

Layachi Anser

Women's Empowerment: Concepts and Contexts

1. Introduction: some facts on the situation of women
2. Women empowerment: an historical background
3. The Gender gap and gender equality
4. Women Empowerment: Multiple Aspects
5. Conclusion: some policy recommendation

Introduction: some facts

Before analyzing in details the meaning and significance of women's empowerment, we need to provide a brief account on women's situation. This will help us evaluate the fundamental importance of the issue and the immensity of the task at hand facing both governments and civil society at the national and international levels.

Existing data reported by various United Nations specialized agencies reveal a gloomy picture regarding women's situation. Women constitute more than 50 percent of the poorest people in the world today with responsibilities to feed and take care of whole families. These are direct bread winners toiling mainly in agriculture, but also in a large variety of productive activities and services in the crowded urban and slum areas of the megacities.

However, almost 75 percent of women in the world have no access to financial facilities like bank loans and credit lines for the simple reason that they have unpaid or insecure jobs and most of them are denied the right to property ownership. This is the true picture behind a very peculiar situation where women constitute over half the world's population, yet have only one percent of the world's wealth.

Available data also show that out of 1.3 billion people living in absolute poverty around the world, some 70 percent are women and girls. Such situation is characterized not only by dearth and hardships, but also denial of basic rights and lack of opportunities. (United Nations, 2010)

According to the UN Millennium campaign, women carry out two thirds of the world working time. It means the major share of work that maintains life, like farming, cooking, rearing children, looking after the elderly, housekeeping etc., is done by women. But these efforts are being undervalued, if not, totally ignored. They rarely appear on any society's records of production or added value.

It is striking that women's income share barely amounts to 10 percent of all income

distributed over the planet. Moreover, female labour, where it exists, is widely confined to marginal positions and low paid jobs. The majority of women are still living in a situation where traditions and customs deny women property rights, whether in land or other means of production, obstruct their access to loans, credit lines, the right to inheritance, or own their home, women face complete economic instability and cannot have any long term investment for themselves or in their children's future.

Turning to education and literacy, available data show that women make the bulk of the illiterate in the world, 2/3 of nearly 900 million adult illiterates worldwide. Girls make up 77% of some 77 million children deprived of primary education. Education is a decisive driving force for human development. Available data show women with access to education tend to have fewer children, (some studies correlate every additional year of education with a 10 percent drop in fertility). Educated women delay their marriage and pregnancies, have fewer and healthier children, (according to UN Population Fund, each additional year of women schooling is associated with 5 to 10% drop in child mortality) and they are more likely to send their children to school. But where women have no stable and permanent income to rely on and invest in their own or their children's education, where girls' education is considered superfluous and girls are valued for their contribution to household labour, they miss the excellent opportunity to enhance their status and position. In such situations it is not only individuals who stand to lose but also families, communities and society as a whole. The World Bank estimates that countries in Africa and South East Asia lose 1 to 5 percent in per capita income per year compared to countries where children enjoy quality basic education. (United Nations, 2010)

Women's Rights are Human Rights

“Women's rights” is a term which refers to the assumed liberties and privileges of female population. Such rights vary according to time and space, may or may not be recognized by law, suppressed or not by social norms in a given society and under specific historical conditions. These rights are usually distinguished from general notions of human rights that are recognized for male population. Moreover, advocates of this issue believe there is an intrinsic historical bias against women and girls. (Hosken, 1981)

Women's rights could be categorized into economic, social, legal and political rights. They encompass a wider range of issues such as the right to physical integrity and autonomy, to work, to equal wages, to own property, to education, to vote, to hold public office, to enter into legal contracts and to enjoy marital, parental and religious rights. (Lockwood, 2006). In many parts of the world, women and their advocates have campaigned and continue to do so for the same rights as men. (Lockwood, 2006).

Women worldwide had to struggle for decades to accede to their basic rights and elevate them into human rights. The long and extremely hard struggle culminated with

success in the International Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in June 1993. It was a mile stone in the modern history not only for women but for humanity generally. This was sooner followed by another major success represented by the UN General Assembly's ratification in December 1993 of the famous Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. Such success contributed to keep momentum on the issue of women's rights placing it top of the agenda not only for the UN institutions, but also for most governments and civil society organizations around the world. The long heated debate in precedent years was the driving force behind the advent of a new comprehensive conception of human rights which openly acknowledges women's rights as fundamental human rights. This significant change in approaching human rights was further strengthened by the appointment of a special Rapporteur on violence against women by the UN commission on human rights less than a year later in March 1994. (UN Population Information Network (POPIN))

The dramatic development in this area revealed what great potential the human rights framework can provide to the cause of women's rights. Nonetheless, the real effects of those changes were hampered by many structural and systemic factors excluding the majority of women in the world whose conditions remained much the same. Societies and culture worldwide were slow to respond to changes brought about by political and legal measures, thus denying women almost everywhere some fundamental rights. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) approved in 1979 presented yet another fantastic opportunity for the international community to enhance women's status and role in a large number of countries. This convention, unlike others in the field of human rights, compels signatory members to make practical arrangements to eliminate forms of discrimination regardless of their source and nature. Furthermore, the convention not only secures fundamental human rights, but also indicates practical measures, tools and areas of interest to women and their advocates, such as affirmative action, access to health and education, changing sex roles and stereotypes. These actions are of vital importance especially to women in the poorer countries and in the rural areas. (UN Population Information Network (POPIN))

Gender Equality: meaning and impact

Gender equality is a term that covers the area of gender equity, gender egalitarianism, or sexual equality. It could be defined as a complex process that aims to establish fairness of treatment and provide women and men with equal opportunities, rights and responsibilities. (UNDP, 2008) Such objective is rooted in a belief in the injustice of numerous forms of gender inequality, leading to what has become known as gender gap. (United Nations, 1997). This latter phenomenon is best combated through mainstreaming a gender perspective.¹⁵

United Nations bodies and agencies make a strong link between gender equality and

human rights, especially women's rights and economic development. (World Bank, 2006) (United Nations, 2008). UNICEF, for example, defines gender equality as "leveling the playing field for girls and women by ensuring that all children have equal opportunity to develop their talents." (UNICEF ., 2008)

The United Nations Population Fund has explicitly considered gender equality "first and foremost, a human right." (UNFPA , 2006). Furthermore, "Gender equity" is one of the major goals of the United Nations Millennium Project, to end world poverty by 2015. The project goes farther to argue "Every single Goal is directly related to women's rights, and societies where women are not afforded equal rights as men can never achieve development in a sustainable manner." (United Nations, 2008)

Enhancing gender equality is, therefore, considered a strong endorsement to greater economic success. (World Bank, 2006). For example, Arab countries that deny equality of opportunity to women were strongly criticized by a United Nations' report released in 2008. The report alerted that such disempowerment played a critical role in hindering their development in many areas such as commerce, learning and culture. (E-Joussour , 2008)

Gender equality has to be accepted by both men and women as having positive material and moral impact on the lives of those concerned. For example, a Swedish study of gender equality in 2007 revealed that "negative effects" to health for both sexes are observed due to increased stress of the opportunities in the workplace. It suggests that "one-sided expansion by women into traditionally male roles, spheres and activities will not lead to positive health effects unless men also significantly alter their behavior". (Backhans, 2007)

The impact of gender equality:

Gender equality is not only an end in itself, being a fundamental human right, but is also considered an effective and efficient tool to achieve other valued objectives, including economic prosperity for both women and their communities. In the following, I will briefly present some of the implications of gender equality.

1- Equality between men and women is more than a matter of social justice - it's a fundamental human right. Furthermore, gender equality also makes an efficient means to achieve economic success. By having equal opportunity and acceding to good education, women can effectively participate in diverse economic activities and fully take part in decision-making. Such achievements will make women a genuine driving force

15 "Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality." See United Nations: Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997. A/52/3.18 September 1997, p 28

for sustainable development and a significant contribution to the combat against poverty.

2- Gender equality is therefore a pivotal element that gives women access to other fundamental rights like, quality education, good health, access to property ownership and financial help. For the moment, women are still lagging behind on all indicators; in terms of political participation they only represent $\frac{1}{4}$ in national legislatures or parliaments. Girls still constitute the majority of children not attending schools, and almost two thirds of women in developing nations work in the informal sector and/or as unpaid domestic workforce. Yet, these are among the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which all nations accepted to achieve by 2015.

3- Gender equality is rightly considered by UN specialized bodies and NGOs an essential “condition for comprehensive, democratic, violence-free and sustainable development.” This attitude is behind concerted efforts made by all UN bodies, particularly UNDP, and NGOs around the globe to work collaboratively with national partners to ensure a full and effective involvement of women in planning, budgeting, and policy-making processes. Encouraging governments and private enterprises alike to promote women’s economic opportunities. To hold governments responsible for the provision of essential public services such as education, health care and dissent shelter for all citizens, including women and girls, equitably. (UNDP, 2008).

Women’s Empowerment: concept and context

Although it is a contemporary catchword, the word empower is not new, having arisen in the mid-17th century with the juridical meaning “to invest with authority, authorize.” Shortly afterward it acceded to a more general use meaning “to enable or permit.” Both of these usages survive today but have been overwhelmed by the word’s use in politics and popular psychology. However, its modern use originated in the civil rights movement’s pursuit of political empowerment for its followers. The word was then used by the women’s movement, and its appeal has not diminished since.¹⁶ As people of all political creed have a need for a word that makes their constituents feel that they are, or are about to become more in control of their destinies, the term empower has been adopted by conservatives as well as social reformers. It has even migrated out of the political field to become an interdisciplinary notion. (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2009.)

However, according to the free encyclopedia Wikipedia, the word empowerment “covers a wide range of meanings, interpretations, definitions and disciplines starting from individual psychology and philosophy” to the highly publicized self-help business and

¹⁶ According to the definition used by the World Bank “Empowerment is the process of enhancing the capacity of individual or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets.”

behavioral or managerial sciences. As for the Sociological meaning, empowerment often refers to power acquired by members of groups that have been excluded from decision-making processes, on grounds of disability; race; ethnicity; religion, or gender. Today, Empowerment as a methodology is too often associated with gender equality and feminism (Wikipedia.org, 2010). The term also refers “to increasing the spiritual, political, social or economic strength of individuals and communities. It often involves the empowered developing confidence in their capacities” (Wikipedia.org, 2010).

In a more comprehensive sense empowerment is a complex process through which individuals and /or groups gain full access to their personal/collective power resources and authority to influence their rapport to other people, institutions and society. Consequently, Women’s empowerment covers a wide spectrum of issues that can be easily summarized into five important components:

1. The extent to which women hold a sense of positive self-image;
2. Women’s right to have access to, and make choices.
3. The right to enjoy equal access to resources and opportunities,
4. The right to self-determination and control over their own lives,
5. The ability to influence the course of events both locally and globally. (UN Population Information Network (POPIN))

The concept in this wider and comprehensive sense became popular through the use of the United Nations specialized institutions in the beginning of the 1990’s. The United Nations various institutions became especially aware of the increasing significance of women’s empowerment to the success of development programmes in developing countries. The empowerment of women was crucial component to a great number of declarations and platforms of action such as the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the 1993 Human Rights Conference, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, the 1995 World Summit for Social Development and the Regional Preparatory Conferences for the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. This increased interest in, and understanding of, women’s pivotal role in the development process has also been mirrored in the goals and priorities of all UN organizations and agencies. The United Nations resident agents in developing countries have been urged to play a greater role in facilitating interagency cooperation on the specific issues of gender equality, equity and women’s empowerment at country level.

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) has stressed in its programme of action that women’s empowerment and autonomy is highly important both as an end in itself and necessary tool to achieve sustainable human development. It openly states that “Advancing gender equality and equity, empowerment, and the elimination of all kinds of violence against women... are priority objectives of the international community”(Principle 4 of the ICPD Programme of Action). (United Nations, 2009)

The ICPD recognizes in its programme of action that women everywhere are not only facing hardships, but their lives; health and well-being are also at risk. They receive less education and lack equitable access to many other resources making them overrepresented among the poor, the needy and the powerless. A concerted programme of action is required to overturn such situation and give women access to scarce resources, ease their household tasks and remove legal and social barriers to their effective participation in the public sphere. Women have to be freed from the specter of domestic violence and enhance their social awareness and commitment through education and mass communication programmes. By now, it has become evident that the central issue uniting all the major international conferences of the 1990's is women's empowerment. Moreover, the international community has assumed the responsibility for fulfilling the major commitments to help make women's empowerment a reality of today's world.

Women's Empowerment: the economic aspect

Women's economic empowerment, is therefore, a process that requires daring, comprehensive and sustained policies to advance women's chances and rights and to ensure they can participate effectively in all sorts of economic activities and their voice be heard. To increase women economic prospects and chances, they need access to the labour markets, increase their share of better paid and secure jobs, a good environment that helps them to start their own businesses. They also require financial services specifically tailored to meet their needs. They also need security and care in times of crises and disputes. "This is especially true for women living in rural areas and vulnerable environments".

In this context, it is argued, there are crucial factors to ensure that women's empowerment is genuine and not factitious. They include legal rights giving access to land property, effective participation in decision making, representation in local institutions, securing access to appropriate financial services and other forms of technical help. Women's empowerment is an essential and highly important goal, "ranked third among the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – and it plays a vital role to speed progress toward other MDGs." (UNDP, 2008)

It is noticeable that the term women's economic empowerment is often used in relation to- and sometimes interchangeably with – gender equality and women's rights. But the question is how does this concept operate into a larger context which does not only ensure gender equality, but also contributes to advance society in general?

Since development was for a long time defined and measured strictly by economic indicators, progress too was measured in economic terms. Consequently, economic growth and income distribution are considered decisive factors to combat poverty and economic empowerment a vital aspect of gender equality and women's empowerment.

This conception or rather misconception of development led international agencies, governments and private businesses to concentrate their efforts on economic aspects in an attempt to enlist support for gender equality dimension. But the validity of such conception of development has been severely challenged¹⁷ and so is the validity of the term empowerment which is closely related to it. What are the wider implications of this concept on women's sense of identity, on the concept of work, and on the overall notions of well being and progress? Is there a danger that it might neglect or even reinforces the latent structures of injustice that we are combating? Today, some argue that the use of the term empowerment and its relation to gender equality should be rooted in an alternative approach, one that values justice, freedom and human integrity for all. Development strategies based on notions of economic growth tend to advocate women's empowerment through various measures that direct women from the early age into programmes of entrepreneurship. This can also be seen from allocating resources to educational programmes stressing financial skills on how to invest, how to save and how to access markets. These are considered as important skills for women and girls to manage their own businesses. Such measures and skills could probably contribute to lift women from poverty and ensure material prosperity for them and their communities. But would they be of any significance for intrinsic human and social values such as honesty, reliability, cooperation and collective responsibility that should go along with sound financial management? Are those skills sufficient to empower women making them principal actors in a process of sustained change and integrate them in a more holistic notion of development and well being? Are there alternative models of development that can strengthen the community and its economy while addressing at the same time crucial issues of injustice and social inequality, to avoid having women turned into mere tools of economic growth?

While it is incontestably true that economic empowerment is an important component to provide women with means of subsistence and material prosperity, to give them a meaningful life, the crucial issue is to change attitudes and perceptions. To seed in peoples' minds and hearts that men and women cannot improve their lives separately, or at the expense of each other. They must believe in the equality of their chances and struggle to obtain it and preserve it if they are to build a humane society. The main idea is that economic empowerment should not be thought of separately from moral empowerment. Building a social system on self interest alone can be very damaging to both individuals and society. It contradicts the very basis of family, community spirit and human solidarity built on love, generosity, social responsibility and parental devotion to material and moral welfare of the children, relatives and neighbors.

Studies in this field have shown that women are not only confronted with difficult choices between career and family, but many have already chosen not to marry, or not to become mothers. Family is in danger of losing more ground as women are eco-

¹⁷ See the rich and varied scholarly work produced by scholars such as Samir Amin, Immanuel Wallerstein, Andre Gander Frank among others, on the notions of underdevelopment, dependency and unequal world exchange.

nomically empowered, women are trading off their role as first educator against paid career and children and family life are only the first victims. There is an urgent need to reconsider the relationship between men and women as strategic partners may be with different roles, but certainly with shared responsibilities for building an equitable society. This goal has to start at the family level or will have no chance to be achieved. This vision of empowerment goes beyond acquiring mere technical skills or financial know-how and managerial expertise, it is based on men and women engaging into a process of self transformation in order to transcend existing social structures and build a humanely balanced social order. (advancingeconomics.blogspot, 2010)

Women's Empowerment: the political aspect

Promoting women's political participation and involvement in public affairs does not benefit to women alone, but also to men and communal life generally. This makes women's effective involvement in politics a crucial issue with far reaching consequences on the development of society as whole. Women's participation in politics may take various forms such as active involvement in community life, civil society organizations, local authority bodies and government institutions. In all such instances, women should be equally and effectively represented in various processes of decision making. (Nussbaum, 2003)

In the last few decades some spectacular changes have occurred in this field. Despite the fact that women still constitute only a minority in national parliaments (19%) worldwide, an even increasing number of countries have opened their parliaments to women representation either through free election or quota systems. Rwanda, a small central African country emerging from civil war, made the headlines in September 2008 being the first country in the world to elect more women than men to its national parliament (56%). (Krook, 2010). Other countries have made spectacular advance on this issue including Sweden (47%), South Africa (45%), and Costa Rica (39%) pointing to a growing worldwide trend. But there also exceptions, particularly among old democracies of the West like France (19%), and the USA (17%) barely achieving the world average representation. The 2010 legislatures in Britain brought an unprecedented number of women to the House of Commons (22%), but even this was a modest increase over the previous elections (Krook, 2010). However, even with these dramatic developments, issues regarding the status and role of women in public life, particularly their participation in politics are still major questions of discussion and debate.

In most developing nations, the driving force behind women success has been the adoption of electoral gender quota systems. These take various forms including reserved seats for women, party quotas voluntarily adopted by political parties, or legislative quotas passed by law imposing on political parties the nomination of a specific proportion of women. Today, more than 100 countries worldwide have resorted to one or another type of gender quota system to enhance women's presence in politics. The

sudden spread of this tool in the last two decades have led to a heated debate and discussion, particularly from those who consider them unfair and weaken merit as an essential criterion of representation. (Bassu, 2003)

Nevertheless, gender quota system could fulfill various functions besides increasing women's political participation. Advocates point to the fact that it boosts diversity among elected women themselves, attracts more attention to women's problems in policy making, alters the gender aspect of the public field and encourages female voters to become more involved in politics. Whereas, opponents fear that quota will open the way to unqualified, inexperienced and less interested women to hold office, thus reinforcing the stereotypes about women's lack of skill and performance.

The existing empirical evidence is lacking and contradictory at the same time. While some studies reveal that quota systems opened the way to elite women, either women having strong ties with powerful men or those loyal to political parties. Others show that quota brought more diversity and provides chances to young women and sometimes women from marginalized groups. But all concede that women acceding to office through quota systems were relatively lacking political experience. This is a double edged argument that points to both lack of qualification and lack of opportunity and discrimination which keeps women in a vicious circle. (Tambiah, 2003)

Women's Empowerment: the cultural aspect

The cultural aspect is probably the most contested sphere of women's empowerment providing opponents with diverse arguments that policies enhancing women's status represent undue interference with established traditions, harmful for customs and religion. But these are not always authentic and neutral claims. In many instances, they represent a defense of the status quo and preserve interests of particular social groups, strata or classes. Hence, the need to draw a clear line between cultural traditions, beliefs and social practices that are harmful to women's fundamental rights like forced early marriage, gender violence and denial of inheritance rights and those which affect women positively such as praise of elderly women and their traditional skills and know-how. (UN Population Information Network (POPIN))

Advocates of women's empowerment should stress the relational nature of all societal aspects be that material or moral. Consequently, change in the material side such as the adoption of new technologies, economic development and new forms of organization will bring with them changes in the socio-cultural aspect including family relationships, social status, roles, values and perceptions of life and society. Women's rights and women's empowerment should be considered as integral parts of a general strategy for social and economic development worldwide, but especially in the poorer countries. The champions of cultural specificities should understand that culture has never been a fixed entity accomplished once for all, but rather a synergy of values, dogma and

perceptions embedded in continuous processes of formation and change. Culture is a complex human artifact produced in response to internal and external challenges; environmental, economic, social and political.

It is also very important to note that culture and society as concepts or theoretical categories may be misleading in implying uniformity and conformity. Both society and culture are based on social interaction, practical relationships and as such they are diverse, plural and produced by different groups with opposed and perhaps conflicting interests. Society and Culture usually refer to the established social order, one that reflects a certain balance of power between various groups and interests. But nonetheless, they represent dominant groups and their interests at specific point in history. Hence, the use of culture by opponents to deny women's rights has to be questioned and not taken for granted. They almost invariably represent factional interests of dominant groups under the patriarchic social order in which women are kept under male subjugation. The appeal to cultural and religious specificity is more often than not a cover that preserves social control and oppression. The claim that gender discrimination is "natural" and part of a nation's culture reflects the assertion that domestic violence is a private family matter rather than a public offense. Gender discrimination is like race discrimination, both cannot be justified. If South Africa's apartheid policies received international condemnation, so should be the case with gender discrimination. (UN Population Information Network (POPIN))

Modalities to enhance women's empowerment

Enhancing women's empowerment in all its aspects requires coordinated actions and policies between various bodies, institutions and agencies at the international, national and local levels, governmental and non-governmental, public and private. Governments and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) should draw national plans indicating specific goals and establish indicators to achieve realistic levels of gender equality and women's empowerment. They have to provide training in gender analysis and gender-sensitive programming for government officials, staff, partners and individuals in NGOs. Grass-roots women's movements have to be involved in working sessions and meetings of international and national officials as well as international NGOs. Furthermore, there is a pressing need for establishing research institutions and study groups bringing together gender experts from governments, NGOs, women's grass-root organizations and academia. The incorporation of various civil society organizations and actors will ensure women's opinions and views are taken into account at all levels of policy-making process.

In order to consolidate a critical mass of support for gender-sensitive policies, these should not be left to relatively junior staff as this more often reinforces the existing marginality of women's interests and concerns in strategies of national development. The high-level advocacy and representation will serve to legitimize gender interests in

the eyes of international agencies' staff and local partners alike, thus making development strategies most effective. (UN Population Information Network (POPIN))

Some Policy Recommendations

a- Economic Empowerment

Women's economic empowerment can be achieved through a selection of measures including the following actions:

- Extending education and training opportunities to women and girls at all levels to provide them with much needed skills and know-how necessary to be actively involved in various economic and social activities.
- Endorsing increased recognition of women's unpaid care work, as well as its reduction and redistribution between males and females within families and communities.
- Encouraging research in the field of customary law to enhance women's position and give them better access to land and participation in decision-making.
- Developing women's business' opportunities through training schemes focused on technical skills, management aptitudes and functional literacy.
- Backing business projects that observe equality of chances and fairness of standards and rules in the workplace.
- Support efforts aimed at strengthening women's legal rights to hold and manage property. (United Nations, 2010)

b- Political Empowerment

These are few policy recommendations which may be useful to formulate institutional strategies for capacity building to empower women politically:

- Close the gender gap in education at all levels, especially in primary and secondary education. The role of equality in education in bringing about equality in all walks of life is well known and discussed in much detail in most studies dealing with this issue.
- Increase the visibility and representativity of women in public office using different forms of quota systems.
- Enhance women's leadership by helping to reform electoral processes, change political parties' rules, and strengthen parliaments, judiciaries and the civil service.
- Strengthen the ability of women's organizations to advocate and implement projects that promote women's rights.
- Promote legal reforms to ensure equal legal protection to women and girls.
- Ensure that essential public services like health and education benefit women, girls, men and boys equitably.
- Promote the ratification, implementation, and reporting on women's international and regional instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.
- Reduce gender-based violence through raising awareness, promoting family con-

sultation services and training of human rights activists.

- Encourage governments and civil society organizations to adopt policies that help eliminate gender biases in all sectors and in its various forms and expressions. All parties should make concerted efforts to integrate gender awareness into policies, programmes and institutional reforms. They must strive to mobilize and engage men in the struggle to end gender inequality; and develop gender-sensitive tools to check progress and ensure accountability. (UNDP: women empowerment) (UNDP, 2010)

Bibliography

- (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/popin/unfpa/taskforce/guide/iatfwemp.gdl.html>
- advancingeconomics.blogspot. (2010, March 01). Retrieved 09 12, 2010, from <http://advancingeconomics.blogspot.com: http://advancingeconomics.blogspot.com/search/label/gender%20equality>
- Alastair Mcintosh, B. M. (2000). Interview with Prof William Montgomery Watt. Retrieved 09 15, 2010, from <http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/articles/>: http://www.alastairmcintosh.com/articles/2000_watt.htm
- Backhans, M. C. (2007). Does increased gender equality lead to a convergence of health outcomes for men and women? A study of Swedish municipalities Swedish National Institute of Public Health. *Social Science & Medecin*, May; 64 (9) , 1892-903.
- Badawi, J. A. (1971.). "The Status of Women in Islam". *Al-Ittihad Journal of Islamic Studies* 8 (2) , <http://iaislam.tripod.com/TSOWII.htm>.
- Badr, G. M., & Mayer, A. E. ((Winter 1984).). "Islamic Criminal Justice". 32 (1): . *The American Journal of Comparative Law* (*American Society of Comparative Law*) , 167–169 167–8. .
- Bassu, A. (2003). *Gender and Governance: Concepts and Contexts*. In H. D. UNDP, *Essays on Gender and Governance* (pp. 20-58). New Delhi: HDRC- UNDP.
- Brody, M. (1983). *Mary Wollstonecraft: Sexuality and women's rights (1759–1797)*, . In D. Spender, *Feminist theorists: Three centuries of key women thinkers* (pp. pp. 40–59). Pantheon, ISBN 0-394-53438-7.
- Campbell, J. (1967). *Myth, religion, and mother-right: selected writings of JJ Bachofen*. N.J: Princeton,. Manheim, R (trans.), introduction xxxiii.
- E-Joussour . (2008). *UN Report: Gender Equality in Arab world critical for progress and prosperity*. Rabat: E-Joussour.
- Esposito, J. L. (2005). "Politics and Religion: Politics and Islam.". In E. L. Jones, *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed (p. p. 79). New York: Mcmillan.
- Esposito, J. L. (2000 , 399). *The Oxford History of Islam*,. Oxford: ISBN 0-19-510799-3, .
- Gouges, O. d. (1791). *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen*,. Paris: Macdonald and Scherf, "Introduction", 11–12. .
- Hosken, F. P. (1981). "Towards a Definition of Women's Rights'. *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 3, No. 2. , pp. 1–10.
- Houghton Mifflin Company. . (2009.). *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, forth edition, 2000. Houghton Mifflin Company. .
- <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/> (n.d.). Retrieved 08 20, 2010, from [journal_of_womens_history/](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_womens_history/): http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/journal_of_womens_history/v012/12.2braukman.html
- Jones, L. (2005). *Encyclopedia of religion*, second edition, p.6224,. New Yourk: Mcmillan, ISBN 0-02-865742-X.
- Khadduri, M. (1978). *Marriage in Islamic Law: The Modernist Viewpoints*,. *American Journal of Comparative Law*, Vol. 26, No. 2 , pp. 213–218.
- Krook, M. L. (2010, June 18). *Gender Quota and women's political empowerment*. Retrieved 09 10, 2010, from *Electronic International Relations*: <http://www.e-ir.info/?p=4433>
- Lauren, P. G. (2003). *The evolution of international human rights: visions seen*. . Pennsylvania : University of Pennsylvania Press. pp. 29 & 30. ISBN 9780812218541. .
- Lauren, Paul Gordon. (2003). *The evolution of international human rights: visions seen*. Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press. pp. 32. ISBN 9780812218541.
- Lockwood, B. B. (2006). *Women's Rights: A "Human Rights Quarterly" Reader* . Baltimore, Maryland : Johns Hopkins University Press, ISBN 9780801883743.
- Maine, H. S. (1861). *Ancient Law* .
- Mishra, R. C. (2006.). *Towards Gender Equality*. Authors press. ISBN 81-7273-306-2. <https://www.vedamsbooks.com/no43902.htm>.
- Naish, C. (1991). *Death comes to the maiden: Sex and Execution, 1431–1933*. London: Routledge. p. 137. ISBN 978-0415055857.
- Nussbaum, M. (2003). *Gender and Governance: an Introduction*. In H. D. UNDP, *Essays on Gender and Governance* (pp. 1-19). New Delhi: HDRC-UNDP.

Schimmel, A. ((1992) p.65). Islam: an Introduction, , Albany : State University of New York Press.

Tambiah, Y. (2003). The Impact of Gender Inequality on Governance. In H. D. UNDP, Essays on Gender and Governance (pp. 59-95). New Delhi: HDRC- UNDP.

UN Population Information Network (POPIN). (n.d.). un.org/popin/unfpa. Retrieved 09 15, 2010, from taskforce/guide/: <http://www.un.org/popin/unfpa/taskforce/guide/iatfwemp.gdl.html>

UNDP. (2008). Empowered and Equal: Gender Equality Strategy 2008-2011. New York: United Nations.

UNDP. (2010, Sept 03). UNDP: Democratic Governanc. Retrieved Sept 03, 2010, from UNDP website: http://www.undp.org/governance/focus_womens_empowerment.shtml

UNFPA . (2006, Feb.). United Nations Population Fund. Retrieved 06 01, 2010, from UNFPA/ender Equality: <http://www.unfpa.org/gender/>

UNICEF . (2008, May 12). UNICEF "Gender equality". Retrieved 08 01, 2010, from unicef.org/gender/: <http://www.unicef.org/gender/>

United Nations. (1997). Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997. A/52/3. New York: United Nations.

United Nations. (2009, 09). un.org/popin/. Retrieved 09 03, 2010, from United Nation Fund for Population: Source: <http://www.un.org/popin/unfpa/taskforce/guide/iatfwemp.gdl.html>

United Nations. (2008). United Nations Millennium Campaign/gender-equity. Retrieved 08 01, 2010, from endpoverty2015.org: <http://www.endpoverty2015.org/goals/gender-equity>.

United Nations. (2010, 09 03). Whitepapers. Retrieved 09 03, 2010, from care.org/ website: http://www.care.org/newsroom/publications/whitepapers/woman_and_empowerment.pdf

Walters, M. (2005). Feminism: A very short introduction . Oxford, : Oxford University Press, ISBN 978019280510X.

Wikipedia.org. (2010). Definition: Women Empowermen. Retrieved 09 10, 2010, from wiki/Empowerment: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empowerment>

wikipedia. (2010, 08). Women's_rights. Retrieved 09 12, 2010, from Wikipedia.org/: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women's_rights

womenshistory.about.com. (n.d.). Retrieved 09 15, 2010, from marriedwomensproperty: 22. http://womenshistory.about.com/od/marriedwomensproperty/a/property_1848ny.htm

World Bank. (2006). Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan. New York: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/GAPNov2.pdf>.

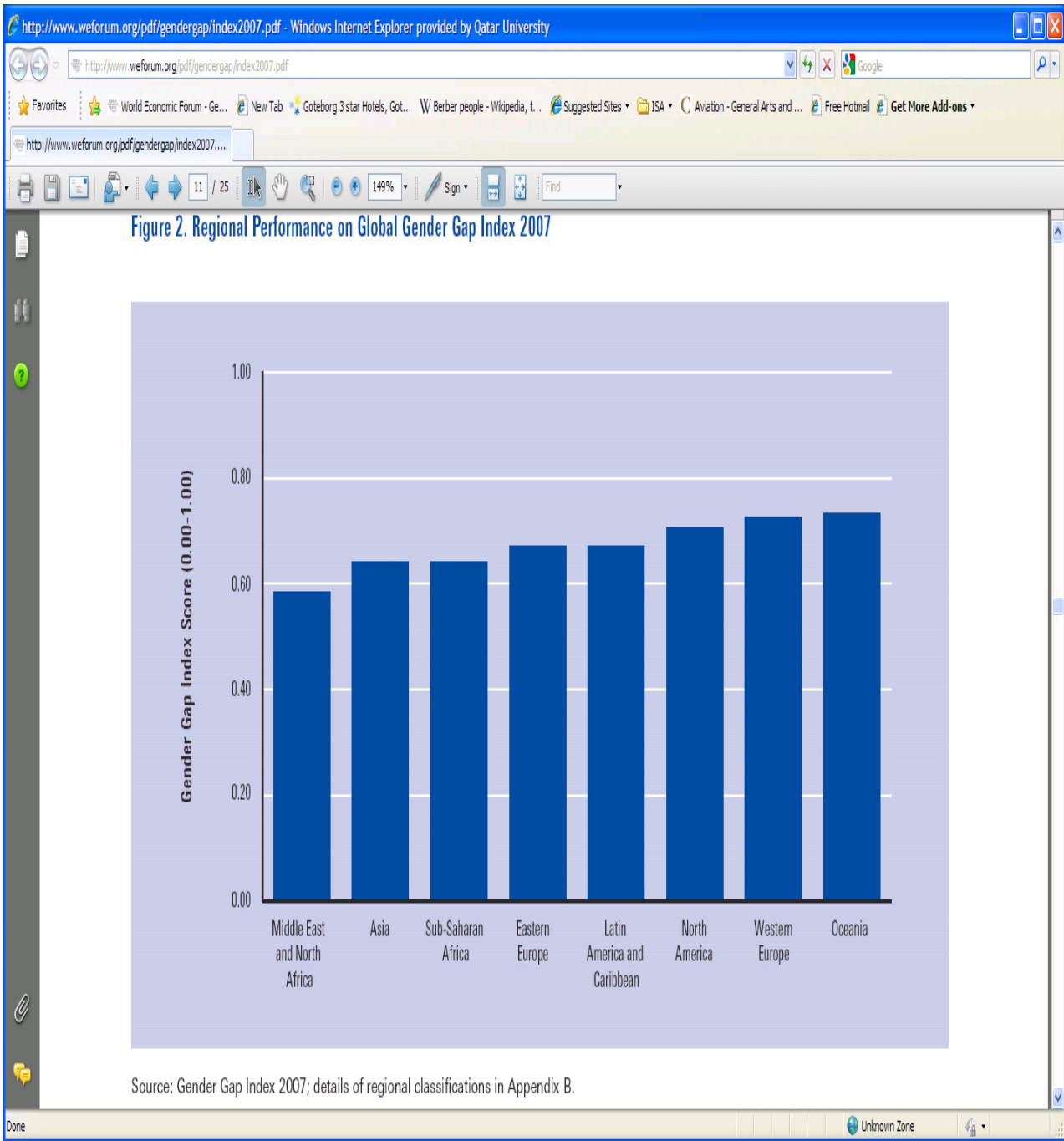
www.britannica.com/. (n.d.). Retrieved 08 20, 2010, from Married-Womens-Property-Acts: 24. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/366305/Married-Womens-Property-Acts>

www.umd.umich.edu/. (n.d.). Retrieved 08 20, 2010, from classes/434/geweb/PROPERTY.htm: <http://www.umd.umich.edu/casl/hum/eng/classes/434/geweb/PROPERTY.htm>

حطّاب, ز. (1976). تطور بنى الأسرة العربية... الجذور التاريخية والاجتماعية لقضاياها المعاصرة. بيروت: معهد الإنماء العربي.

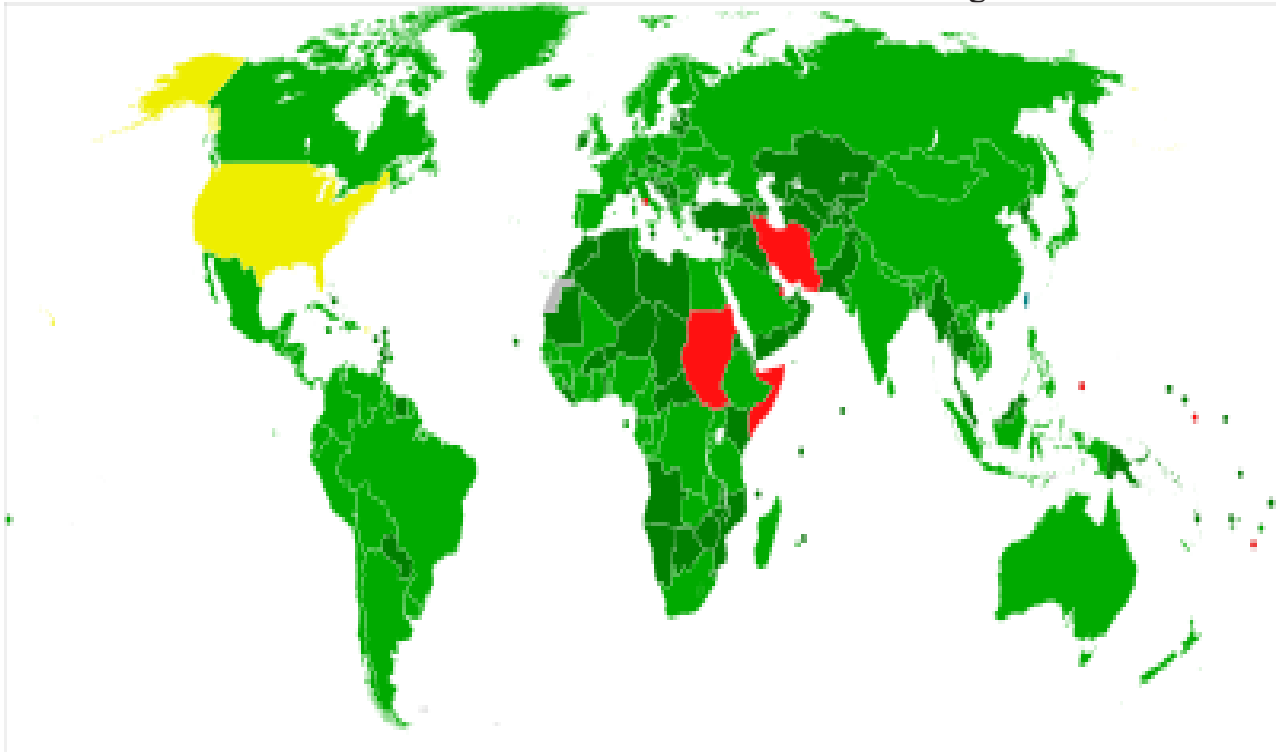
Appendix:

1- Gender Gap Regional Ranking 2007



2- Global Map of CEDAW

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women



Participation in the CEDAW

- Signed and ratified
- *Only signed*
- Acceded or succeeded
- *Non-signatory*
- Unrecognized state, abiding by treaty