



VIDEO TRANSCRIPT BOOKLET

FOR THE ONLINE CONFERENCE
A WORLD IN REVOLUTION
 FEMINIST POLITICS IN TIMES OF SOCIAL UPRISINGS



Middle East
Centre



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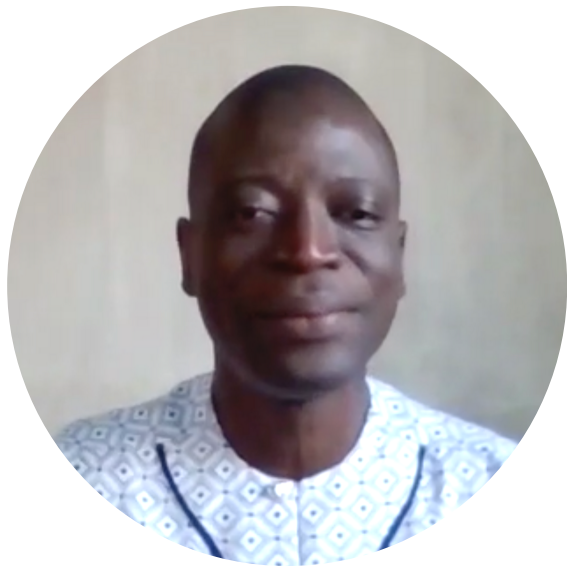
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VIDEO PART I





BRICE OSWALD AHOGNONVI

The Batonga Foundation

BENIN

“ I am happy every day to work alongside women for their emancipation ”

My name is Brice Ahognonvi and I live in Cotonou, Bénin. I am Training Manager with the Batonga Foundation in Benin. The Batonga Foundation is an international organization that works for the educational and financial liberation of girls and young women through strengthening their life skills (self-confidence, self-esteem, decision making, public speaking, sexual and reproductive health, and income generating activities).

I am responsible for developing the Benin office's curriculum and managing trainings and trainers (mentors, teachers) through training modules. It's work that I enjoy doing because since I was a child, I have developed a passion for helping others. I detest injustice, and I fight for justice and equity around me, in my family, and everywhere I go. I seriously detest the injustice that permeates through our communities through the way we treat men and boys differently from women and girls. We currently live in a society where women are mistreated and exploited. Women and girls experience various forms of discrimination in their families, in their homes, and in their environments. I recognize that this stems from our customs and traditional norms that have been in place for centuries, and I detest it. I work against these norms daily everywhere I go, despite the risk of confrontation from those who disagree with my vision of justice and freedom.

With my recruitment to the Batonga Foundation, my vision and the vision of the foundation are in perfect harmony. This vision has led me to accomplish my mission with passion and determination. I am happy every day to work alongside women for their emancipation.

Today at the Batonga Foundation, after the most recent 5 years, we have the pleasure to say we have educated and trained many girls and young women who are competent and mature, and possess social and financial aptitudes. These young women are able to access all the stages of a normal life. Some among the girls who graduated from the program have been recruited as employees with Batonga.

These trained girls and young women, in addition to others who have already entered working life, constitute models of success. Batonga is very proud of them. As Batonga's mission statement explains, these girls are also agents of change in their communities.



They are role models for the other girls in their area. They possess the indispensable skills that permit them to avoid exploitation and mistreatment from any source. They understand that they can participate in income generating activities to resist exploitation and discrimination. They strive to include other girls and young women from their community in order to bring desired changes.

However, we know that our task is immense. Why? Because the majority of the women in Africa, and above all Bénin, exist within systems that oppress and mistreat them. They continue to suffer due to many responsibilities and problems. The justice and equity we are looking for have not yet been reached. Thus, we still have the responsibility to continue to make justice and equity between men and women a reality that translates through everything.

Thank you for listening.

**“ We have the
responsibility to
continue to make
justice and equity
between men and
women a reality ”**



“
**CIVIX was
created
by youth
for youth**
”



HORTENSE DE BEIR

CIVIX

BELGIUM

Hello, my name is Hortense de Beir, and I'm here today to talk about CIVIX. CIVIX is a Belgian nonprofit organization that was created by youth for youth and has a goal of renewing political interest in youth through the deconstruction of all the abstract notions surrounding Belgian politics that make it difficult to understand. Concretely, CIVIX is composed of 60 student volunteers who remain politically neutral. In effect, it's important that we have this mediator role between politics and youth in order to accompany youth to make their own political choice later. It's why we adopted a neutral position- to be able to truly accompany them while they make their own political choices.

Why did I join this nonprofit? In fact, it has been two years since I noticed that the young people around me weren't interested in politics. It brought a lot of questions to my mind because politics are something that I have been interested in since I was young, and I've been in the habit of discussing politics with my friends and family throughout my life. So, I tried to understand why young people weren't interested in politics. Is it because they don't understand anything? Is it because they just aren't interested? In fact, I quickly learned that they weren't interested because they had a lot of preconceived notions and ingrained stereotypes about politics. I found that it was necessary to deconstruct all of these ideas so that they could find interest in politics. So, I have truly found the mission of CIVIX to correspond directly with my manner of thinking and viewing the world.

If I have to explain a success through CIVIX that made me happy, I'd say that when I organize events, conferences, and political meetings, some attendees will give me their feedback and say something like, "Listen, I wasn't interested in this at all before, but thanks to the event you organized, I think I'm interested in politics now. I realized that it isn't useless like I imagined." When people come and thank me for the content I've created, whether it be social media, videos, or interviews with members of Belgian politics, I feel successful.

If I have to talk about a challenge I've encountered at CIVIX, the true challenge is to reach all the youth of Belgium because, for the moment, we have mostly concentrated our efforts on those in university. However, not every young person attends or even has the chance to attend higher education. So, for the future, our objective is to grow the diversity of our audience and reach out to youth who aren't yet interested in politics and haven't had the chance to be as it may be a world too distant from them. This will be our objective in the future.





CLARA ALEMANN

Promundo

USA

“without transforming harmful masculinities we will not fully achieve equality”

Hello, my name is Clara Alleman. I am from Argentina and currently live in Washington DC. I'm the Director of Programs of Promundo, an NGO whose mission is to promote gender equality and create a world free from violence by engaging men and boys in partnership with women and girls and individuals of all gender identities.

Why do I do this? I really believe that promoting critical consciousness in individuals, parents, families, children, and individuals can promote gender justice by challenging patriarchy, working with women, girls, men, and boys to really question how these restrictive gender norms and structural drivers sustain power inequitable relationships, violence perpetrated by men against women, and how we can create a critical mass of individuals and communities that are ready to undermine the patriarchy, and eventually realizing that its among one of the key factors keeping individuals from having the connected, fulfilled, and peaceful lives that they all deserve. I do believe that engaging men and boys is extremely important – although not the solution to achieve gender equality- but that without it and without transforming harmful masculinities we will not fully achieve equality.

I feel successful when I can support feminist organizations and the other frontline workers or partners on the ground to facilitate or to lead these processes of critical reflection by individuals, families, couples, institutions and we start seeing changes in relationships, in communities. Men recognizing the invaluable work that women do and treating them with the dignity they deserve, supporting their autonomous decision-making processes. Adolescents realizing- adolescent boys realizing that without consent they cannot have sexual relationships. Parents learning skills to discipline without violence, and I think boys realizing that they can be their true selves without conforming to rigid models of masculinity. And I really think that gradually this is the way in which we can create caring, equitable, nonviolent, and connected relationships and societies.

The biggest challenge is to support gender justice initiatives that don't fit within the short-term and vertical logic and funding of international development and to elevate the work of feminist movements and organizations that are ultimately driving change and to support change beyond small groups or communities or single institutions – but to be able to support processes in which we can transform the structural drivers that are sustaining patriarchal systems. So this is the key challenge that I hope we all continue working for.



YASSMIN FASHIR

ProAct Indy

USA



“ radical
empathy
provoked me
to
understand ”

Hello from Indianapolis, Indiana. My name is Yassmin Fashir. I was originally born in Darfur, Sudan but I was exiled along with the rest of my tribe. Most of us ended up here in Indianapolis, Indiana. I currently work as a Community Impact Concierge with ProAct, a local non-profit redefining community service. Our mission is to “Stand in the gap for vulnerable populations while empower our youth to actively transform their community.”

While working with ProAct Indy, I am also focused on creating a legacy project and this legacy project is called the Capacity. Hopefully it will launch into a full-scale non-profit sometime in the future but the mission is dedicated to fosteringtransnational solidarity and facilitating radical social justice movements abroad.

People often ask why do you do the work that you do? And the reason why is because without the implementation of human rights, I would not be alive. It was because of the implementation of human rights, activists, transnational solidarity all over the world today that allowed us to gain the title of refugee and migrate to the United States.

I think that one of my greatest successes in my quest to know more about social justice and human rights is when I took classes at the Indiana Women’s Prison. I took classes there for about 6 months with the women that were inside the prison, and I gained a really really strong nuanced understanding of justice but also an understanding of radical empathy that really provoked me to understand that prison and this jail system that we have today is really just about poverty and it cages people who cannot afford the fines that come with breaking the law.

Most of my students that I work with do not look like me nor do they look like the community we are serving but every day I increasingly charting new vulnerable groups of people who end up using community aid, or mutual aid. Sometimes their house burns down so it's momentary. Other times they are trapped in a state of generational poverty and in this last year, 30% have been because of COVID factors. But I think one of my greatest challenges was facilitating an understanding for my students and for people that come in to volunteer, as much as systems of oppression target certain groups for marginalization, anybody can be in need and anyone can be vulnerable at any point in time regardless of social identity.





RINU ODUALA

#EndSARS

NIGERIA

“ [Because of my work], the whole world decided to focus and join the conversation on police brutality and the injustice happening in Nigeria. ”

My name is Rinu Oduala. I hail from Lagos, Nigeria. I am 22 years old. I am a community organizer focused primarily on issues of equity, justice and policies. I use my social media platforms to speak on issues surrounding humanity, especially about violence by state actors in Nigeria. I am also an entrepreneur. You can call me an activist but more importantly, I am an active Nigerian citizen.

Why do I do this work? That's a tough question. As a female growing up in Nigeria, the ethno religious society constantly reminded you that you only need to be seen and not heard, so you have to fight harder than you need to for your voice to get heard. The injustice in Nigeria cannot be kept under wraps any longer. Nigerian women have been primed for fighting because we spend so much time fighting, as a result, I decided to help increase the public awareness and put a spotlight on injustice and oppression that is happening. Also, growing up in a marginalized community among oppressed people, the scary realization that I or my loved ones may be victims of oppression at any moment also factors into my decision to join the fight to change the status quo.

I felt successful when I organized an around the clock stay on the streets from the Police Headquarters in Lagos, to the State House of Assembly on the 7th of October and young Nigerians realized that this was a fight for survival, joined in sleeping out on the streets and from there the protests spread to strategic points such as the Lekki Toll Gate, progressed all over and outside the country. After which, the whole world decided to focus and join the conversation on police brutality and the injustice happening in Nigeria.

What is the biggest challenge in my work? Lack of Support. Persecution. Intimidation. Harassment by the Nigerian Government



“ The aim of PrSF is to raise political and social awareness among students. ”

JAI KUMUR

Progressive Students' Federation

PAKISTAN



I'm Jai Kumar, I'm a part of Progressive Student's Federation Sindh. I've been involved in student politics for seven years. Politically, I belong to the Progressive Students' Federation (PrSF) which is a continuation of the National Students' Federation (NSF). NSF was formed after the Democratic Students Federation (DSF) was banned in 1954. DSF had been an active force in the politics of the left, which has struggled tirelessly for the rights of students. However, issues regarding students have been scarcely solved since the 1950s for which students have been voicing their concerns time and again. Rather, it would be more appropriate to state that students are now facing ever-increasing problems since the crackdown on left-wing political parties and student organizations. Keeping this context in mind, PrSF has paved the way for student politics again and has campaigned for their issues, such as lack of hostel provision, fee hikes, and freedom of expression on the campus.

The aim of PrSF is to raise political and social awareness among students so that they stand for their rights. Along with that we struggle for the democratic rights of students, for restoration of student unions, to organize students in educational institutions and outside, to create a strong and organized students' movement that will lay the foundation for a uniform, fair, democratic, secular, modern and scientific education system.

More from the Progressive Students' Federation:

My name is Faryal Rashid and I'm a member of PrSF. In recent years, with students rights being the focal point, we've arranged weekly study circles, highlighted the importance of Student Unions, increase in the budget for education, campaigned against anti-student policies, pushed a bill in Senate, highlighted issues of students on campuses and helped solve them while playing a leading role in organizing annual student marches. Our organization has been a primary platform for raising student's issues and rights. Furthermore, our organization joined hands with other allies to fight religious extremism through Mashal March, in addition to annual Women's rights' march and Climate March in which we played an effective role. Ever since student unions were banned in 1984 students have been facing difficulties. On the same subject, issues like check posts on Balochistan's universities and College campuses of FC and similar security outfits, the lack of internet facilities, and the limited access to education for women, are increasingly prominent in our region. Leftist political activity that raises the issues faced by workers, women and students is subject to censorship by the state. Meanwhile the state harasses and intimidates us indirectly through rightwing groups, FIRs and even threatening our very lives.





AMAL HUMA

Women
Democratic Front

PAKISTAN

“ In fact, [woman] is not just ready but is already mobilising ”

Salam! My name is Amal Huma and I belong to Women Democratic Front or WDF. WDF is a socialist feminist resistance organization with units in all four provinces of Pakistan. The foundation of WDF was laid on 8th March 2018 on international Working Women's day and ever since it has been active across Pakistan.

There are three facets of the struggle of WDF, organizing, political education and street resistance politics. We also have a representative magazine which is called "Nariwad". We believe patriarchy, class oppression, imperialist oppression, state, and racial oppression are deeply interlinked and take strength from each other. Our movement works on the same ideological framework of socialist feminist resistance.

For us, our biggest success is that we not only formed a socialist-feminist resistance organization but also started a movement. Especially due to our political school and street resistance politics a country wide socialist feminist narrative is developing and a debate surrounding the topic has started in political circles.

This organising itself is our biggest challenge. We face difficulty in accessing women in rural areas where patriarchal violence is much higher. State oppression is another huge challenge for us. Religious right wing enjoys state patronage due to which we face organised attacks which not only constitute of physical violence but also of organised legal attacks and intimidation tactics. Our state institutions, courts, fiqah, parliament are all intrinsically anti-woman and patriarchal, which is why our state has failed to provide even those rights which are legally or religiously available to women.

However, the future is not as bleak. We believe that woman is ready to take her rightful place in feminist revolutionary resistance and the society, against patriarchy, against her exploitation. In fact, she is not just ready but is already mobilising. WDF will continue its struggle till the absolute emancipation of woman.



ROZANA ISA
Sisters in Islam
MALAYSIA



**“ We uphold democracy
and equality of
Malaysians as citizens ”**

Hello, everyone. My name is Rozana Isa. I am with a women’s rights organisation called Sisters in Islam, based in Malaysia. Sisters in Islam or also known as SIS, has been established for almost 34 years and we work to advance the rights of Muslim women in the family within the frameworks of Islam, human rights, constitutional guarantees and lived realities. SIS is involved in this work on Muslim women’s rights because when it came to getting justice at the Syariah Courts, women’s experiences and voices tell us that they were not getting what they expected. They expected justice and fairness to be delivered at the Syariah Courts but instead what they got were delays in court hearings, prolonged divorce processes and these were after going through many issues within troubled marriages dealing with domestic violence or non-payment of maintenance and for some, being in polygamous marriages. The work that we do at SIS is to support these women by informing them of their rights, raise public awareness that Islam recognises equality of women, to bring these voices and experiences of women in Syariah Courts and their experiences with the Islamic family laws towards making them better, and to work towards reform and changes in laws, policies, processes and practices because without recognition of equality, there can be no justice for women. SIS also works with other women’s groups and civil society organisations on broader issues of women’s and human rights, that we uphold democracy and equality of Malaysians as citizens as provided for within our Federal Constitution.

We have successfully campaigned against the discriminatory amendments to the Islamic Family Law. We have pushed for the elimination of child marriage in Malaysia and objected to the discriminatory sentencing and punishments carried out against women under the Syariah Criminal Offences laws.

We have also contributed to the drafting of bills for gender equality and sexual harassment laws in Malaysia, been successful in creating and expanding the space for public debate and discussion on Islam, and have reached out to over 10,000 women (and some men) to make better and informed decisions in the pursuit of their rights in Syariah Courts through our Telenisa legal counseling services. In addition, we have successfully advocated to the UN CEDAW Committee and at the UN Universal Periodic Review Process to raise issues of concern on women in Malaysia. SIS, which began as a small study group founded by eight women in 1987, had initiated and launched Musawah, a global movement for equality and justice in the Muslim family in 2009. Musawah, which means equality in Arabic, continues to be a global force for the production of knowledge on Islam and women’s rights and groundbreaking engagements in international institutions like the United Nations to ensure that equality and justice applies to women living in diverse Muslim contexts around the world.



Challenges we have faced include the 2008 Book Ban, as well as police reports filed against SIS in 2009 by Islamists groups who called for questioning of those who protested against the caning of women for alcohol consumption. In 2010, a lawsuit was filed by the Malaysian Assembly of Mosques Youth in 2010 to stop SIS from using the word Islam as we are not deemed to be Islamic. Going further, in 2014, Fatwa expressed opposition to SIS for subscribing to liberalism and religious pluralism, and in 2015, we were shunned by the government from public engagement on Islamic Family Reform, which had an impact on grassroots women. In 2019, the Deputy Minister of GE14 elected government announced RM20,000 fund for SIS on data gathering and statistical analysis which was heavily attacked and criticized in Parliament. Ongoing challenges include website hacks and social media trolling.

“ Musawah, which means equality in Arabic, continues to be a global force for the production of knowledge on Islam and women's rights ”





HAYRIYE KARA

Kaos GL

TURKEY

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**I believe in solidarity
and solidarity knows
no border.**

”

Hi! My name is Hayriye Kara. I work as refugee rights program coordinator in Kaos GL, also I am one of the lawyers of my organization.

Kaos GL, celebrating its unofficial foundation date as to the publication of the first issue of Kaos GL Magazine in September 1994, has been fighting against homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, sexism, nationalism and militarism since the beginning of its establishment. In 2005, Kaos GL was established officially as the first association in Turkey working on sexual orientation, gender identity, expression and sex characteristics.

I am bi+sexual woman. I am struggling for LGBTI+ rights for over 10 years. I am living in Ankara, Turkey. But I have been in different places all around the Turkey for struggle. If we called this struggle “activism”, I have been doing it for myself. I have met different people from different countries, they touched my life and I touched their lives. I know I am a survivor and there are survivors all around me. I witness and feel the bonds between people from different countries. Differences are not the threat.

I feel lucky, this solidarity taught me to oppose the practices that ignore the persons who have different qualities and skills, yet are being de-identified under the identities that stigmatize persons because they do not fit the norms. All of us and each of us are more than all of these with our past, our future, our professions, our art, our struggle, our sadness and our love; and whichever country we’re in, we will continue to be so. No discriminatory and ignoring practice will change it.

I believe in solidarity and solidarity knows no border.





VIDEO PART II



JOANA CAVACO
Kontra Rotterdam
THE NETHERLANDS



“

**Success is creating a space
where my community can be
together...**

”

Hello everyone! My name is Joana Cavaco and I am a community organiser based in Rotterdam. I am originally from Lisbon, Portugal, but I've been living in The Netherlands for the past five years. I describe myself as a community organiser because through my grassroots project, Kontra, but also through my personal work, which is, in a lot of times, to facilitate spaces where communities can feel safe and express the grievances together and also share their joy.

I do this work because I honestly cannot imagine myself doing anything else, really, at least for right now. I think that at this point as someone who is working with various communities, especially me being a queer, Jewish person and immigrant living in The Netherlands. I think that right now my skills are being best appreciated throughout this advocacy work that I am conducting right now.

When and how have I felt successful? This is a tricky one because you would have to define success. Does a successful protest mean that a law changes? Or does it mean that suddenly a practice that was deemed wrong suddenly changes, a change of collective societal behaviour? What do you deem successful, because I think for me, right now, success is creating a space where my community can be together and can even share this space with others who do not belong to it, but that this sharing of the space has a transformative effect in their minds and, I guess you could say their hearts. By doing that, maybe time and time again we can start creating some chains of local change that will make our work successful.

What is the biggest challenge in my work? Let me tell you about the biggest challenge in my work. It's money. I was thinking about this question. Should I say that it is the threat to our lives that, you know, we are obviously suffering, threat and danger by right-wing organisations? Is it maybe that I'm afraid that there is going to be violence at the protests? No, the biggest problem in the movement is money. There is a lack of funds. We are talking about grassroots organisations that can very difficultly access governmental funds. We are talking about individual activists, like me, who could benefit from mutual aid funds, and from continuation of our work and support in a financial way. So I would say that is the biggest challenge, is that most of the funds go to the big organisations doing transnational, global, national work. And then those doing local work obviously experience a different struggle.





MADELEINE CASTLES

Australian National
University

AUSTRALIA

My name is Madeleine Castles. I'm from Australia, based at the Australian National University. I've spent the past two years working on sexual harassment. My work is principally focused on the role of Australia's civil litigation system and its ability to bring about change, not only for survivors of sexual harassment, but also to bring about broader, social and political change.

I do my work because, as a woman, I know all too well the devastating impacts that sexual harassment can have. And I wanted to do something that would, if only in a small way, address this issue. I have ultimately found it to be really empowering to contribute to hopefully making some reform in this space, not only for survivors but also for broader society.

I felt successful when, earlier this year, a research article that myself and two colleagues wrote was published in Australia's Federal Law Review. The article immediately got a lot of media attention, and it was really satisfying to feel like work that I have been putting years of my life into was being recognised on a broader scale.

One of the most challenging aspects of my work is dealing day in and day out with the effects of sexual harassment and particularly the impact it has on survivors. When you come to understand the breadth and depth of sexual harassment in society it can feel really overwhelming, and like it is a problem with no solution.

“ I have ultimately found it to be really empowering to contribute to hopefully making some reform in this space. ”



“My work at Gender Links is to bring about strength to achieve gender equality in our country.”

ANUSHKA VIRAHSAWMI

Gender Links & Safe Haven Halfway Home

MAURITIUS



Good day. My name is Anushka Virahsawmy, Director of Gender link and Founder of Safe Haven Halfway Home, a shelter for women survivors of violence whom we accommodate for a period of one year; where they go through a transition of a year to integrate in everyday life which is something very hard for them since they are people who have been left to fend for themselves with no support. So, my work at Gender Links is to bring about strength to achieve gender equality in our country.

When I am talking about equality, we are working on three different axes: Gender in the media - how we are including gender with media houses, Gender Governance and also how we are including gender in the economy by empowering women also known as Gender Justice. And it is a lot to do with empowering women to be self-sufficient.

The way we work, I have gained insightful experiences where research work that we have done in Gender Links as we do a lot of research when it comes to parity where the research has been taken into consideration and also taken as examples. There is a lot of other work that has been done apart from research, various programmes put in place, which is helping people to understand and bring change in people’s mind, to be in a world where there is equality between women and men and for a more balanced world in all aspects and across all sectors.

It is also important to understand that when we are talking about equality, we are also talking about the various challenges that we have witnessed within the work we do. For example, the difficulties in changing laws - for instance the children’s bill that we have been advocating for many years and also I had to go to CEDAW to present a paper to show that we are against child marriage. Unfortunately, our law is still stipulating that a child of 16 can get married with the consent of the parent or guardian.

In terms of other challenges that we have had, the biggest challenge is in the advocacy work that we are doing for equality to be understood and accepted - get ministries to understand why gender mainstreaming is important - not only because we need figures but in a holistic approach - socially, economically and politically.

Another challenge that we have when doing advocacy work is to create awareness on inequality that exists and that if we bring societal changes there is a lot of improvement that can happen. Inequality is found in the public and private sector and in society in general. We will carry on with our actions because we believe in them. Thank you.





RAJNI LALLAH
Muvman
Liberasyon Fam
MAURITIUS

**“Women...
do not
have to
suffer
violence.”**

Hello – from the *Muvman Liberasyon Fam* (Women’s Liberation Movement) in the Republic of Mauritius to all participants in the international on-line conference “The world in revolution”. The *Muvman Liberasyon Fam* was born in 1976, over 40 years ago. Our aim is the emancipation of women, women’s liberation, freedom from patriarchy. We are a women’s association. By that we mean we are not an NGO, and we are not a *single issue campaign* either. We do not accept funds from outside -- neither from the Government, nor from any Embassy, nor from any religion, nor from the bosses. We are an independent women’s organization. We run on our monthly contributions from members. So, our members are what we are. Our committee, elected annually by the General Assembly of Members, meets once a week, normally in person, but with the lockdown, we are meeting virtually – but still every week.

For us, in our history, the struggles for decolonization and demilitarization are inter-linked. For example, our Association, together with Mauritian women who were born and grew up on Chagos and who were expelled from there by the withdrawing colonial power, Britain, to make way for a US military base on Diego Garcia, one of the Chagos Islands. We held all kinds of protests over the decades from the 1980s – up against Riot Police, followed by a famous case against eight of us women. This struggle continued over the years until finally we forced our Government to go to the UN system, and at the ICJ (International Court of Justice) when the judgment came in 2019, it was a victory, and was followed by a massive UN General Assembly vote for the decolonization of the whole of Mauritius, including Chagos and Diego Garcia. The *Muvman Liberasyon Fam* with hundreds of neighbourhood women’s associations over the years fought and won many battles. We won a single marriage law for all women, meaning religious marriages were given civil effect. It assured relatively more rights for women. We also made gains in the struggle to decriminalize abortion. In 2012, abortion was finally legalized, if in very restrictive conditions. So, the struggle goes on.

In all these struggles we saw that the whole civil code, the entire Code Napoleon left over from colonial times is intrinsically misogynist. The entire legal framework needs to be overhauled. And what we have seen as vital during these times of the Coronavirus epidemic, is that women must all be able to get work, thus economic independence. And a house, a place where we do not have to suffer violence. Food on the plates and food security.

The challenge before us now is to gain proper democratic control over the totality of the land and all that 2.4 million square kilometres of sea that constitute our country. No less.



KHEDIJAH ALI MOHAMMED-NUR

Network of Eritrean Women

UK



“

Without the participation of women, society cannot develop.

”

My name is Khedijah Ali Mohammed-Nur, I live in London. My profession is in public health and is known as specialist community public health nurse or health visitor. I work with families with children under 5. I am also one of the co-founders of the Network of Eritrean Women and identify as a Black feminist and human rights activist.

The Network of Eritrean is an organisation that defends the rights of Eritrean women, works to develop women, and encourages them to know and defend their rights.

We do this work because it's our principle. Because we believe in human rights and in social justice and in societal development too. Without the participation of women, society cannot develop. That is why, we do what we do.

I feel successful when I see women come together and organise themselves to help sort out each others problems. Also, when I see young women carrying on our vision and fight for their rights, this gives me a lot of satisfaction.

This work comes with a lot of challenges, it's not easy. This kind of work cannot only be done by volunteers. One main challenge is that we all have other commitments, we have families, we have jobs, and we only do this in our spare time. Due to this, sometimes our work is not always as we want. We want to reach out and help more women and support them but because we have limited capacity and the funds that we get are also limited or one-off funds; when that ends, the work stops. The work is mainly being done by volunteers, but it is a huge job that can not only be carried by volunteers. It is a very important job. In society it's important that women know their rights and for women to pay their role in society and capacitate/empower them and the challenges are not easy.

Thank you.





MAHBUBEH MOQADAM

Bidarzani

IRAN

“ gender discrimination is not separate from various [other] discrimination ”

Bidarzani dates back to 2010, when women's rights activists protested a family protection bill that was being passed in parliament and fueled some violence against women in the family. During this protest movement, they collected 15,000 signatures face to face, and created a site with the title of “Ta Ghanoun-e Khanevadeh Bararar. After a while, the group expanded its activities to pursue the issue of gender discrimination as a whole. It was at this point that they chose the name of Bidarzani and the group's activities expanded in several areas and, producing information / context/ knowledge in this area and produced notebooks with some information about democratic activism in order to make social changes in the society. They also made connections to other women in other women's rights' activist groups. Furthermore, Bidarzani started translating feminist texts and analyzing current affairs from a gendered perspective.

Over the last 11 years of activism, Bidarzani came to the conclusion that gender discrimination is not separate from various discrimination based on class ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation, and developed its activism and connections with groups which were active in these areas. One of the agendas Bidarzani has is about protesting against changing population policies and restricting sexual and reproductive rights. In this regard, Bidarzani collaborated with a campaign and produced booklets and had face-to-face conversations with people and held meetings with people to increase public awareness in this area.

Another area that Bidarzani has also been active has been in combating domestic violence against women. To this end, Bidarzani gathered and translated the laws regarded domestic violence laws in other countries in the region and some European countries. In addition to this, Bidarzani studied the Iranian laws regarding this topic and the studies the domestic violence against women in Iran. And then all the studies and data were given to a group of volunteer lawyers, and they were able to prepare a draft law during three years of study and discussion and took it to the parliament. Following the drafting law Proposal, a nationwide campaign was launched by Bidarzani 's suggestion as a campaign to end domestic violence, in which several groups and women activists participated. During the campaign, about 100 workshops were held and about 400 narratives of domestic violence were collected.

These narratives provided excellent analysis of this campaign. Eventually, the campaign rallied in front of parliament, reiterating its demands for the passage of a law banning domestic violence. In this campaign, the activists emphasized the need to create a mechanism to protect violent women. Because in Iran, domestic violence is not considered a crime and a woman who has been abused cannot seek refuge anywhere and can only file for divorce. Bidarzani's demand was primarily to ensure the safety of women and their return to society.



“ Our destiny is tied together ”

Another activity was during the ‘me too’ movement in Iran, Bidarzani became a tribune to talk about this issue and was able to be a source of information. Another activity of this group is monitoring the situation of women prisoners. In this regard, it is one of the tribunes that inform about the situation of women and other oppressed groups in prison and follows their situation and reflects pressures on them and tried to gather information about their situation and inform the society about their situation.

Currently, the group focuses most on the prohibition of violence against women, sexual and reproductive rights, and women's employment, and in this regard, it emphasizes networking between groups of women, students, workers, etc. Bidarzani ‘s main challenge is that currently women’s issues have turned to a security issue and the government’s oppression on them has increased. As a result, finding and accepting new members has become very complicated. This is the situation with any group we want to work with, and in this security environment, being democratic is very difficult. And they are always under the danger of being arrested and going to prison. This security environment prevents public programs from being held.

On the other hand, if we get permission, we can no longer work under this name, and it cannot work on issues such as LGBTIQ people rights or the right to body like right abortion. Also, many members cannot even be members of the board because of a political record. We still want to work openly, but this situation has made us semi-public, but we still make our demands as much as possible. Last but not least, we cannot work openly and face a lot of problems. We are keenly willing to learn about the experience of countries that are in a similar situation to us in the region so that we can benefit from their experience and see how they have followed their aims and have reached them. Our destiny is tied together. In particular, in the Middle East we need each other and each other's experience.



ÉRIKA MONTECINOS

Agrupación LésBlca
Rompiendo el Silencio
CHILE



“ Trans women are not there and for that we also are going to continue fighting in alliance with our fellow trans women ”

Hello, my name is Érika Montecinos, I am the General Coordinator of the lesbian organisation Rompiendo el Silencio, a organisation that this month celebrated 19 years of activism, dedicating ourselves in all these years to work on three fundamental issues that are policies incidence, legislative incidence and communication incidence focused specifically on lesbian, bisexual and also cis gender or trans gender communities. So, in this sense, we have worked to install in the public, political and social debate the historical demands of lesbians and bisexuals that have been generally omitted throughout the movement.

So, we undertake that task of being able to work and making these demands visible through this effective incidence. So much so that some organizations have also promoted, after we have carried out these campaigns and we have carried out a very successful advocacy, for example, in Congress and in public policies, they have promoted the same. Because they have realized this great historical debt that there is, for example, with lesbian and bisexual compañeras in Chile. That is why our work is so important. That is why it is so essential. And that is also where its importance lies, right?

So, basically, the organisation has set the tone, has installed issues, has installed debate, only with the aim of improving the human rights of lesbian and bisexual women so long invisible from all public, political and social discussion in Chile. That is why the work we do today is so important to us. In addition, as for the current political situation. Well, we are very happy and we highlight that, for example, the Convención Constituyente has a lesbian-feminist comrade. The dissidents are present there. Trans women are not there and for that we also are going to continue fighting in alliance with our fellow trans women so that there is effective representation and their voices are in all of politics, right?

The LGBTIQ + representativeness will always be important for our group and we also want to support in all the historical and political processes that are taking place where there is a real representation of our colleagues in all these spaces, so that they will hear our voices.





JEAN ENRIQUEZ

Coalition Against Trafficking
in Women - Asia Pacific

PHILLIPINES

**“ We led the women in protesting in
the streets to reject neo-fascism and
patriarchy ”**

I am Jean Enriquez, a leader of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women – Asia Pacific or CATW-AP, an international feminist organization based in Manila. CATW-AP fights all forms of sexual violence. I also coordinate the World March of Women in the Philippines, an international feminist grassroots movement against capitalism and patriarchy. In the Philippines, CATW-AP organizes women in communities most vulnerable to trafficking, not only because of poverty but also because climate crisis and conflict. We conduct grassroots education on women’s rights and empower them to combat all forms of violence against women at the community level. The work of gender-based violence watchgroups resulted in quantifiable decrease in all forms of gender-based violence in affected communities.

By strengthening the World March of Women in the Philippines, CATW-AP contributes to the broadening of unities, especially in the face of the rise of neo-fascism in the Philippines and other parts of the world. Even before President Duterte came to power, CATW-AP, WMW and Sentro sued Duterte. We won the case but because he assumed presidency, he became immune from suit. That did not stop us. We led the women in protesting in the streets to reject neo-fascism and patriarchy represented by the Duterte administration. We sustained this in the face of rape and death threats when Duterte came to power, we organized the widows and orphans of extra-judicial killings, other than survivors of trafficking, prostitution, rape. Eventually, the widows, and the survivors are in the streets with us protesting.

Our biggest challenge has been the neo-liberal project that gave rise to neo-fascism, push back the rights we fought for, and normalizes the rape culture saying that women choose the sexual violence we experience. As a survivor, I can say that women did not choose to be raped, to be prostituted. We stand to dismantle the neo-liberal system that seeks to keep women subjugated, objectified and commodified.

We do this because we and the women we represent have to survive. We do this because we need an alternative world – where women and the most oppressed can live and claim our rights – including that of life, security and dignity. We feel most successful when we are able to mobilize critical masses of women and when survivors themselves stand up and declare: Duterte and what he represents are not going to win. We, women and the oppressed peoples, will win!



“

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”

-Jean Enriquez



NOTE

The transcripts provided in this booklet represent the transcripts (or translations of the transcripts) provided by the speakers. In some instances, the transcriptions include information in excess of the accompanying video due to the video's editing. Additionally, some transcripts were edited to provide clarity.

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