

GRÓ·GEST 2021

YEAR IN REVIEW



GEST 2021 cohort at Breiðamerkurfjara

SEASON'S GREETINGS

The staff of GRÓ GEST, the Gender Equality Studies and Training programme at the University of Iceland, sends their best holiday greetings to the programme alumni, partners, and collaborators. We wish you joy, peace, and good health for this festive season.

In the midst of the global pandemic, we have reached the end of 2021, GEST programme's second year as part of GRÓ Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainable Use of Natural Resources and Societal Change. We are grateful for our partners' and fellows' support, flexibility and adaptability, enabling the GEST programme to operate despite challenges caused by the pandemic. We have continued to learn and we remain empowered to work with our partners and alumni in advancing gender equality world wide.

Happy New Year!



The GEST Academic Programme During COVID-19



It was a great pleasure for the GEST team to welcome the 2021 cohort to Iceland in August. While obtaining visas and travelling to Iceland during the global pandemic was a struggle for almost all fellows, 20 enthusiastic gender experts managed to arrive to Iceland safely to attend the GRÓ GEST postgraduate diploma programme. As the programme was postponed due to the pandemic, the GEST fellows of 2021 were welcomed with long sunny days, rather than short winter days, like previous cohorts who arrived in January. The first few weeks were busy for the fellows with quarantine and adjusting to Reykjavík's weather, but eventually, everyone got to know each other, the programme, the campus and the city.



GEST 2021 cohort at Austurvöllur, Reykjavík Centre



GEST 2021 cohort in front of the Prime Minister's Office

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



GEST 2021 cohort with the Prime Minister, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, at Harpa.

Having arrived in August, the 2021 cohort went on a short field trip around the south part of Iceland in early September, while the days were still (relatively) long and the weather was good. The cohort visited some popular sites, and got familiar with the impact of climate change in Iceland. The fellows visited two glaciers, Breiðamerkurjökull and Sólheimajökull, which both have shrunk dramatically during the last decades. This visit was a good preparation for one of the GEST's programme's six academic modules: Gender, Environment and Climate Change.



The GEST fellows at Sólheimajökull glacier



GEST 2021 cohort at Gljúfrabúi waterfall



The GEST 2021 fellows at Reynisfjara, black beach



The GEST 2021 fellows at Breiðamerkurjón, glacier lagoon

The 2021 Graduation

GRÓ GEST programme's graduation took place on 10 December 2021, where 20 fellows were celebrated and awarded a postgraduate diploma in International Gender Studies from the University of Iceland. The fellows come from 15 countries: China, Egypt, Kenya, India, Iraq (Kurdistan), Malawi, Mexico, Mongolia, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Palestine (West Bank), Russia (Arctic), Sri Lanka and Uganda. The group consists of experts working in governments, academia, research, civil societies and non-governmental organisations.

Throughout the semester, the fellows have completed six interdisciplinary modules: Theories and Concepts of Gender; Gender and Development; Gender, Violence and Security; Gender, Labour and Migration; Gender, Environment and Climate Change; and the Final Assignment. A number of international and Icelandic scholars have contributed to the programme.

It was GEST 13th graduation, and second graduation of GEST as a GRÓ Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change. The 20 fellows joined the previously graduated 152 GEST fellows, in an expanding GEST alumni network.

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

Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir, Director of GRÓ GEST, opened the graduation ceremony following a musical performance by *A Band Called Eva*. Ms. Dórdís Kolbrún R. Gylfadóttir, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Dr. Jón Atli Benediktsson, Rector of the University of Iceland shared their remarks, congratulating the 2021 fellows. Newly graduated fellow, Bernah Namatovu, addressed the guests and shared her reflections on the programme.



GEST 2021 cohort with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Rector of University of Iceland, Director of GRÓ, Director of GEST and Chair of GRÓ Board.



GEST 2021 fellow Bernah Namatovu addressed the guests and her fellow graduates



Fellow, Jessy Gondwe, receives a GEST postgraduate diploma. From left: Nína Björk Jónsdóttir, Ólöf Garðarsdóttir, Jón Atli Benediktsson, Guðrún Eysteinsdóttir (GEST Operational Manager) and Jessy Gondwe.

Recipients of the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir Award



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

The Vigdís Finnbogadóttir award, was presented for the best final assignment. Ms. Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, the matron of the programme, sent her best wishes to the new graduates, but was not available to attend the ceremony.

All final assignments must address gender issues that are of concern in the fellow's home country. In order to be considered for the Vigdís Finnbogadóttir award, the work must show strong evidence of sophisticated gender analysis with appropriate academic references, and it shall be well structured and written.

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

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

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

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

Two GRÓ GEST alumni have commenced their Ph.D. studies at the University of Iceland on full GRÓ GEST scholarships. We at GRÓ GEST are proud to support the research education of the programme's alumni, and we are particularly pleased to welcome our first fully funded Ph.D. fellows to doctoral programmes at the University of Iceland.



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

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

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

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



Gender and Climate Change in Malawi



Late this year, GRÓ GEST in partnership with Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR), conducted a short course on Gender and Climate Change in Mchinji district in Malawi. The short course facilitators were a team of experts from LUANAR, led by Dr. Tasokwa Kakota, and during this first course, they were joined by a GRÓ GEST consultant, Dr. Auður Ingólfssdóttir, who has taught in the Gender and Climate Change module in the GEST programme for many years.

The short course was developed through a collaboration of GRÓ-GEST and LUANAR with the objective of contributing to gender sensitive climate policies in Malawi through an increased awareness of the gender dimension of climate change. The course focuses on both mitigation measures and adaptation to climate change and is to be conducted at district level. The main target group is gender and climate change stakeholders at district level in Malawi, including representatives from regional and local governments, academics, researchers, civil society, women's organizations, relevant private actors, and the media.

The course in Mchinji was a pilot course where the participants discussed the science of climate change, climate impacts, and the links between climate change and gender, both generally and more specifically for Malawi. The participants also discussed how to create gender sensitive climate policy by using gender mainstreaming as a tool.

The participants were district officials in different sectors in Mchinji district. In addition to lectures, exercises and discussions, the participants visited climate related initiatives and projects in the Mchinji district. This partnership is hopefully marking the start of a fruitful partnership leading to the implementation of short courses on Gender and Climate Change across the diverse districts in Malawi.



The short course participants with the team of experts from LUANAR and GRÓ GEST



The short course participants visited ongoing projects in Mchinji District focusing on environment and/or climate change

Teaching Gender to Youth in St. Lucia



GRÓ GEST had the pleasure of facilitating a two-day online version of the short course *Teaching Gender to Youth*, in partnership with Girls of A Feather in St. Lucia on 12-13 July. The training took place in five sessions and was moderated by GRÓ GEST teachers Þórður Kristinsson and María Hjálmtýsdóttir, who both have years of experience in teaching gender to youth in Iceland.



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

The short course on *Teaching Gender to Youth* has been initially implemented as a five-day training course, and Þórður and María adjusted the course to be implemented through an online platform, with five sessions conducted over the course of two days. Girls of A Feather invited approximately 50 professionals, teachers and NGO employees, to participate in this two-day training. The online course was well attended, and sparked lively discussions and questions on gender equality among youth and in St. Lucia.

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

TEACHING GENDER TO YOUTH

WHO IS THIS FOR?
TEACHERS
SCHOOL COUNSELLORS
NGOs (working with students/youth)
CURRICULUM DEVELOPERS

REGISTER TODAY

FREE TRAINING COURSE
Girls of A Feather in collaboration with the University of Iceland's Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme.

SPOTS ARE LIMITED! REGISTER NOW!

TWO DAY TRAINING SESSION

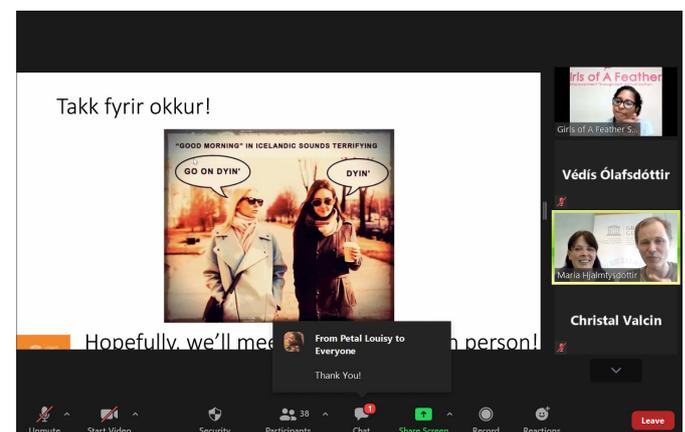
FREE AND VERIFIED CERTIFICATION

APPLICANTS WHO MEET THE CRITERIA WILL BE CONSIDERED.

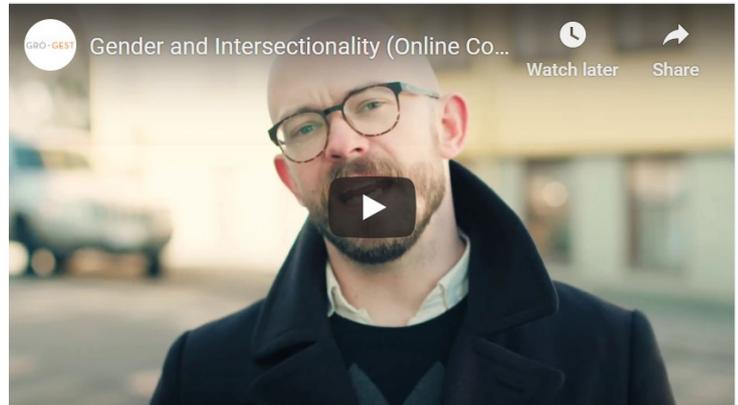
EMAIL: GIRLSOFAFEATHER.SLUG@GMAIL.COM
CONTACT US AT 519-7263

Zoom dates:
JULY 12 (9AM-2PM)
JULY 13 (9AM-12PM)

Topics: Gender Equality Status in St. Lucia, Concepts when Teaching Gender Equality, Privilege, Intersectionality, Equality & Equity



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



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



From left: Dr. Robert Morell from the University of Cape Town; Dr. Thomas Brorsen Smidt, project manager at GRÓ GEST; and Dr. Giti Chandra, research specialist at GRÓ GEST



Dr. Marsha Henry from the London School of Economics, filming at the Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of Iceland.



In 2020, GEST sent out a call for applications for grants from the GEST Alumni Fund. All former fellows to the GEST programme were eligible to apply. The GEST programme received many strong applications, but in the end, it was Ms. Chinenye Anekwe (2018), who received a grant for the project *Business Booster Programme for 100 Rural Women Energy Entrepreneurs*.

Conceived at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project set out to fund community sensitization programs for 100 Solar Sister Entrepreneurs (SSEs) in each of the 25 states where Solar Sister operates. This business booster project supported 100 Solar Sister Entrepreneurs in Nigeria to grow their local clean energy business enterprises through targeted

activities. The project aimed to improve their capacity, expand their customer base and increase their market visibility. This GEST Alumni Fund grant has enabled the Solar Sister Entrepreneurs to create additional impact by funding community-based market awareness and sensitization campaigns, as well as providing marketing materials that build awareness of gender-inclusive business, increases the uptake of clean energy conversion, and provides enhanced economic opportunity to women entrepreneurs.

Now, at the end of the project, outcomes have exceeded expectations. Within six months, the 100 SSEs reached over 7000 users with clean energy in 30 communities in Nigeria – 5 more communities than originally planned. In the target areas of the project, women-owned clean energy businesses have grown their business capital from an average of \$1000 to an average of \$1500, a growth that has continued even after the end of the project. Moreover, after the end of the project, 70% of participating SSEs have gone on to organize mini sensitization campaigns in their own communities, and some of them have moved their businesses to new locations as their self-esteem was boosted. Additionally, participating SSEs scaled up their product portfolio from predominantly pico-systems and phone charging lamps to solar home systems. Most community members upgraded their pico-systems to solar home systems. Finally, this project saw the recruitment of at least 10 new women entrepreneurs during the project. These recruits reported being inspired by what their fellow women were doing, and the prestige that came with it.



We hereby extend a heartfelt congratulations to Ms. Chinenye Anekwe and Solar Sister Nigeria for a successful implementation of a very important project.



#MeToo: Thinking Forward

#MeToo: Thinking Forward was the topic of the joint RIKK - Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference and Gender Equality Studies and Training (GEST) Programme conversation series in spring 2021. The series focused on #MeToo gains as well as the challenges that remain in the fight against harassment, discrimination, and violence. The conversation series took place in both English and Icelandic, and was entirely online. In the series, authors from the newly published Routledge Handbook of the #MeToo Movement, edited by GRÓ GEST Director Dr. Irma Erlingsdóttir, and GRÓ GEST Research Specialist, Dr. Giti Chandra, as well as other GEST collaborators, engaged in a dialogue, reflecting on each other's work on the #MeToo Movement. Five conversations (pictured) took place in English.

The conversation series is available online on GRÓ GEST website [here](#).

18 FEBRUARY 2021 | 15:00 GMT

#METOO: THINKING FORWARD

Absence-Presences, Memes, and Masculinity



Tonya Haynes | Jeff Hearn

RIKK | GRÓ GEST

18 MARCH 2021 | 14:00 GMT

#METOO: THINKING FORWARD

Now what? Accountability and Leadership in Planning a Feminist Future



Karen Boyle | Audrey Roofeh

RIKK | GRÓ GEST

8 APRIL 2021 | 12:00 GMT

#METOO: THINKING FORWARD

Race, Immigration, History and Contemporary Feminist Activism



Nichole Leigh Mosty | Marai Larasi

RIKK | GRÓ GEST

29 APRIL 2021 | 16:00 GMT

#METOO: THINKING FORWARD

Survivor Voices and Stories



Rochelle McFee | Pamela Runestad

RIKK | GRÓ GEST

4 MAY 2021 | 12:00 GMT

#METOO: THINKING FORWARD

Spaces Opened Up by the #MeToo Movement in Academia and Work Places



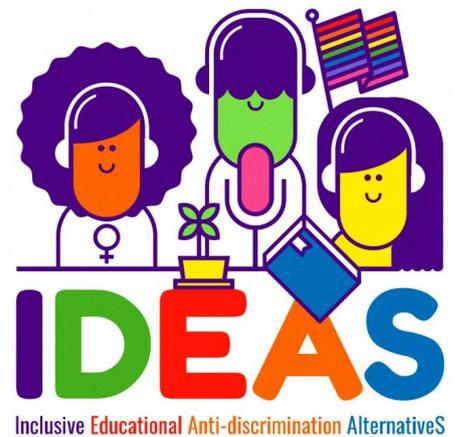
Vinita Chandra | Lisa Salomonsson

RIKK | GRÓ GEST

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

The episodes are available at the GEST website [here](#).

This year, GRÓ GEST joined a new two-year project, IDEAS - Inclusive Educational Anti-discrimination AlternativeS, along with five other partner organizations from the Czech Republic, Croatia, Greece, and Serbia. The project partners will conceptualize and record 35 podcasts, with the aim of disseminating feminist knowledge and contributing to the empowerment of multiple marginalized groups.



Through the podcasts, listeners will be able to learn about the history of the women's movement, feminist theories, their bodies and sexuality, and LGBTIQ+ issues. They will also have an opportunity to gain insights into the experiences of Roma and migrant women, theories of social reproduction, women's labor rights and the issue of politics and the political. The podcasts will utilize various innovative methods in order to help the listeners gain a better understanding of the above mentioned topics.

GRÓ GEST contributes to the project by sharing their knowledge of podcasting with project partners through training and consultation, and by producing five podcasts with national and international experts on the topic of gender, environment and climate change.

The partners on this project are: the Center for Women's Studies from Belgrade (lead partner) Charles University from Prague, Colour Youth from Athens, University of Iceland, Centre for Women's Studies from Zagreb and IPAK - Research Centre for Culture, Politics and Identities from Belgrade. The project is funded by the EU, within the Erasmus+ programme, while the implementation partner is the Tempus foundation in Belgrade.



In November, Thomas Brorsen Smidt, GEST project manager, facilitated a session with the project's partners in Greece, about the production of podcasts.

Creating a platform for transnational dialogue, knowledge production and exchange is one of GEST's three main pillars. This includes creating space for knowledge sharing by hosting and coordinating conferences, seminars, workshops and public lectures. This year was another challenging year in terms of gathering people physically, setting a strong need for creating hybrid platforms of knowledge exchange. All of GEST public activities within this pillar, took place either fully online or in hybrid format.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, author of *We Should All Be Feminists* and *Half of a Yellow Sun*, gave an open lecture in the Large Hall of Háskólabíó - University Cinema in September, as a part of the Reykjavík International Literary Festival (RILF) and in collaboration with RIKK and GRO-GEST. The lecture was streamed and is available online [here](#).



Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was born and raised in Nigeria, and moved at the age of 19 to the United States of America. She has received multiple awards for her novels *Purple Hibiscus* (2003), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), and *Americanah* (2013). She is known for her lecture *We Should All Be Feminists*, which was also published as a book in 2014. *Dear Ijeawele, or A Feminist Manifesto in Fifteen Suggestions* was published in 2017, and her most recent book is *Notes on Grief*, which first appeared as an essay in *The New Yorker* in 2020. Her works have been translated into over thirty languages, including Icelandic.

Irma Erlingsdóttir Director of GRÓ GEST moderated the session and GRÓ GEST fellows actively participated by addressing Ms. Ngozi Adichie in a *questions & answers* session.



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

The UN has declared the year 2021 as the International Year of Trust and Peace, emphasizing the importance of reaffirming the UN's role to settle disputes peacefully. However, in recent years, international cooperation has been under threat as the effectiveness of multilateral institutions has been

questioned. The threats of climate change, pandemics, and the increasing role of non-state actors in conflict are challenges that the international system faces in a rapidly changing environment. The conference addressed these challenges, discussing sustainable solutions. The event was divided up in four seminars: Broken Promises? The International Community and Afghanistan; Global Citizenship Education for Peace; Addressing the Impact of Climate Change on Peace; and Global Citizenship Education for Peace.

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

Two former GEST fellows, Ofoq Roshan and Zeba Sultani, who moved to Iceland following the Taliban takeover in August, participated in the first panel of the conference, sharing their insights about the situation of Afghanistan.

The seminar *Protection, Gender and Inclusion* (PGI) took place in October and was hosted by the Icelandic Red Cross in collaboration with GRÓ GEST and with support from the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The aim of the PGI seminar was to assemble guests and participants from diverse backgrounds and disciplines to share knowledge and lessons learned around protection, safeguarding, social inclusion and Gender and Diversity, as essential perspectives for a comprehensive approach to emergency response and development work that provide a range of best practices which should be integrated throughout programming. Furthermore, effective humanitarian and development action is both a goal and a means to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The seminar consisted of a full day webinar organised in four sessions. The first session offered an overview of Iceland's strategy for International Cooperation and the state of the world regarding the situation of women and children as reported by UN agencies. The second session gathered experts around the area of protection, specifically specialised protection issues such as sexual and gender-based violence and child marriage. The third session focused on gender both as an evolving concept and as a key area of work. The fourth and last session covered inclusion, showcasing different experiences of community engagement and inclusion of people with disability.



PGI Seminar

Protection, Gender and Inclusion



Government of Iceland
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

The second day of the seminar was structured in three face-to-face workshops at the University of Iceland. The first session addressed gender budgeting activism by *Feminist Finance*, the second session was led by Azra Sehic who talked about how to approach gender based violence in humanitarian settings, and lastly Melanie Powell addressed protection and psychosocial support.

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



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

The workshop's aim was to provide a platform for discussions on how to mobilize and include representation by all community actors, including diverse groups of women, girls, and marginalized groups, to every level of peace making. The workshop was divided in two sections; the first led by Dr. Marsha Henry, Associate Professor at the Department of Gender Studies and a founding member of the Centre for Women, Peace and Security at the London School of Economics, where she critically discussed the Women, Peace and

Security agenda. The second part of the workshop was led by Dr. Catherine Turner, Associate Professor at Durham Law School and Deputy Director of the Durham Global Security Institute, who focused on inclusive conflict mediation and the redesigning of peace processes.

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

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



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

The opening event set the tone for the annual meeting, with a conversation between Mahbouba Seraj, Afghani journalist, women's rights activist, and founder of the Afghan Women's Network, and Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, NWM Iceland chapter member, former UN Women Country Representative in Afghanistan and current Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. They discussed the situation for women and girls in

community, with a focus on the Nordic countries, can support following the recent Taliban seizure of power. Their conversation was followed by panel discussions moderated by Dr. Silja Bára Ómarsdóttir, a member of the NWM Iceland and a professor of international relations at the University of Iceland.

The second day consisted of three panel conversations about transformative approaches to peace processes, how to best include and strengthen women in mediation and peacebuilding efforts, evaluating interventions, and the way forward. Following the conversations, the network members engaged in group discussions.

The third day was dedicated to internal discussions about the Nordic Women Mediators network, including an update from its members, reflecting upon the network's work until now as well as the future of the Global Alliance of the Regional Women Mediators.

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



Decolonisation of Nordic Higher Education

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

In the Nordic countries, the history of colonisation is largely absent from collective consciousness in higher education. As a result, many Nordic higher education institutions fail to interrogate their own colonial positionality in their collaborations with post-colonial societies. This has direct consequences for what kinds of knowledges are supported and what narratives are produced and reproduced, and for what purposes.

The goal of the workshop was to bring together scholars, primarily from Nordic universities, in a bid to stimulate intra-Nordic collaboration on research, action-plans and best-practice recommendations relating to decolonization processes in Nordic higher education.

During the workshop GRÓ-GEST's representatives learned invaluable lessons and received important feedback from scholars from across the Nordic region and beyond, which will lay the groundwork for future collaborations within this important field.

The workshop featured presentations, both online and in person, by scholars from across the Nordic region and in a plethora of different academic fields, including keynotes from prominent decolonial scholars Madina Tlostanova and Rauna Kuokkanen.



New Director of GRÓ Centre

Nína Björk Jónsdóttir is the new Director General for GRÓ, Centre for Capacity Development, Sustainability and Societal Change. GRÓ Centre is the umbrella organisation representing the four Icelandic programmes: Gender Equality Studies and Training (GEST), Geothermal Training (GTP), Fisheries Training (FTP) and Land Restoration Training (LRT).

Ms. Jónsdóttir has been working for the Icelandic Foreign Service since 2005. Over the last two years she has been the Director for Business Services at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. From 2016-2019 she acted as Deputy Permanent Representative at the Permanent Mission of Iceland to EFTA, the WTO, UNOG and other international organisations in Geneva. She was posted to the Embassy of Iceland in Paris from 2012-2016, where she acted as Deputy Head of Mission (from 2013), Deputy Permanent Representative to the OECD, and from 2014 also to UNESCO and the Council of Europe. During the years 2005-2011 Ms. Jónsdóttir worked in the Directorate for International affairs and on external trade.

Before joining the Foreign Service, Ms. Jónsdóttir worked as a TV and radio reporter and a journalist in Iceland. She also worked as a media officer for Concordia, the EU's first peacekeeping operation in North-Macedonia in the year 2003 on behalf of the Icelandic Crisis Response Unit.

Ms. Jónsdóttir holds an MA in International Politics and Security Studies from Bradford University, as well as a postgraduate diploma in Journalism and a BA in French and Political Science from the University of Iceland.

