



## Graduation 2019

# 2019



The United Nations University Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme (UNU-GEST) graduated its 12th cohort on 21 May 2019. 23 fellows from 13 countries were awarded a post-graduate diploma in international gender studies from the University of Iceland.



Ms. Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, the patron of UNU-GEST, presented this year's Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Award to Najla'a Attaallah from Gaza, Palestine for her final assignment: 'Towards the Implementation of Effective Gender Mainstreaming in UNRWA Infrastructure Projects'.

This year, a high number of final assignments were exceptionally good, showing innovation, nuanced understanding of social complexities and the use

of transformative approaches to development and the advancement of gender equality. Six final assignments received an honorary mention; they were authored by Irma Šiljak, Lensa Biyena Geleta, Rita Berisha, Hassan Waddimba, Sanja Dojkić and Valens Mpezu.



Hassan Waddimba spoke at the graduation ceremony on behalf of the 12th cohort and described the future potential impact of the 23 final assignments as follows:

*We are committed to engaging in policy advocacy and education to strengthen institutions to combat sexual and intimate partner violence in Ghana, Malawi, and Mozambique; and to increase access to specialized services for survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Nigeria. We are determined to engage community structures in Malawi to bring an end to child marriage; and demand for gender responsive programming in the criminal justice systems of Mozambique, Palestine, and Serbia. We want to give a voice to the forgotten contribution of women in the pre-war social movements of Kosovo. We have explored avenues for expanding opportunities and wealth for women in agriculture in Ghana, and Kenya; and want to empower female youth with disabilities in Uganda to overcome multiple marginalizations. It is in our understanding that we cannot achieve the change we want without women in power. We therefore want to increase political participation of women in Afghanistan and Uganda. And in Ethiopia, we will seek to empower women in politics, to turn their numbers into gender responsive legislations and public policies.*

Further information about the final assignments can be found [here](#).

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## GEST Director Among the World's Most Influential People in Gender Policy

According to a new list from Apolitical, a peer-to-peer learning and policy platform for governments and other public bodies, **Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir**, the Director of the UNU-GEST Programme and RIKK – Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference, is among the world's 100 most influential people in gender policy in 2019. The list features politicians, civil servants, academics and activists, such as Ruth Bader-Ginsburg, Ranjana Kumari, Michelle Bachelet, Margot Wallström, Winnie Byanyima, Michelle Obama, and Åsa Regnér.



In a newspaper interview following the publication of Apolitical's list, Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir spoke about the GEST programme, its mission, projects, and alumni. She stated that to reach gender equality a transnational and multi-sectorial approach is needed.

Further information:

[Apolitical](#)

[Fréttablaðið](#)

## UNU-GEST Fellows Lecture Tour Around Iceland



During the last two months of the programme, UNU-GEST fellows traveled around Iceland and shared their experiences within the field of gender equality. The visits were successful and hopefully UNU-GEST fellows will continue to have the opportunity to visit both secondary schools as well as partner institutes, both in Reykjavík and in the countryside.

Sanja Dojkic, Rayma Raja and Issiko Aramadhan, visited the secondary school Fjölbrautarskólinn við Ármúla (FÁ) in Reykjavík where they met with students, ages 16-19, who are currently enrolled in gender studies.

Gabriel Ogbeyemi, Najla'a Atallah and Imeldina Matimbe Rego visited the secondary school Kvennaskólinn í Reykjavík. The lecture was open to all students in the school and was well attended. Najla'a also visited Ingunnarskóli, where she met students in 9th and 10th grade who were participating in an Erasmus exchange programme focusing on refugees.



UNU-GEST fellows visited Akureyri for the first time. Lensa Geleta and Valens Mphezu gave a lecture at the University of Akureyri, in partnership with the Directorate of Equality. The lecture was well received. They also briefed the students in the secondary school Menntaskólinn á Akureyri about gender in the context of Ethiopia and Malawi. The presentation was open to both students and teachers.

The Multi-Cultural Information Centre in Ísafjörður and the University Centre in Ísafjörður received UNU-GEST fellows Irma Šiljak and Hassan Waddimba. Irma and Hassan shared their experiences from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Uganda at the University Centre and at the secondary school Menntaskólinn á Ísafirði (MÍ).



## Gender, Labour and Migration

In 2019 a new module, Gender, Labour and Migration, was added to the UNU-GEST curriculum. The module was elective with 11 students enrolled. The students were introduced to how migration intersects with labour and gender by looking at international agreements and treaties, national laws and policies, and local responses to migration. Furthermore, students learned how global economic imbalances, conflict and environmental degradation can lead to migration and different impacts on men and women. Concepts and theories of comparative law affecting gender and labour were discussed.

Topics included: International, national, and local migration; international economics; immigration law; globalism; human trafficking; economic-based migration; enforcement; the gendered labour market; and gender and work.



### EPIC technical workshop (2-3 April 2019)

The fellows enrolled in the module Gender, Labour and Migration participated in a two day technical meeting of the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) on promoting better indicators, statistics, data and policies to reduce the gender pay gap. The technical meeting was attended by 70-80 international and local specialists with an overall aim of identifying how pay gaps between women and men can be analysed in broader contexts of inequality, including looking at women's limited access to paid employment (in emerging and low income countries) and the unequal division of unpaid work within households (in all economic contexts). The EPIC technical workshop was hosted by the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Social Affairs of Iceland in partnership with the Nordic Council of Ministers and the International Labour Organization.

### Future of Work (5 April 2019)

As a part of the module Gender, Labour and Migration, the fellows attended the second day of the conference Future of Work, hosted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Nordic Council of Ministers in Harpa, Reykjavík. The second day of the conference included presentations about gender equality at work and economic growth and addressed the importance of inclusive labour market policies, decent working conditions and job quality and was concluded by a session in which the measures taken to achieve equal pay were discussed. The contribution of a new generation of policies and legislation in the Nordic countries was discussed, as well as their experiences in attempting to translate their commitments to actual changes on the ground.



## Field Trip with a Focus on the Environment and Climate Change

During the first week of May, as a part of the module Gender, Environment, and Climate Change, the UNU-GEST fellows participated in the annual field visit to the southeast of Iceland. The module examines the role of gender in sustainable development, environment and natural resource management and focuses on the transformative potential of gender equality to advance environmental sustainability and on gender perspectives with respect to resilience, vulnerability, mitigation and adaptation to global environmental change.



The fellows attended presentations at Nýheimar knowledge centre by Kristín Hermannsdóttir, a meteorologist and the director of the South East Iceland Nature Research Center; glaciologist Snævarr Guðmundsson; and Hulda Laxdal Hauksdóttir, project manager for ADVENT. They furthermore visited the Vatnajökull visitor centre in Höfn, where Steinunn Hödd Harðardóttir, assistant park manager, shared with the fellows how the Vatnajökull National Park contributes to knowledge sharing of the effects of climate change. The presentations focused on the effects of climate change on the area, which the fellows observed on multiple stops during the field trip.



On the second day of the trip, the fellows hiked with Sigurður Ragnarsson, a geologist and mountain and glacier guide from the area, to the glaciers Fláajökull and Heinabergsjökull, two glaciers that are rapidly retreating. The fellows also visited the farm Hoffell, located by glacier Hoffellsjökull, where they were introduced to the history and nature of the area.

## Other Educational Field Trips and Excursions

The fellows attended a number of other field visits over the course of the semester. The visits provide the fellows with geographical and situational context of Icelandic society.

As part of the module on gender, health and education, visits were made to Bjarkarhlíð, a centre for survivors of violence, and the National University Hospital's Emergency Clinic.

The fellows also visited Samtökin 78, an NGO dedicated to the rights and interests of LGBTQI+ people in Iceland, Kvinnasögusafn, the Women's history archives, Sorpa recycling center, and Stígamót, an education and counselling centre for survivors of sexual abuse and violence.

The fellows also enjoyed some sightseeing on a trip to the so-called Golden Circle where they saw and experienced some of the best known tourist and geographical destinations of Iceland: Gullfoss waterfall, the Geysir hot-spring area and Þingvellir. On the trip the fellows also made a stop at Friðheimar farm where tomatoes and cucumbers are grown in greenhouses using geothermal energy.

## A Meeting at the Presidential Residence

At the beginning of April the 2019 cohort of the UNU-GEST programme had the honour of being received by the President of Iceland, Mr. Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, at the presidential residence Bessastaðir. The president opened the event with a welcoming speech after which three fellows spoke. Gabriel Oladipupo Ogbeyemi, from Nigeria, spoke of the purpose of the GEST programme and the diversity of expertise present in the 2019 cohort. Next to speak was Suhaila Mubariz Qaderi, from Afghanistan. Suhaila related her main reasons for joining the GEST programme; inequality in many areas of society despite full equality by law, and in particular the paucity of women in positions of power. She noted that when women hold positions of leadership and participate equally with men in policy and decision making, equality in many other aspects of life will follow. Finally, Rita Berisha, from Kosovo, gave an example of the final assignments fellows are currently working on by describing her research into the roles and largely hidden history of women in ethnic Albanians' protest and human rights movements during the latter half of the 20th century, giving those present a glimpse into the history of Kosovo.



## Introduction to the Icelandic Parliament and the Supreme Court



In March, as a co-curricular activity, the GEST fellows visited the National Parliament of Iceland (Alþingi). The fellows were led around the new and old parliament buildings where Alþingi's history was presented through paintings and art installations. There, the fellows were acquainted with the first woman in Alþingi, Iceland's first and only female president and Iceland's first female prime minister. Furthermore, the fellows were briefed about the general composition of men versus women in the parliament, especially across different political parties. After the tour, former Minister for Social Affairs and Equality Mr. Þorsteinn Víglundsson, met the fellows and discussed the Icelandic legislations related to gender equality with them.

The UNU-GEST fellows visited the Supreme Court of Iceland as an extra-curricular activity to the module Gender, Violence and Security. The group was briefed about the Icelandic judicial system, the history of the Supreme Court of Iceland and the recent reform of the judicial system. Furthermore, they were introduced to the history of the Supreme Court building, its architecture and art.



## NORA 2019 Conference: Border Regimes, Territorial Discourse & Feminist Politics

The NORA conference 2019, was co-hosted by UNU-GEST, RIKK - Institute for gender, equality and difference, and EDDA center of excellence. The conference focused on critical feminist cross-disciplinary research and activities relying on contemporary and/or historical perspectives as well as the theme of material and symbolic



borders in a period of nationalist revival, putting forward questions on the return to territoriality; the construction of new political, cultural and social boundaries; the shaping of border regimes gendering relations; the boundaries affecting work for social justice and equality as well as intersectional, gender, queer and feminist research, and how feminist resistance can be organized against paternalistic modes that reinstate and reinforce relations of inequality.



## First ReNEW Summer School: Nordic Trends in Gender Studies

ReNEW (Reimagining Norden in an Evolving World) is a research hub established in 2018 to enhance cooperation to develop new and path-breaking excellence in research about the Nordic region. One of ReNEW's activities during the five-year duration of the project is to organize annual summer schools. UNU-GEST hosted the first ReNEW summer school in May 2019, in collaboration with EDDA Research Center, the Icelandic ReNEW project leader. Fourteen students from Sweden, Finland, Poland, Denmark and Iceland attended the ReNEW Summer School 2019 at the University of Iceland. The overall topic of the summer school was Nordic trends in gender studies and the main target group were PhD students and advanced MA students. Experts within the field introduced students to four separate but interlinked pillars of current Nordic gender research: Intersectionality, migration and labour markets, post-colonialism, as well as trans issues and queer theory. The summer school programme concluded with students attending the NORA Conference: Border Regimes, Territorial Discourses and Feminist Politics.

## Opening the (Gender) Blinds: Conference on Gender and Substance Use

UNU-GEST in partnership with RIKK, the Root and the Gender Equality Agency of Iceland hosted a conference on Gender and Substance Use: Opening the (Gender) Blinds, Towards an Inclusive Gender-Based View of Trauma and Addiction. Until recently, the role and centrality of gender in relation to addiction has been largely under-theorised and overlooked, especially in dominant biomedical and criminal justice models. There is, however, growing recognition of the need to increase awareness and expand the knowledge base of gender issues in studies of addiction, trauma, and treatment.



Further information:  
[NORA Conference](#)  
[Opening the \(Gender\) Blinds](#)

## Teaching Gender to Youth in Malawi

In April, in collaboration with the Icelandic Embassy in Malawi, UNU-GEST implemented a short training course on Teaching Gender to Youth in Mangochi, Malawi. Over 50 participants attended the training and the group included teaching students, teachers and education administrators. Icelandic teachers Kristín Ragnarsdóttir and Þórður Kristinsson led the five day course that was carried out in cooperation with the District Education Manager (DEM) Office in Mangochi, under the Iceland funded Mangochi Basic Service Programme (MBSP II).

The goal of Teaching Gender to Youth is to support women and promote gender equality in Malawi. The course tackles several key aspects of the introduction of gender studies at elementary and high school levels, from generating political and institutional will to inaugurate the programs, to curriculum development, teaching and student organizing. Since 2013, 20 fellows from Malawi have graduated from the UNU-GEST programme. *Teaching Gender to Youth* attests to the continued importance of the programme's cooperation with Malawi. UNU-GEST plans to expand the implementation of this course to other countries, drawing on the experience gained in Malawi.



## Gender and Climate Change in Uganda



In June, UNU-GEST in partnership with the Ugandan Government; Climate Change Department and Makerere University with the support of the Icelandic Foreign Ministry, conducted short training course of Gender and Climate Change in Mbale town, Uganda. The training was attended by 30 specialists from Karamoja region, Bududa and Mbale representing different sectors within district local governments, and representatives of CSOs. The training was led

by the Course Development Team consisting of Beatrice Mukasa from Makerere University, Lawrence Aribo and Bob Natifu from Uganda Meteorology Authority and Uganda Climate Change Department at the Ministry of Water and Environment and Maria Nandago, UNU-GEST coordinator. Gender and Climate Change bridges the gap between the acknowledgement that climate change has gender specific-effects and impacts and the importance of adopting a gender approach to finding solutions to the causes and effects of climate change. The short training course of Gender and Climate Change builds on the curriculum and training initiated, developed and piloted in partnership with the UNU-GEST Programme at the University of Iceland, and the School of Women and Gender Studies at Makerere University in Kampala in 2012-2013.



## RIKK &amp; UNU-GEST Spring Term Lecture Series 2019



## ▶ Noon Lecture Series

The National Museum's Lecture Hall at 12:00-13:00

As in previous years, GEST collaborated with RIKK in hosting a lecture series at the National Museum of Iceland during the spring semester, from January to May. The lectures were seven in total and addressed a broad range of topics within the theme of gender, health and trauma.

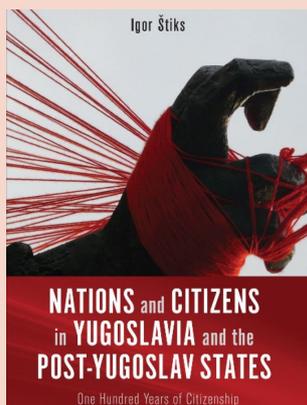
Edda Björk Þórðardóttir, Postdoctoral Researcher, Faculty of Medicine, University of Iceland spoke about trauma and its health-related effects; Henri Myrntinen, PhD in Gender Studies

talked about the benefits and risks of integrating masculinities and LGBTIQ perspectives into women, peace and security agenda; Zilka Spahić Šiljak, PhD in Gender Studies, gave a talk entitled Victim or Survivor? Choosing Identity and Being Acknowledged after Wartime Sexual Violence; Marsha Henry, the Interim Director of the Centre for Women, Peace and Security and Associate Professor in the Department of Gender Studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science, presented her reflections on gender and transformative wellbeing in postconflict contexts in Liberia and Bosnia and Herzegovina; Nanna Hlín Halldórsdóttir, PhD in Philosophy talked about health, neoliberalism and the individualisation of responsibility; Dagný Kristjánsdóttir, Professor in Icelandic Contemporary Literature, presented on children in pain in the works of Steinunn Sigurðardóttir; Ásdís Björk Ásgeirsdóttir, Associate Professor in Psychology and Rannveig Sigurvinsdóttir, Assistant Professor in Psychology, discussed trauma and mental health in a social context in their talk; and Gunnþórunn Guðmundsdóttir, Professor in Literature spoke about inheriting memories in a lecture on trauma in biographical writing.



## Citizenship and Conflicts in a Globalized World: From States to Streets

On 4-6 July Professor Igor Štikš conducted a masterclass on Citizenship and Conflicts in a Globalized World: From States to Streets. The masterclass was organized in collaboration between UNU-GEST, the Faculty of Media and Communications in Belgrade and the Center for Comparative Conflict Studies Belgrade. In the masterclass, professor Štikš addressed some of the questions about citizenship: What defines citizenship? Is it the idea of membership, common identity and participation only? Or, can exclusion, conflicts, wars, and our perception and construction of enemies have an influence on how we perceive ourselves as citizens? What happens when we cannot agree about the nature and institutions of our political community? What happens when we descend on the streets and confront the legal 'owners' of violence?



The masterclass was dedicated to general theories of citizenship, the struggles over citizens' rights, political conflicts, and social inequalities. After examining legal and political uses and misuses of citizenship related to status and rights of individuals, the masterclass distinguished further between active and activist citizenship and how citizens can shape their political communities and respond to global challenges. The case of the Balkans—and especially of Yugoslavia and the post-Yugoslav states—offers a valuable insight into the fine mechanics and repeating glitches of modern politics, applicable to multinational states in the European Union and beyond.

The masterclass took place at the University of Iceland, and was well attended.

## Annual Meeting of the Nordic Women Mediators

On 9-10 May 2019 more than 50 members of the Nordic Women Mediators (NWM) network convened in Oslo for a two-day annual meeting. In addition to the NWM members, seven specialists from Afghanistan, Libya and Yemen were invited to provide insights into the status of women's engagement and influence in the peace processes in their respective countries. UNU-GEST is an operational partner of the Nordic Women Mediators in Iceland.



The mission of the NWM is to work for the inclusion and meaningful participation of women in peace and mediation processes. The annual meeting in Oslo provided a good opportunity for the NWM members and the invitees to enhance knowledge, exchange experiences and explore different ways for strengthening women's involvement in the peace processes in Afghanistan, Libya and Yemen. A direct outcome of the annual meeting is the establishment of working groups of NWM experts that will suggest follow-up activities in close collaboration with women activists.

Nordic Women Mediators (NWM) is a network of women from the five Nordic countries who have professional expertise relevant to conflict mediation, peacebuilding and negotiations. The network was established in 2015 and holds annual meetings to discuss relevant issues and exchange experiences. The NWM annual meeting in 2019 was organized by the Norwegian MFA, NOREF and PRIO.

## CSW63: Women at the Table!



As the operational partner of the Nordic Women Mediator Network in Iceland, UNU-GEST co-hosted the CSW63 side event: Women at the Table! Transformative Change - Women Shaping the Agenda of Peace, Transitional Justice and Political Agreements. The side event was supported by the Office of the Icelandic Prime Minister and the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Panelists included women from Iceland, Northern Ireland, Kosovo and DRC. Participants shared best practices and lessons on how to ensure the meaningful participation of women in shaping agendas of peace, transitional justice and political agreements. The event was moderated by Dr. Sarah Taylor.

## Conference on Men and Masculinities in Mozambique

In February UNU-GEST staff members Anna Guðrún Aradóttir and Thomas Brorsen Smidt visited Mozambique where they attended the conference, Men, Masculinities and Gender Equality in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean: Inter-regional dialogues. The conference was organised by UNESCO and HOPEM. At the conference, Thomas Brorsen Smidt presented the experiences of UNU-GEST in teaching masculinity studies to men from all over the world and argued for the continued importance of facilitating South-South collaborations on gender equality as part of the global effort to engage men and boys.

