

GIFTED WOMEN

Great Ideas For Transformation, Empowerment and Development of Women

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A UNESCO-SHS NEWSLETTER

This newsletter aims at raising awareness on advances in the social and human sciences which are directly relevant to the 2030 international development goal of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

POINT OF VIEW

“The social sciences in the Arab world”

For many years, social sciences in the Arab world lived in a crisis primarily because of the nature of the incubating institutions. Social sciences' natural place is in public universities, which are, unfortunately, witnessing a continuous decline. The lack of an environment to encourage critical thinking, in a tense and non-liberal political environment, often results in the production of research with weak relevance to the issues pressing a community. Therefore, after five years of work, we have changed many of the programs of the [Arab Council for the Social Sciences \(ACSS\)](#) in line with this reality, but certainly have tried to keep our basic objectives. In the beginning, we did not have any programs geared to undergraduate or master's degree students. Research production begins only with the doctoral degree, but the quality of research we found prompted us to work from the very early stages.



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Seteney Shami

Director-General of the Arab Council for the Social Sciences (ACSS)

Funding is, of course, very important, and it is the main goal behind the establishment of the Council. We did not want it to be a research center as much as we wanted it to be a center of support for scholars, whether individuals or institutions. Besides the difficulty of obtaining funding, there are other difficulties related to the publishing opportunities for scholars. We have provided funding for about 130 researchers over the past three years, but most of them face difficulties in publishing. We have thought of creating a journal to help researchers publish their work, but such a step needs time and funding as well, and we prefer primarily to be a research-support center and not a publisher. The Council uses a broad definition of the social sciences, including the basic sciences such as anthropology and demography, moving to economics, political science, psychology, and sociology, and relating these disciplines to arts, architecture, geography, history, law, literature, philosophy, and public health. This is an interesting approach as it opens the field of social science research so it intersects in multiple places, just as in reality. There is a great opportunity for researchers today to work seriously to change the reality of social research and consolidate its presence and impact in the region. Today, there are many efforts to read the reality, but we need to make a critical reading and provide a perception of the future too.

READ HERE THE COMPLETE INTERVIEW

Quote of the Quarter

“Extremists have shown what frightens them most: a girl with a book!”



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Malala Yousafzai

Social Science Research for Advocacy
The woman responsible for OXFAM's 2017 report
« An Economy for the 99% »



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Deborah Hardoon

Deputy Head of OXFAM's
 Research Team in Great
 Britain

The report "[An Economy for the 99%](#)" prepared by OXFAM for Davos 2017 went viral in a few hours. It presented a new set of "killer facts" that received immediate and widespread attention:

- Since 2015, the richest 1% has owned more wealth than the rest of the planet.
- Just eight men own the same wealth as the poorest half of the world.
- Over the next 20 years, 500 people will hand over \$2.1 trillion to their heirs – a sum larger than the GDP of India, a country of 1.3 billion people.
- One-third of the world's billionaire wealth is derived from inherited wealth, while 43% can be linked to cronyism.

Oxfam's 2017 report is the most recent in a series of reports that has analysed economic inequality and its drivers. Each of these reports was published to coincide with the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos. Each year the report has included an analysis of wealth inequality which drew on data from the [Credit Suisse Global Wealth Databook](#) and the [Forbes list of billionaires](#). The previous reports were:

- January 2014 '[Working for the Few](#)'
- January 2015 '[Wealth: having it all and wanting more](#)'
- January 2016 '[An economy for the 1%](#)'
- January 2017 '[An economy for the 99%](#)'

Oxfam's desk-based research synthesizes existing research and evidence on economic inequality and its relationship with poverty, and focusses on evidence for how the activities of multinational corporations and very wealthy individuals relate to inequality. Oxfam uses the most up-to-date wealth distribution data to calculate headline statistics. Oxfam also works in almost 100 countries around the world, from which evidence is gathered.

"[An Economy for the 99%](#)" consolidates what Oxfam knows about the problems of extreme inequality and provides a propositional approach to rebooting the global and national economies onto a more just path.

The inequality of wealth that these calculations illustrate has attracted a lot of attention, due to both the obscene level of inequality they expose and to the underlying data and the calculations themselves.

The report, which is part of OXFAM's "[Even It Up](#)" advocacy campaign, was produced by [Deborah Hardoon](#), Deputy Head of Oxfam's Research Team in Great Britain, who works on issues related to economic and social justice. Her current activities involve data analysis, constructing indices and analysing quantitative and qualitative data, particularly in the context of inequality.

Prior to joining Oxfam GB in October 2013, Deborah was the Research Manager at [Transparency International](#), responsible for global corruption measurement tools, including the [Corruption Perceptions Index](#). She was an [ODI](#) fellow in Lesotho between 2009 and 2011, and before that worked for three years as a commercial analyst at BP. Deborah holds a BA in Economics and Business Management from Newcastle University and an MA in Economics from the University of British Columbia in Canada.



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AN ECONOMY FOR THE 99%

It's time to build a human economy that benefits everyone, not just the privileged few.

www.oxfam.org

From Ideas to Action

The Role of Women in Countering Terror in Nigeria



“There is no other group as qualified as women to develop strategies aimed at countering terrorism.”

Esther Abimiku Ibanga

Pastor and activist, founder of “Women Without Walls Initiative” (WWWI), Nigeria

Strategies aimed at preventing and countering violent extremism will be most effective if they prioritize consultations with women-led civil society groups in their development and implementation, and women’s inclusion in the security sector.

In the face of evolving global security challenges in which a growing number of conflicts involve insurgencies, extremist and criminal groups use violence to achieve their goals, the ways in which communities and security actors understand, manage and respond to serious threats can have significant an impact on long-term prospects for peace. A lack of platforms for civic participation in security matters, or a lack of respect for human rights and the rule of law by security actors, can fuel grievances that fuel violence and crime. In particular women-led civil society organizations are typically excluded from policies and processes aimed at combating violent extremism, despite their knowledge in this area.

In Nigeria, the insurgency by Boko Haram, which has been running for the past five years, has led to a humanitarian crisis. The increasing threat to security has shocked and stressed communities. This has altered the social fabric of our country, affecting livelihoods and economic activities, and creating deep resentment, hostility and mistrust.

Women have been killed, widowed, raped or kidnapped by Boko Haram to become sex slaves, cooks and cleaners. The few that have escaped from Boko Haram camps have returned pregnant and traumatized, or even infected with HIV. If women are the most vulnerable to this insurgency, then they have earned the right to be included in security. We cannot continue with the same exclusive and hard security approaches to combatting violent extremism and expect a different result. Understanding alternative approaches to preventing violent extremism has never been more important.

An alternative and effective (cost, time and value) model - that will not only uphold human rights but also promote just and sustainable security responses to violent extremism - is needed. This model must seek to take its struggle from the open battlefields of counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism into communities dealing with and addressing the root causes of this violence.

In Nigeria, as well as most African nations, the involvement of women in security is seen as alien and taboo - and sometimes offensive to the men. Women civil society groups tap into the needs of communities, where women and children are disproportionately impacted by terrorism. They can facilitate better communication between the security sector and communities to address grievances with the state, and can be tremendous advocates for needed changes in the way governments approach these issues, ensuring they are effective and sustainable. When women are included in the security sector, they also help to present a softer face of security forces and reduce human rights abuses that anger communities.

Religion has always been used as a powerful weapon for terrorism and violent extremism so the first strategy WOWWI adopted was, in its formation and constitution, to include both Christian and Muslim women who have refused to allow religion to be used as a tool for hate and division.

WOWWI has a strategy to preventing extremist violence at the local level which involves leading training sessions on human rights and facilitating security dialogues (HRSD) in local communities. The training sessions were designed to strengthen WOWWI’s capacity to counter violent extremism at the community level, and help link the local-level initiatives to national and international security policies and programs. At the end of the training sessions, WOWWI organized pilot community forums in four local government areas of Plateau State: Ryom, Barkin Ladi, Wase and Jos North - well known for violent extremism. Other groups of trained women carried out a similar project in Kaduna State.

The forum set up a platform for regular community engagement with security agencies. It also provided a safe space for dialogue between civil society organizations, security actors and community members on just and sustainable responses to preventing violent extremism in their communities.

WOWWI also, in collaboration with Women Without Borders, developed and introduced the pilot project “Mothers School” in Jos, Nigeria and 147 women - ordinary housewives and mothers - were trained to be the first line of security for their homes, families, and communities. This was carried out in five volatile communities and the impact was tremendously positive on the confidence of women, who suddenly realized that they also were major stakeholders in this crisis and should be part of the solution.

Source: [“The Role of Women in Countering Terror in Nigeria”](#), speech delivered by Esther Ibanga at the United Nations, 9 September 2015.

Community Voices

From Girl to Girl - Community-Led Peer Education through Sports



“From Girl to Girl” trains girls between 8 and 17 years from Syrian refugees and Lebanese communities to conduct community-led, peer-to-peer education sessions through sports.

The “From Girl to Girl: Community-Led Peer Education through Sports” project brings together girls and young women in awareness-raising sessions on gender equality through sport.

The girls and young women who lead these peer-to-peer, community-led activities are affiliated with [Stars Academy of Sports \(SAS\)](#), a leading soccer academy and team in Lebanon. SAS was established in 2011 and provides football players with advanced training and the chance to participate in national and international tournaments.

The overall objective is to promote intercultural dialogue among Syrian and Lebanese youth, especially young women.

Progress of the project in 2016

1. Training of trainers workshop on soft skills and gender equality (completed in July 2016)

This workshop, for 20 young women, was organized by UNESCO in Beirut, May 2016.

2. Establishing a peer-to-peer education program (completed in July 2016)

A group of 25 girls, aged between 14 and 19, were trained on the basis of the “Playing for Gender Equality” toolkit, produced in 2013 by [ABAAD](#) and [Save the Children](#). This toolkit provided the girls with basic knowledge on gender equality, gender-based violence and gender discrimination. They were introduced to the [Women and Girls’ Safe Spaces \(WGSS\)](#) program .

3. Community-led peer education program (completed in August 2016)

A series of eight community-led activities through sports kicked off on 22 July, at communities in areas where ABAAD had already established links through the WGSS. These activities targeted a total of 144 girls from the local communities, 65% of whom were Syrian, and 35% from Lebanese host communities.

4. Audio-visual documentation of the community-led peer-to-peer education process (completed in November 2016)

ABAAD, in close coordination with UNESCO, worked on finalizing two videos, one of which shed light on young women and girls who are professional football players. The second video showcased the inter-cultural dialogue held over eight sessions between SAS professional young women players and young women and girls beneficiaries.

5. Football Match (completed in November 2016)

ABAAD, in collaboration with UNESCO and SAS organized a football match on 9 November 2016, gathering together SAS football players and six female news reporters affiliated to the Lebanese TV stations LBC, NTV, OTV, NBN, and Hurra. The match attracted huge media attention to support the protection of women from sexual violence, specifically eliminating article 522 from the Lebanese penal code. [Watch the media videos here: OTV ; NTV ; and NBN](#)

6. Flash mob during the Beirut International Marathon (BIM) (completed in November 2016)

As part of ABAAD National Advocacy Campaign against violence against women and girls in the legal frameworks, around 110 women and girls took part in the BIM through a flash mob. This action, supported by UNESCO, helped in gaining wider visibility among the 73,000 runners, as well as through media outlets. [Watch the marathon video here](#)



“There is no difference between girls and boys. Every girl should have trust in herself. Girls should loudly express their love for football as boys do.” – 14-year-old Syrian girl in Zahleh

Young GIFTED Women



© ScoviaHidita

Hidita Scovia

Member of the Youth Peacemaker Network in South Sudan

“It is vital that youth are involved in promoting and practicing peace and intercultural dialogue. If we engage in violence, people will not listen. Problems can only be solved through forgiveness and sharing ideas.”

[Hidita Scovia](#) is a member of the Youth [Peacemaker Network](#), a flagship programme of the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative, an organization founded by [UNESCO Special Envoy for Peace and Reconciliation, Forest Whitaker](#).

“I was born during the conflict between the north and south of Sudan. At the age of four, my family was forced to seek safety in a refugee camp in Uganda. I remember how tough the journey was, especially for my mother, who walked all the way to the camp carrying both me and my younger brother.

“I eventually returned to South Sudan to complete primary school, but as there were few education resources there, I moved back to Uganda to study agriculture at university.

“When I graduated from university, I joined the Youth Peacemaker Network. The Youth Peacemakers are trained to mediate conflicts and resolve disputes in our communities. So far, I have worked as a mediator on land and territorial issues. One issue in particular focused on a conflict between two communities that began after a young boy was killed by an armed group. The mediation process is still underway but thanks to our work, we managed to stop the fighting. Mediation and dialogue is such a vital part of putting an end to bloodshed.

“I have always wanted to become a peacebuilder and am so grateful for the opportunities I have been given. The skills I have learned have given me so much confidence and, as a young woman, it is so important for me to become both a resource to my community and a role model.”

Raquel Gómez is a 17-year-old singer and songwriter from Cartago, Costa Rica. Raquel’s song, “*Cómo un Árbol*”, was featured as one of the finalists for the “Song for Peace” Contest.

Raquel is a very talented artist. She composes and sings songs about the injustice that she witnesses around her.

In particular, her songs touch themes such as the culture of machismo in Latin America, diversity and combatting xenophobia.

[Watch the video here](#)



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Raquel Gómez

Songwriter, Costa Rica



UNESCO’s Social and Human Sciences Programme is working to engage young women in peacebuilding and the promotion of civic engagement and intercultural dialogue all over the world.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT UNESCO’S WORK WITH YOUNG WOMEN

Articles and Papers

Gendering Terrorism



Could there be separate or different explanations for women's involvement in terrorism as opposed to men's?

What are the nexus or dimensions of relationship between women, gender and terrorism?

“Gendering Terrorism: Women, Gender, Terrorism and Suicide Bombers”

Tunde Agara

Centre For Strategic and Development Studies (CSDS) Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Nigeria

The International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, Vol. 5, No. 6(1); June 2015

Abstract:

Although terrorism is as old as humanity, recent events around the globe have shown that the greatest threat to the future of the world today is not nuclear weapons, military coups or pandemics but religion and religious differences which have spawned a form of terrorism that seem to surpass two of the greatest tragedies of modern history: the two World Wars. However, the involvement of women in terrorism has been obfuscated by media and policy-makers, making it look as if it is a recent phenomenon whereas women's involvement has been there from inception. While this has become problematic and has generated questions about the frequency, importance, uniqueness and meaning of women's terrorist activities, it is becoming clear that the relationship between women, gender and terrorism cannot be ignored any longer. Questions about the motivations of the women who become active in these organizations have been raised - do they participate for strictly religious, political or personal reasons, and which of these are the more important motivation? Is the increase in targeted women recruitment through abduction, compulsion or willingness an important variable in understanding this phenomenon? Could there be separate or different explanations for women's involvement in terrorism as opposed to men's? What are the nexus or dimensions of relationship between women, gender and terrorism? These are the polemics which this paper seeks to interrogate.

[Read the article here](#)

“Has the Emergence of Female Suicide Bombers in Nigeria Depicted the Exploitation of Feminine Vulnerability? A Critical Appraisal of Boko Haram's Female Suicide Bombers in Nigeria”

Florence Anaedozie

Department of Law, Dublin Institute of Technology, Ireland

The International Journal on Innovative Research & Development, Vol 5 Issue 3, February 2016

Abstract:

The emergence of female suicide bombers in Nigeria has resulted in massive human casualties and material destruction. The issue has raised concerns about gender-based violence perpetrated at the behest of Boko Haram. While some scholars argue that terrorism is not exclusively a masculine violence, some research indicate that terrorism, could to a large extent, be dominated by men, given some cultural and religious considerations. However, empirical evidence abounds attesting that some women in Nigeria have assumed active roles within Boko Haram terrorist cells, and use their bodies to transport and deploy bombs. The acts of these women are deconstructing the cultural conception of femininity. It is against the backdrop of the conservative contextualization of terrorism and masculinity, that this article, set in the cultural, social, economic, political and religious landscape of Nigeria, examines feminine involvement in Boko Haram terrorism by posing some unresolved analytical questions, as well as contemporary developments in the study of female terrorist bombers. The article examines if women within the Boko-Haram terrorist hotspots are mere victims in the hands of exploitative men asserting their hegemonic masculinity. It argues that the emergence of female suicide bombers within Boko Haram is, to a large extent, a case of the exploitation of feminine vulnerability and should not be depicted as the willingness of certain Nigerian women to actively commit suicide bombing in the aid of Boko Haram terrorism.

[Read the article here](#)