic and political climate in Argentina is becoming stormier with each rise in inflation and restrictive political legislation. The status quo in Buenos Aires is not sustainable and, if left unchecked, could mean a repeat of the 2001 crash"

# Consequences of Climate Change in Central Asia

Unless climate change challenges are more fully and urgently addressed, current progress will be difficult to sustain, and the brunt of the impacts will be faced by the poor of Central Asia.



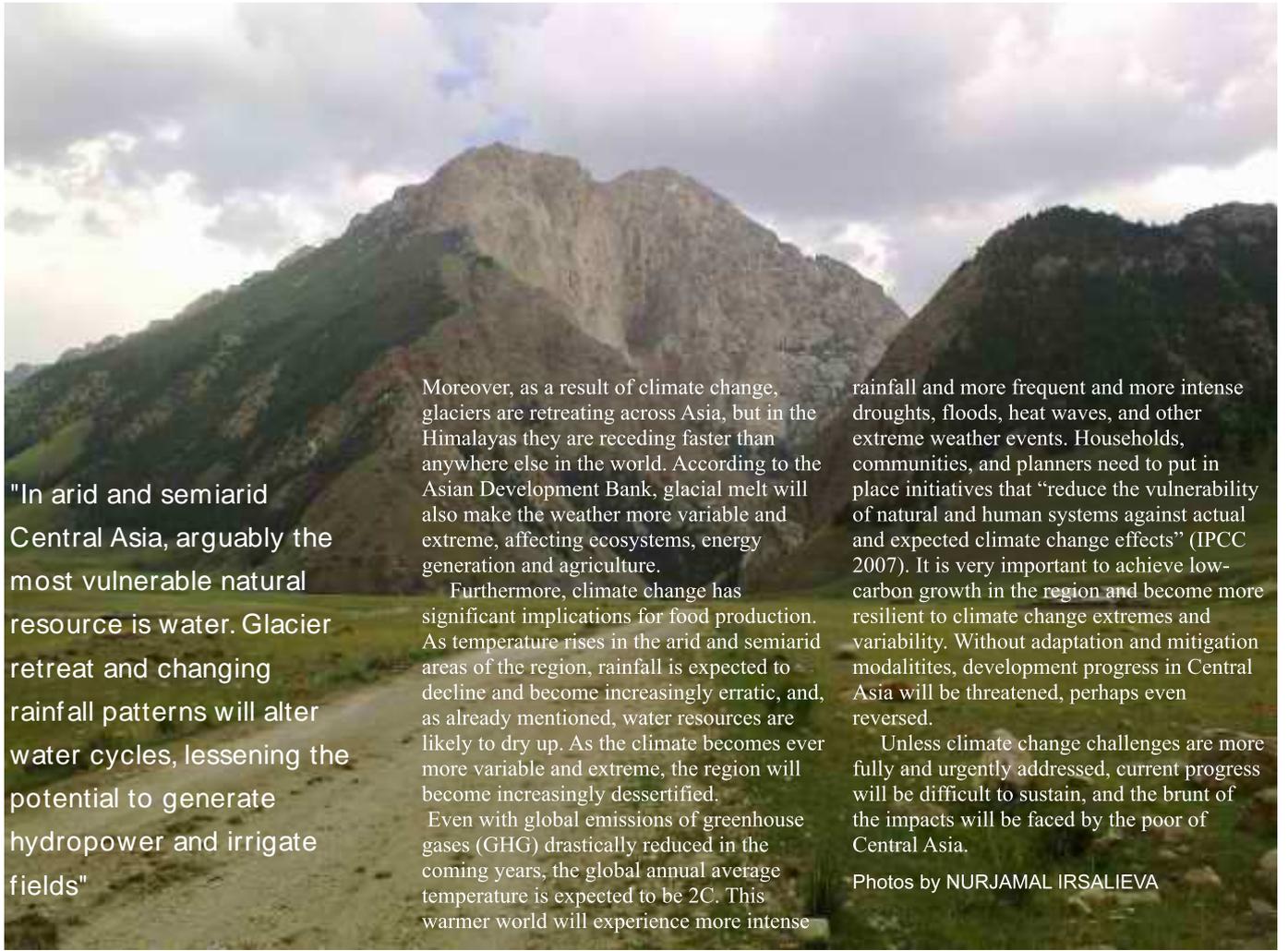
**MEERIM SHAKIROVA**  
GSDM Central Asia

"The region has lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions than more developed parts of the world, but this is changing because of economic growth fueled by excessive oil, gas, and mineral reverses"

The vastness of Central Asia is spectacularly diverse. It is incredibly rich in cultural heritage and natural resources with geographically breathtaking mountain passes, seemingly never-ending deserts and grasslands, and glacier-fed river basins: the Amu Darya, the Syr Darya and the Indus. However, this largely arid and semiarid region is at serious risk from climate change impacts, which threatens ecosystems as well as economies and infrastructure that depend on natural resources, especially the region's water supply. These changes could undermine the hard-won gains of recent decades, making it more difficult to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and improve the lives of many vulnerable communities. The region has lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions than more developed parts of the world, but this is changing because of economic growth fueled by excessive oil, gas, and mineral reverses. Central Asia is exposed to climate change mostly caused by greenhouse gases (GHG) produced elsewhere. Its culturally diverse population relies heavily on fragile land and water resources, and pumps out the region's river basins to the extreme for agriculture, for energy sources, and for production of goods

for trade. This intensive use, increased by numerous economic and sociopolitical issues, makes the region highly vulnerable to climate change.

There are many political implications to this as shortages are aggravating conflicts over transboundary water and energy resources. Moreover, many countries in Central Asia depend on glacial melt in the Tibetan Plateau for water flows for hydropower. The Energy Sector Coordinating Committee Meeting at Almaty estimates the capacity of the installed hydroelectric stations of Central Asia's rivers to be 4.037 megawatts (MW) in Tajikistan; 2.910 MW in the Kyrgyz Republic; 2.248 MW in Kazakhstan; and 1.420 MW in Uzbekistan (Saghit Ibatullin, 2009). Now climate change is making these flows more unpredictable, thus threatening downstream energy generation. At the same time, rising surface temperatures are also leading to increases in energy consumption, for instance, through greater use of air conditioning and increases in water pumping. In arid and semiarid Central Asia, arguably the most vulnerable natural resource is water. Glacier retreat and changing rainfall patterns will alter water cycles, lessening the potential to generate hydropower and irrigate fields.



"In arid and semiarid Central Asia, arguably the most vulnerable natural resource is water. Glacier retreat and changing rainfall patterns will alter water cycles, lessening the potential to generate hydropower and irrigate fields"

Moreover, as a result of climate change, glaciers are retreating across Asia, but in the Himalayas they are receding faster than anywhere else in the world. According to the Asian Development Bank, glacial melt will also make the weather more variable and extreme, affecting ecosystems, energy generation and agriculture.

Furthermore, climate change has significant implications for food production. As temperature rises in the arid and semiarid areas of the region, rainfall is expected to decline and become increasingly erratic, and, as already mentioned, water resources are likely to dry up. As the climate becomes ever more variable and extreme, the region will become increasingly desertified.

Even with global emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) drastically reduced in the coming years, the global annual average temperature is expected to be 2C. This warmer world will experience more intense

rainfall and more frequent and more intense droughts, floods, heat waves, and other extreme weather events. Households, communities, and planners need to put in place initiatives that "reduce the vulnerability of natural and human systems against actual and expected climate change effects" (IPCC 2007). It is very important to achieve low-carbon growth in the region and become more resilient to climate change extremes and variability. Without adaptation and mitigation modalities, development progress in Central Asia will be threatened, perhaps even reversed.

Unless climate change challenges are more fully and urgently addressed, current progress will be difficult to sustain, and the brunt of the impacts will be faced by the poor of Central Asia.

Photos by NURJAMAL IRSALIEVA

## Alternative Energy



### Mongolian Family Uses Solar Energy to Power Home

A family in Tarialan, Uvs Province, Mongolia, uses a solar panel to generate power for their ger, a traditional Mongolian tent. Photo: Eskinder Debebe/UN

## Yet another form of child abuse

# Child Marriages in South Asia



**SANDEEP SRIVASTAVA**  
GSDM Special Correspondent

Birth, marriage and death are three most important events in many people's lives. When birth and death are considered more or less choiceless, marriage, however, is considered a matter of choice.

Though it is considered as a moment of celebration and a milepost in one's life, when it is in the form of child marriage, it does not give real meaning for celebration. Child marriage is one of the problems that cripples social development in the developing world and still today an estimated 10 million girls are married every year before they reach 18 or before they become adult.

A child marriage, by popular definition, is imposition of a marriage partner upon a child, and while doing so, fundamental rights of the child is curtailed or severely compromised.

Usually, children subjected to marriage are not consulted for their decision and nor do they know about the serious implications of marriage. Child marriage affects different parts of the world differently and it has different causes and tradition attached in different parts of the world.

In South Asia, if a girl child is subjected to marriage at or soon after puberty, that is considered a child marriage. In many cases, spouses are older, sometimes even twice their age.

Whether a girl or boy is subjected to such a marriage, there is no doubt that it is obviously violation of human rights and basic child rights. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the right to full & free consent to marriage has been recognized. Consent

still today an  
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they become adult



cannot be considered as full and free until partner is immature and has critical physical, psychological, intellectual or emotional impact. Curtailing education opportunity or personal growth does not fall in full and free consent.

**Global Scenario**

Across the globe, the average age of marriage is rising but the progress is slow. There are still very high rates of child marriage in some sub-populations, such as in the Surkhet district of Nepal, where old traditions, customs, and moral codes are still in place. It appears that community level factors are influencing child

marriages. Child marriages are also fuelled by poverty, concerns about security and protection of girls, lack of education or distance to schooling facilities, gender discrimination, cultural traditions, and religious traditions. National level factors that influence child marriage rates include: the country's birth registration system (which provides proof of



age for girls); lack of an adequate legislative framework that can be enforced to address cases of child marriages; and whether customary or religious laws condone the practice.

Child marriage is generally more prevalent in jurisdictions that offer fewer protections for women and girls. While most countries legislate for a minimum legal age for marriage, this is often not enforced. Some countries continue to have legal age for marriage lower than in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The legal age for marriage is also higher for men than women in many countries. The rates of national birth registration are still low – just 51 per cent of children in

the developing world (excluding China) were registered at birth for the period 2000–2009.

**In South Asia**

*Nearly half of all girls (46%) marry before the age of 18 in South Asia, higher than any other region in the world.*

*In some South Asian countries and regions, however, the rates are much higher.*

Though the average age at first marriage is gradually increasing in South Asia, the rate of progress is slow. Social norms around gender and marriage, cultural traditions like the dowry, customary law condoning the practice, and a lack of access to educational opportunities are all factors

which influence the rates of child marriage across the region.

More than half the world's adolescents live in either South Asia or the East Asia and Pacific region and child marriage rates in South Asia have been closely linked with early pregnancies and

reproductive health implications.

In the last 20 years, infant/child mortality rates have fallen significantly in South Asia but are still higher than the global average. South Asia has the highest percentage of infants with low birth weight and underweight under- 5 year olds in the world, sometimes almost twice the global average (data 2005-2009).

Child marriage often means that girls are not able to attend school. The regional net attendance ratio for girls is 80% at primary school and 47% at secondary schools. Education is difficult to access in countries across the region (rates of girls attendance in school in Afghanistan, for example, are especially low). The

**Child Marriages in Figures**

An estimated 10 million girls are married every year before they reach 18 years.

1 in 3 girls in the developing world is estimated to be married before the age of 18 years.

1 in 7 girls is married before her 15th birthday and some child brides are as young as eight or nine.

Girls from poor families are nearly twice as likely to marry before 18 as girls from wealthier families.

Child marriage occurs around the world; 46% of girls under 18 are married in South Asia; 38% in sub-Saharan Africa; 21% in Latin America and the Caribbean; 18% in the Middle East and North Africa; and in some communities in Europe and North America too.

**Early Marriage in International Human Rights Conventions & Declarations**

Number of human rights conventions & declaration has been made in past which covered issues of age, consent, equality within marriage, and the personal and property rights of women. Few are as follows:

Article 16 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states: (1) Men and women of full age ... have the right to marry and found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. (2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending parties.

Similar provisions were included in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Article 1 of the 1956 Supplementary

Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery includes in the institutions and practices similar to slavery:

Article 1(c) Any institution or practice whereby: (i) A woman, without the right to refuse, is promised or given in marriage on payment of a consideration in money or in kind to her parents, guardian, family ...

Articles 1, 2, and 3 of the 1964 Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages state:

(1) No marriage shall be legally entered into without the full and free consent of both parties, such consent to be expressed by them in personas prescribed by law.

(2) States Parties to the present Convention shall specify a minimum age for marriage ("not less than 15 years" according to the nonbinding recommendation accompanying

this Convention). No marriage shall be legally entered into by any person under this age, except where a competent authority has granted a dispensation as to age, for serious reasons, in the interests of the intending spouses.

(3) All marriages shall be registered by the competent authority.

Article 16.1 of the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women prescribes equally for men and women:

(a) The same right to enter into marriage. (b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent.

Article 16.2 states: The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage.

minimum legal age for marriage for girls in the region varies with age 16 (Pakistan) to 20 (Nepal). In some countries (Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Bangladesh) the legal age for marriage is lower for girls than for boys.

While all countries have legislation providing for a marriageable age, implementation in practice is a struggle, due to factors such as ignorance of the law (including among law enforcement officials), the absence or lack of implementation of marriage registration requirements, gaps in the country's birth registration system, and inadequate punishment for breaking the law (or low rates of prosecutions even where there are legal penalties, such as in India,

Nepal, and Bangladesh). While all countries in the South Asia region are State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, implementation is varied. Only Bangladesh has acceded to the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages 1962. There are increasing numbers of child marriage programmes in South Asia, which address child marriage through legal reform efforts, educational programmes, cash incentive schemes, skills enhancement programmes and opportunities, among others.

**"Child marriages are also fuelled by poverty, concerns about security and protection of girls, lack of education or distance to schooling facilities, gender discrimination, cultural traditions, and religious traditions"**

## Wedlock can wait

A group of youngsters is leading a campaign against child marriages in Siddharth Nagar district in UP

**TARANUM MANJUL**  
SIDDHARTH NAGAR, UTTAR PRADESH

SHIV LAL is all of 22, but has been married for six years. That doesn't make him sound like a crusader against child marriages, but the youngster from Siddharth Nagar district in Uttar Pradesh will tell you why he qualifies.

"I was married when I was barely 16 years old. My mother used to be ill and my parents decided that we should have one more woman in the house. But because of this sudden responsibility, I had to drop out of school and start earning. I know the ill-effects of early marriage," says Shiv Lal. So when it was Shiv Lal's younger brother Shiv Sahai's turn to get married, Shiv Lal put his foot down. "My brother is only 17 now. I want him to study, earn and then get married at the right age," he says after successfully halting the wedding and winning his brother over to his side.

Now the two brothers and a few other youngsters are leading a campaign against child marriages in Siddharth Nagar, a district that records a high number of child marriages. According to the 2009-2010 District Level Health Survey (DLHS) and the National Family Health Sur-

vey (NFHS) Data, 66.9 per cent of boys in the district are married before 20, while 66.2 per cent girls marry before they turn 18.

Youngsters like Shiv Lal are now working as community peer outreach workers to persuade people not to get their sons and daughters married before they reach the officially permissible ages of 21 and 18.

Shiv Lal's younger brother works as a village peer for the Early Marriage and Early Pregnancy (EMEP) prevention project, run in Jogiya block in Siddharth Nagar by Shobhagath Environment Society (SES) and Mama Health Institute for Mother and Child, New Delhi. As a peer, Shiv Sahai not only stops child marriages, but in case the children are married, he persuades their parents for a late ganna, a ritual where the child bride goes to live with her husband.

"Early marriages come with a new set of responsibilities, for which we aren't ready emotionally or physically. Youngsters end up with health problems too as both the girl and the boy aren't ready for marriage," Shiv Sahai tells his friends.

Seventeen-year-old Rakesh Vishkarma of Badgon village had to fight with his parents to stop his marriage



Friends (above, left-right) Rakesh Vishkarma, Ramesh, Deepak and Sunil in Badgon village; (right) Durgawati, Geeta and Beena in Dohni village. All of them have stories either of how they had to fight with their parents to stop their marriages or how they put their foot down about not joining their 'spouses' till they completed their studies

two years ago. "The bhaiyya from SES would tell us about problems related to early marriages and told us that the legal age for marriage is 21. So when my parents tried to get me married, I protested. It was tough," Rakesh says of his fight.

He now says he won't marry before 24, till he completes his educa-

tion and starts earning. Together with village peer Suchit, Rakesh has been able to delay gannas of several village scenes.

Seventeen-year-old Deepak Yadav married three years ago, but hasn't brought his child bride home, thanks to the campaign. "Rakesh and Suchit bhaiyya told me that I have to study

and earn first. I also want my wife to complete her education and only then will we be husband and wife," says Deepak.

The girls too have managed to stand their ground and fight conventions. Fifteen-year-old Uma of village Badgon married when she was barely 10. The class X student has

decided she will wait for at least four more years before she goes off to her husband's home. "My father works in Saudi Arabia. After he saved enough money, he got me married. But now, I want to complete my studies and also want my husband to earn before I go to live with him," says Uma. Similarly, Geeta, another 15-year-old in Dohni village, has been working towards delaying her marriage. Her friends Durgawati (15) and Beena (14) were married early and they want to delay their ganna. "I want to at least complete my education and wait for another five years," says Beena.

BC Srivastava of SES, who has been working in the district for the last several years, says poverty, migration and lack of health services are the biggest reasons for the high child marriage and maternal mortality rate in Siddharth Nagar.

"There is a lack of strong political will on the issue. The administration does not do much to check these child marriages. Most of those who get married young have to drop out of school and are forced to migrate to other cities to earn. We are trying to retain them in schools as most of them are forced to drop out after they get married."

## Prema's story

Prema is a 16 year-old girl from a rural community in Bihar who wants to delay her marriage because she believes that her young body is not ready to bear children. "Our bodies, our internal organs are tender," she says. "If you put water in an unfired pitcher it will break." Prema doesn't believe she is mature enough to have a baby and wonders how she can possibly take care of in-laws too if she marries before 18.

Prema knows many girls who were married young. She describes their life as 'hell'. She recounts the story of one friend who was married at just 12 years-old. She knows that her friend is unhappy; she has become angry and aggressive towards friends and her relatives.

Prema participates in a local community programme run by Pathfinder International that empowers young people – both boys and girls – to mobilise and take the lead in efforts to stop child marriage. Prema says that it is the responsibility of her and fellow young people to stop child marriage, as well as parents. She believes that if young people spread the message among each other about the harm that child marriage can cause, they will never marry their children young: "We must first educate our generation so that we can lead the next generation." She claims the local authorities do little to stop child marriage – "but they should", she concludes.

*\*To protect Prema's identity her name has been changed for the purposes of this story.*

Media coverage such as this one in India has helped raise awareness and reduce child marriage incidents



# GIRLS NOT BRIDES

The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage

Girls Not Bride was Launched in September 2011 in New York, and is a global partnership of over 70 organisations working to end child marriage at the grassroots, national and global levels. Members of Girls Not Brides have joined together to accelerate efforts to prevent child marriages and to support girls who are or have been married.

Girls Not Brides aims to maximise the collective impact of its members across the world by supporting them to learn from each other's experiences and successes; to raise awareness of the harmful impact of child marriage through encouraging open and informed discussion at the local, national and international levels; and to mobilise policy, financial and other support to end child marriage.

The organization was initiated by The Elders as part of their effort to foster gender equality worldwide. Brought together by Nelson Mandela, The Elders is a group of independent global leaders who work

together to promote peace and human rights. Chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the group includes the Finnish Nobel Peace Laureate Martti Ahtisaari, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Ela Bhatt, Lakhdar Brahimi, Gro Brundtland, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Jimmy Carter, Graça Machel and Mary Robinson.

The first regional meeting of Girls Not Brides was held in New Delhi from 9 to 10 February 2012. It brought together 70 women and men from a range of grassroots, national and international organisations working to end child marriage across South



Asia. Participants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka came together to share experiences, ideas and information, and to discuss the potential for working together to end child marriage in the region.

Child marriage affects nearly half of all girls (46 per cent) in South Asia. The participants, including programme implementers, experts and advocates, shared the belief that child marriage can and should be ended in South Asia. They brought a wealth of expertise and experience, some participating organisations had been working to end child marriage for over 20 years.

## How many more fish in the sea?



Photo: Giles Revell

Seafood is the primary source of protein for more than one billion people - can they live without it?

Worldwide, 90 per cent of large predatory fish stocks are now gone due to overfishing.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that 85 per cent of fish stocks are "overexploited, depleted, or recovering from depletion".

Speaking on the occasion of International World Biodiversity Day on May 22, UN chief Ban Ki-Moon warned that over-consumption and rampant pollution was threatening the world's oceans and marine biodiversity.

"Commercial over-exploitation of the world's fish stocks is severe," he said. "Many species have been hunted to fractions of their original populations. More than half of global fisheries are exhausted, and a further third are depleted."

## Drink your milk: waste is equal to gas emissions from 20,000 cars



Waste milk creates a carbon footprint equivalent to thousands of car exhausts, according to a study that highlights the environmental costs of inefficient farming and the aggressive marketing of supermarket food.

Scientists have calculated that the 360,000 tonnes of waste milk that is poured down British drains each year creates greenhouse gases equivalent to 100,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide, which is about the same as that emitted in a year by 20,000 cars.

Figures show that 99 per cent of milk that is thrown away by British consumers is designated as "avoidable waste". Almost half of this waste is a result of too much being served, with the rest discarded for being sour or past its sell-by date.

The scientists also found that if the developed world cut its poultry consumption to Japanese levels – about half of those in the West – the cut in global greenhouse gas emissions would be equivalent to taking about 10 million cars off the road permanently.

## 53 arrested in Sri Lanka in anti-mosquito searches



COLOMBO: Police arrested 53 people for failing to eliminate stagnant water and other mosquito breeding grounds as Sri Lanka tries to prevent dengue fever, which has infected thousands already this year.

Police, army and health officers searched 11,500 houses in the capital Colombo over seven hours, police spokesman Ajith Rohana said. Those arrested for not cleaning up their surrounding environment face fines and up to six months in jail.

He said this is the first time police made such a large number of arrests from Colombo for failing to clean mosquito breeding places.

Dengue fever has killed 74 people this year and infected 15,000. Health officials say it has increased because residents have become more careless about cleaning their properties and eliminating mosquito breeding grounds.



## Mobile phone boom in developing world could boost e-learning



In Kenya, mobile phones have become an integral part of cash transfer schemes, enabling poor people in urban areas to buy food. In remote rural areas of Peru, computers provided by the Euro-Solar programme are fuelling an appetite for learning among children. And the senior US political adviser Alec Ross – acknowledging the

galvanising influence of social media on the Arab spring – has described the internet as "the Che Guevara of the 21st century".

If the global spread of technology can do all this, what else might it achieve? Quite a lot, according to the authors of a report prepared by the GSMA mobile industry body and published to coincide with last week's eLearning Africa conference in Cotonou, Benin.

Shaping the future – realising the potential of informal learning through mobile, explores mobile technology's potential to improve access to education for young people in developing countries. The study looks at Ghana, Morocco, Uganda and Maharashtra, in India, identifying young people's aspirations and priorities, exploring the education and employment challenges they face, and scrutinising their mobile phone use. The endgame is to establish how the mobile industry and international development

community can pool their expertise to create m-learning services that improve teaching and learning, and therefore promote long-term development.

"It's a big step in the right direction in terms of putting the possibilities in front of the GSMA's members and raising awareness of the commercial and business opportunities education represents in the developing world," says John Traxler, professor of m-learning at the University of Wolverhampton in the UK. "Clearly it's a small sample, covering only four countries, so it's indicative rather than representative. But if the networks get the message, it's a valuable piece of work. Networks don't need to hear it's virtuous, they need to hear it's profitable – just enough to encourage them to get out there and do something."

Mobile phones are increasingly ubiquitous in poor countries, which now account for four in every five connections worldwide. As Elsie Kanza, of the World Economic Forum, recently said: "Regardless of social class, almost everyone [in Africa] has a mobile phone, or two or three. Even in remote villages, mobile phones have replaced the bicycle or radio as prized assets."

# After the Revolution Back to the Kitchen



**MANOJ BHUSAL**  
GSDM, Editor-in-Chief

It hasn't yet been 2 years since the world for the first time saw the magical protests in the Arab world where hundreds of thousands of women, along with their male counterparts, took to the streets and chanted slogans for freedom and democracy. Women's activism in the Arab world is not a new phenomenon. For instance, in 1919, a number of veiled women in Egypt took to the streets against British rule, demanding independence. However, the peculiarity of the latest movement was that the global media was constantly present when the women, once again, shunned conservative norms and veils of superstition and camped in Tahrir Square, protested in Sana'a and hoisted their fists in the streets of Tunis.

We saw that almost on real times on our TV screens and social networking sites. We saw the revolutions taking place out there. We saw the dictators being toppled and killed and exiled. We praised the brevity and the courage of the revolutionaries. We assumed the dark days of the Arab World were over. We assumed there is nothing but freedom and equality and democracy for all, for men and women, for the rich and the poor, equally, absolutely.

We extended our moral support and sympathy. Some revolutionary leaders instantly became global celebrities, one of them, Tawakel Karman, the Yemeni activist, even received the Nobel Peace Prize.

When the heydays of the revolutions have subdued, that promising, bright and mesmerizing picture of the Arab world has started to fade. Recent media reports claim that, in Egypt, women have been repeatedly harassed in political rallies and, reportedly, have been asked by men to 'go back to their kitchen and feed their babies' as the revolution was over and everyday politics isn't women's affairs. Women's representation was zero on the committee that drafted Egypt's transitional constitutional declaration.

Contrary to popular expectations outside the Arab World, the Islamist fundamentalist and semi-fundamentalists dominate the

electorates in the post-revolutionary Arab states. The Tunisian Islamist party, Ennahda, which won 89 seats in the 217 seat assembly, called for the Shariah law to be recognized as the principle source of legislation. The Islamist Muslim Brotherhood won presidential and parliamentary elections in Egypt and the 28% of seats went to the more extreme Salafi parties. After their victory, some media reports claim, women in more rural areas of Egypt were punished for the way they dress and talk.

Women rights activists in Egypt fear that the status of women is going to deteriorate than before. 'I was shocked the fundamentalists took over and I didn't foresee a male gender constitution. That's not what I went to Tahrir Square for,' an Egyptian activist writes on an internet forum.

Some argue that the Arab Spring was for democracy and political freedom, not specifically for women's rights, and political democracy is not enough to abolish social conservatism and patriarchy. So they believe another revolution is needed in order to strengthen women's rights in the Arab World.

The revolutions seem to be hijacked by the fundamentalists, but there are people who still see room for optimism. Though political rights have been compromised, legal rights have advanced and dictators have been overthrown. Some court verdicts have been encouraging, and the level of awareness among women seems to have unprecedentedly heightened. But then again, the rise of the fundamentalists has been unprecedented and scary too.

The way doesn't look very smooth, but one thing is sure: the desire for freedom is abundant, so abundant that soon in the future we might see another series of revolutions sweeping throughout the Arab world, once again led by women, but this time for women. (Editor can be reached at [manoj.bhusal@silcreation.org](mailto:manoj.bhusal@silcreation.org))



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