

Promoting Gender Equality

Methods, results and lessons learned



Introduction

The Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law is deeply rooted in the field of gender equality promotion.

The Institute seeks to address human rights and gender equality together, concentrating on their common and complimentary aspects. This approach comes from an under-

standing that gender equality and non-discrimination are human rights, and that human rights include gender-related human rights.

Gender is a social construction that has important influence on how the world functions today. Gender stereotypes and norms are root causes of societal inequalities and

gender-based discrimination, which in turn can translate into shunted life experiences and very serious life situations. These can include, but are not limited to:

- ▶ gender-based poverty
- ▶ gender-based violence
- ▶ discrepancy in life expectancy
- ▶ unequal access to justice
- ▶ education, pay and pension gaps

On a continuum, these experiences influence everybody's life. Gender is always present and must be taken into account at all times.

[Definition] Gender Equality (noun) The Institute understands gender equality as the equal enjoyment of rights, responsibilities and opportunities of all individuals regardless of gender. Gender equality does not mean that all individuals will become the same, but that the rights, responsibilities and opportunities of the individual will not depend on one's gender. It refers to all individuals having equal choice and power to shape society and their own lives.

"Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world."

Outlook of Agenda 2030 on gender equality

The Institute acknowledges the key significance of gender relations on sustainable development and is dedicated to gender equality as part of the commitment to human rights.

Gender equality is both a human right and a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable development.



The founder of the Institute, Professor Göran Melander, is a former member of the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee). The institute has actively been promoting gender equality during its 30 years of existence and Professor Melander has been instrumental in relation to some key choices made in this direction.

How the Institute Works towards Gender Equality

The Institute understands gender equality as a goal in itself, and as a transversal goal.

The Institute's body of work is established within the overall framework of its four focus areas – People on the Move, Inclusive Societies, Fair and Efficient Justice, and Economic Globalisation and Human Rights. The Institute strives to integrate a gender equality perspective into the design of the interventions even when the primary objective is something else.

From an operational point of view, the Institute works with the *individual* as well as the entire *society*.

Individuals should be able to claim their rights and strive towards accessing rights and maximizing opportunities. For this reason, the Institute seeks to empower wo-

men, men, girls, boys and other genders of all ages so that they do not accept that gender-based discrimination gets in their way towards the best possible life.

And from the societal perspective the Institute promotes transformative change within communities, systems, mechanisms and structures towards the realisation of gender equality and human rights for all women, men, girls, boys and other genders of all ages. When individuals claim equal opportunities and equal rights, communities around them should give them support and states should have the capacity to protect, promote and fulfil human rights, including gender equality.



"Taking part in the course on Gender Equality Human Rights of Women provided me a comprehensive understanding on the issue in terms of gender concepts and frameworks, skills, possibilities and knowledge of legal standings and international conventions for enhancing the protection and empowering women all over the world."

Rosita Tandos, Lecturer at the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Syekh Nurjati Cirebon in Indonesia

What We Have Learned

The Institute has the ambition to take every opportunity to advance gender equality. Over the years we have learned which investments generate the biggest value towards the objective.

RWI Integrates a Gender Equality Perspective

To promote achievement of gender equality the Institute strives to integrate a gender equality perspective in all of its work. Generally, the Institute employs four strategic avenues:

- ▶ **The Institute supports and creates educational opportunities with the goal to contribute to achieving gender equality.** *For example, gender equality is included as a key area of learning within the Human Rights Master's Programme that the Institute runs together with the Faculty of Law at Lund University*
- ▶ **The Institute supports research that is gender-aware and addresses gender issues that are relevant to the context.** *For example, the institute develops research projects on disability rights in China where a gender perspective has been introduced. The project revealed the effects of multiple forms of discrimination in China and identified a number of promising practices.*
- ▶ **The Institute provides support to the development of partner organisations' institutional capacity to address gender inequalities at the workplace and interaction with students.** *For example, the Institute worked through continuous trainings with management and teachers at two university faculties in Belarus to develop plans of action for gender equality promotion and strategies for implementation.*
- ▶ **The Institute raises awareness about gender equality in society and results are disseminated to a broader public.** *For example, the institute contributed to the establishment of a website and knowledge hub aiming at supporting the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in the East African Community. The web based platform continues to be an online re-source centre for the public disseminating information on women, peace and security.*

RWI Develops Knowledge

The Institute sees itself as particularly well positioned to contribute to knowledge development in relation to gender equality. The Institute aims at collecting gender-related data and doing analysis at the preparation phase of all interventions. In addition, the Institute attempts to invest in the gradual advancement of knowledge related to gender equality that can be used by everyone. Research, dialogue and capacity development activities continue to develop the body

In its work, the Institute is careful not to contribute to the hegemony of ideology and structures, based on patriarchy and historical privilege. Inclusive and consultative processes, with a focus on a gender equality perspective, are pursued in order to avoid those unintentional effects.

In addition, as mentioned above, the establishment of consultative processes is a goal in itself, aiming at the introduction of sustainability and accountability. Sustaina-



RWI's Turkey office recently organised a study visit in Ireland and Northern Ireland on the role of women in peace processes and the UN Security Council's 1325 document to prevent violations of women's rights in conflict and to ensure women's participation in peace processes. Yildiz Ramazanoglu, a feminist activist, author and columnist, writes a message on the Peace Walls in Belfast.

of knowledge that further facilitates gender equality promotion as a result of the work of the Institute and its partners.

RWI Places Emphasis on Inclusive Processes

An important aspect of the Institute's gender equality approach is the continuous emphasis on inclusive processes, with a focus on gender equality. The Institute relates to inclusive processes in two ways; both as a human rights oriented way of getting things done as well as a goal in itself.

ble human rights advancement rarely happens through the identification of the best one-off solution. Instead, systems, including consultative processes and accountability, with a particular consideration of gender equality, must be promoted. Inclusive processes have the potential to produce good solutions also when decisions will be made in the future. These processes must involve consultation and the active participation of women, men, and other genders over time and embrace the values of listening to and taking into account the voices of all.

When speaking about inclusive processes it is important to point out that the Institute attempts to employ an intersectional approach, by which identity is complex and gender is not a sufficient category for efficient interventions and sustainable development, but must be complimented by other aspects of identity, such as race, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, age, nationality, and ethnicity, etc. This means that every individual is different and that every representative from one group cannot speak for the whole group and that truly diversified representation is necessary.

RWI Engages in Solution-oriented Dialogue

Solution-oriented dialogue about gender equality is another avenue that generates positive effects. The institute employs many complementary approaches towards dialogue; for example we support efforts to establish platforms for interaction between different societal sectors on gender equality. We have particularly noticed how the effects of dialogue are enhanced when combined with investments in relevant and practically oriented research.

Gender Equality Results

The Institute has, together with partner organisations, made significant contributions to gender equality. Examples of more recent results include:

- ▶ In Turkey in 2015, the Institute collaborated with the Police Academy in organising a training program “Gender Equality and Violence Against Women Training” targeting the police force. Fifty police officers were trained on the applicable standards and the State’s obligations. In 2016, a group of academics in the Police Academy carried out research on inclusion of women in policing in Turkey with the Institute’s support. The intervention of the Institute contributed to a 3 percent increase in recruitment of women in the Police Academy from 2015 to 2016.
- ▶ Gender equality has become part of the academic discourse in Belarus among the top ranking universities in that country as a results of our cooperation with academic institutions there. Today, these institutions are cooperating to produce research and publications, organize conferences, and participate in the national dialogue when it comes to gender equality. These actions have the effect of influencing other sectors in society, including at the policy level.
- ▶ In Cambodia, the Institute has introduced a scholarship scheme for female students from disadvantaged backgrounds to study law to increase the number of young women in Cambodia with a basic law degree. Students who have received scholarships and graduated now have jobs at, for example, the Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, law firms, and the arbitration council.
- ▶ A book with jurisprudence relevant to gender equality in the Middle East and North Africa has been published and disseminated. The book highlights the role of the Arab judiciary in the application of international principles of human rights of women. Judges are using the book in court and professional training institutions for judges in the region are using the book as training material in their courses.
- ▶ Since 2011, the Institute has worked with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 regionally in the East African Community (EAC) through its partnership with the Africa Youth Trust. This cooperation has resulted in the establishment of a thriving network throughout the EAC on Women, Peace and Security and the adoption of recommendations by the EAC Secretary General's Forum on gender training for security forces.

- The Institute has worked extensively with the rights of female prisoners through its cooperation with the Kenya Prisons Service. This has included training of directors of women's prisons on the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners (the Bangkok Rules). Ongoing assessment shows that these and other RWI capacity development initiatives on the Bangkok Rules have resulted in increased enjoyment of relevant rights by female prisoners in Kenya.

Next Steps with Gender Equality Work

Gains have been made towards gender equality, but there is a lot of work still to do. The Sustainable Development Goals provide a momentum and a framework for advancing gender equality across the globe for current and coming generations of women, men, girls, boys, and other genders of all ages making sure that no one is left behind. To do its part going forward, the Institute is expanding how it can contribute to gender equality in all of its activities.

One current focus area centers on the *link between gender equality and the environment*. In relation to environmental degradation and climate change, societal patterns of labour, ownership, decision making, education and all other areas of life are highly gendered, which solutions must take into account.

Another focus area is the *promotion of access to justice for victims of gender-based violence*. Violence against women is a fundamental violation of human rights and a problem of gigantic proportions with significant effects on global development.

The institute will increasingly take part in alliances of different kinds, of global and local nature, in order to continue to learn and develop theories, methodologies and tools as well as to support others in their efforts to contribute towards the advancement of gender equality and develop avenues for global exchange. Together with the



"The Republic of Belarus is working hard to promote gender equality. However, there still remains a large number of gender stereotypes in the Belarusian society. That hinders the establishment of new sociology and cultural values and norms."

Elena Yakimovich, PhD and associate professor at the Faculty of Management Technologies and Humanitarization of the Belarusian National Technical University

Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law at American University and the ALAS Network (<http://www.redalas.net/>), we are arranging a conference that will focus on global exchange in the spirit of the SDGs for the elimination of discrimination against women. The conference will take place in Mexico City in the spring or early summer of 2018.

In addition to supporting public institutions, we also believe it is important to aid private institutions in their efforts to advance gender equality, both in relation to the strategic processes or more narrow efforts. This includes gender audits, gaps analysis, establishment of gender plans, policy development, the development of individual capacity through human rights and gender equality education, etc.

The involvement of men for gender equality has also proven to be of key importance. Gender equality is not a women's issue but pertains equally to men. Since gender equality has to do with a shift in power relations it cannot be achieved unilaterally. For this reason, the Institute will work increasingly with men for the advancement of gender equality.