



Strengthening Urban Engagement of  
Universities in Africa and Asia

Thematic Paper Series TPS104/19

**The role of gender mainstreaming in city-level  
interventions and leadership: Examples from  
Manila, Duhok, and Sanandaj**

Lavinia Hirsu, Zenaida Reyes, Lamiah Hashemi, Kamal Aziz Ketuly, Sizar Abid  
Mohammad

To be cited as: Hirsu, L., Reyes, Z., Hashemi, L., Ketuly, K.A. and Mohammad, S. A. (2019) The role of gender mainstreaming in city-level interventions and leadership: Examples from Manila, Duhok, and Sanandaj. SUEUAA Thematic Paper Series, TPS 103/18. CR&DALL, Glasgow, UK, ISSN 2517-5548 (online) ISSN 2517-553X (Print)

The SUEUAA project (Reference CI170271) is funded by the British Academy under the Cities and Infrastructure programme, which is part of the Global Challenges Research Fund, itself, part of the UK's Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitment



University  
of Glasgow



UNIVERSITY  
of KURDISTAN





## An introduction to the thematic paper series and the SUEUAA project

Muir Houston<sup>1</sup>; Mike Osborne<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Glasgow, Scotland

The collection of papers in this series of Thematic Papers published by the SUEUAA (Strengthening the Urban Engagement of Universities in Africa and Asia) team focus on topics of relevance to project partners and the city regions and institutions they represent. Papers in this series cover: Migration, Gender, Sustainable Energy, the Environment, the Economy and Policy Rhetoric. Each paper is co-authored by a member of the University of Glasgow SUEUAA team, and at least two other partner Institutions from cities in the Global South. The following cities are represented in SUEUAA: Sanandaj, Islamic Republic of Iran; Duhok, Iraq; Manilla, Philippines; Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania; Johannesburg, South Africa; and, Harare, Zimbabwe.

The SUEUAA project was funded by the British Academy under the Cities and Infrastructures Programme part of the UK Government's £1.5 billion Global Challenges Research Fund 'to support cutting-edge research that addresses the challenges faced by developing countries through:

- challenge-led disciplinary and interdisciplinary research
- strengthening capacity for research and innovation within both the UK and developing countries
- providing an agile response to emergencies where there is an urgent research need'<sup>i</sup>

The SUEUAA project addresses a core problem in emerging economies of strengthening the urban engagement role of universities, and ways they contribute to developing sustainable cities in the context of the major social, cultural, environmental and economic challenges facing the global south. It uses a set of well-proven benchmarking tools as its principal method, and seeks to strengthen the capacity of universities to contribute to city resilience towards natural and human-made disasters. Examples of urban engagement include supporting the development of physical infrastructure, ecological sustainability, and social inclusion (including of migrants). It calls upon contributions from science and engineering, the arts, environmental sciences, social sciences and business studies. It assesses the extent to which universities in 6 countries (Iran, Iraq, the Philippines, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe) respond to demands of society, and how through dialogue with city stakeholders this can be enhanced and impact on policy; it uses a collaborative team from the UK and emerging economies.<sup>ii</sup>

---

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.britac.ac.uk/global-challenges-research-fund-resilient-cities-infrastructure>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://sueuaa.org/>

**Disclaimer:**

This material has been funded by the British Academy. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any other agency, organization, employer or company. Assumptions made in the analysis are not reflective of the position of any entity other than the author(s)



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

**You are free to:**

- **Share** — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format
- **Adapt** — remix, transform, and build upon the material

**Under the following terms:**

**Attribution** — you must give appropriate credit



**NonCommercial** — You may not use the material for commercial purposes.



**ShareAlike** — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original.

**Notices:**

You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation. No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material.

---

## **The role of gender mainstreaming in city-level interventions and leadership: Examples from Manila, Duhok, and Sanandaj**

Lavinia Hirsu,<sup>1</sup> Zenaida Reyes,<sup>2</sup> Lamiah Hashemi,<sup>3</sup> Kamal Aziz Ketuly,<sup>4</sup> Sizar Abid Mohammad<sup>4</sup>

### **Abstract**

Making space for women in universities and encouraging their participation in various sectors have become some of the primary goals on many national and regional agendas in the Global South. However, feminist scholars have pointed out that gender mainstreaming failed to accomplish its goals as it primarily encouraged the integration of women in already compromised neoliberal and patriarchal structures, therefore ignoring the collective responsibilities for gender-based inequalities (Alston, 2014). Recently, there has been a shift by feminist researchers to focus on wider issues of gender and development, to account for the wide range of interrelated issues which may be at play in gender-based inequalities. In this paper, we explore the policies and actions towards gender mainstreaming (both in terms of public engagement, interventions, as well as discussions surrounding empowerment of women). By looking at three case study cities, Manila (Philippines), Duhok (Iraq) and Sanandaj (Iran), we argue that focusing on gender mainstreaming demonstrates both the ways in which women navigate infrastructures in order to make an impact on their communities, but also the areas of development that need to further tackle gender-based inequalities.

<sup>1</sup>University of Glasgow, UK; <sup>2</sup>Philippine Normal University, Philippines; <sup>3</sup>University of Kurdistan, Iran;

<sup>4</sup>University of Duhok, Iraq

## Table of contents

1	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
2	<b>Gender mainstreaming: a contested term</b>	<b>2</b>
3	<b>Contextualising gender mainstreaming policies in the Philippines, Iraq and Iran</b>	<b>4</b>
	3.1 The Philippines	4
	3.2 Kurdistan Region - Iraq	6
	3.3 Iran	7
4	<b>Islam and Education</b>	<b>8</b>
5	<b>University responses to the gender gap in Iran</b>	<b>9</b>
6	<b>Gendered spaces and the importance of gender-based interventions</b>	<b>12</b>
7	<b>Examples of city-level interventions</b>	<b>13</b>
	7.1 Case-study one: Manila	13
	7.2 Case-study two: Duhok	14
	7.3 Case-study three: Sanandaj	15
8	<b>Learning from city-level interventions</b>	<b>16</b>
9	<b>An emergent generation of graduates</b>	<b>17</b>
10	<b>Discussion: Gender mainstreaming and future steps</b>	<b>19</b>
	10.1 Policy Recommendations	20
	<b>References</b>	<b>22</b>
Tables		
	Table 1 Total student population of University of Kurdistan by gender and faculty	10
	Table 2 Percentage of University of Kurdistan students by gender, faculty and educational level	11

## 1. Introduction

The university space has not been a traditionally “feminine” one (Papadóoulos and Radakovich qtd. in Calvo, 2005); to the contrary, higher education (HE) has often been seen as an environment where gender inequalities are reproduced and have to be fought over by women both inside and outside its structures. Supporters of gender mainstreaming have tried to tackle the unequal distribution of men and women in various pockets of the academia and other parts of the society; however, more recently, the discourse has come under critique. Feminist scholars have pointed out that the aims behind mainstreaming may have had good intentions, but, in the end, gender mainstreaming has been co-opted in the patriarchal structures of HE and lost its radical power to reform women’s roles and gender value systems in the universities and beyond.

While gender mainstreaming is indeed a concept that needs to be critically weighed against its impact and achievements, this paper argues that efforts towards gender mainstreaming in different contexts are still very important and uncover complex relationships that reveal both successes as well as compromises. More importantly, gender mainstreaming is a key component in universities that can enable female academics to carry out the third mission of the universities, i.e., of public engagement and social impact. Without having a space of one’s own, as the motto of this paper suggests, academics do not have the necessary solid ground that would allow them to expand their work beyond the primary functions of research and teaching, reaching out to communities in need and contributing to sustainable development.

To support these arguments, in this paper we will evaluate the role of gender mainstreaming in the case of universities in three cities: Manila, Duhok, and Sanandaj. The focus on gender mainstreaming in relation to the city reflects the authors’ belief that contextualising gender challenges at the local level has the potential to open up new routes to agency and change. The focus on city-level interventions is also in line with current agendas of developing sustainable cities and turning these into more equitable spaces, equipped to deal with environmental and human-made crises (e.g., forced displacement, migration, refugee crises, environmental and climate changes, etc.).

The paper begins by setting out the context against which the authors of this paper look at the role of gender mainstreaming in the three cities. The paper considers larger trends and research conversations around gender mainstreaming, particularly in relation to the global discourses on gender, as well as in relation to national and regional trends relevant to the three contexts. Against this background, we introduce three examples of city-level engagements which illustrate the complex and often entangled nature of public engagement of universities and the role of gender across different sectors (public and private). We conclude this paper with a few considerations about current and future directions that academics can consider in relation to their public work with various communities in their respective cities. We also offer a few recommendations for policy change that could

strengthen the support provided to academics who want to initiate and/or continue their public work in a more sustained and sustainable manner.

## **2. Gender mainstreaming: a contested term**

At the international level, a series of policies, conferences and action plans have created a global climate which outlined a general approach to women's issues and therefore put pressure on individual countries to develop strategies that address gender-based inequalities and challenges. The Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 was one of the pivotal moments when participants at the conference called "on governments across the world to recommit to gender equality and the empowerment of women" (Alston, 2014:288), to focus on the importance of gender mainstreaming, and "to integrate gender perspectives in all forms of development and political processes of governments" (Ginige, Amaratunga and Haigh, 2009:30). Instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW), the Framework for the integration of Women in Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the establishment of the UN Commission on Women, the Millennium Development Goals, the ASEAN Committee on Women, and more recently, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have all contributed to bringing women's and gender-related issues to the forefront of international and national debates.

As a way to achieve "women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life" (SDG 5.5), the discourse on gender mainstreaming emerged with the promise to make an impact on women's lives. Making space for women in universities and encouraging their participation in various sectors have become some of the primary goals on many national and regional agendas in the Global South.

However, feminist scholars have pointed out that gender mainstreaming failed to accomplish its goals as it has lost its transformative power because it primarily encouraged the integration of women in already compromised neoliberal and patriarchal structures (Alston, 2014:290). By focusing on issues of women's empowerment and gender equality, (Cornwell and Rivas 2015) feminist activists have been led "into a cul-de-sac and away from a broader-based alliance of social change activists" (p397). As Alston (2014) argues, gender mainstreaming has permeated all policy agendas and, in so doing, it has been co-opted in the neoliberal agenda; it has placed a premium on individual rather than collective responsibilities for gender-based inequalities. By focusing on access, it also risks losing focus on the more complex gender-based challenges such as the need to create substantial engagement opportunities for women to have a meaningful and sustainable impact on communities in need.

In response to these critiques, policy makers, feminist researchers and other stakeholders gradually moved from a discourse on gender mainstreaming and women's access issues, to wider issues of 'gender and development' (GAD). The shift to GAD entailed a repositioning of the agenda towards the analysis and intervention into a wider range of gender-based issues,

while taking into account the more subtle and complicated nature of various forms of gendered challenges (Calkin, 2015:297). Integrating development into debates on gender meant that, on the one hand, structures of power could be critiqued and interrogated; on the other hand, women could become key players into various projects and strategic actions that aimed to contribute to sustainable development. GAD also implied a movement away from mainstreaming alone to empowerment and agency. In principle, a GAD perspective was meant to enlarge the scope of interventions in different sectors (private and/or public) and ensure significant social impact.

However, in many cases, GAD has been understood as “making women work for development, rather than making development work for their equality and empowerment” (Cornwall and Rivas, 2015:398). Cornwall and Rivas (2015) note that policies on GAD have taken an instrumentalist approach; painting “women as the deserving subjects of development’s attention because of their inherent qualities” (p. 399). By assigning women to ‘caring roles’ based on gendered assumptions regarding the ‘qualities’ of women, women are portrayed as heroines of development work. This can also be seen where women are discussed as ‘victims’ who require intervention. Both lack the agency of women, and also lack nuance regarding an understanding of the deeper structures of gender inequalities (Cornwall and Rias, 2015). This is further complicated when we look at the gendered assumptions regarding leadership roles, with roles associated with masculine cultures of aggression, competition and stress (Morely and Crossouard, 2016).

With such competing positions, what role does the discourse on gender mainstreaming still have in the context of universities and beyond? Calkin (2015) argues that simply critiquing gender mainstreaming may miss real efforts from feminists who can strategically use these policies to further the socio-political agenda. While policies and actions towards mainstreaming may be complicit in the neoliberal agenda, they can also be seen in the creation of ‘Smart Economics’ initiatives (Calkin, 2015).

In line with Calkin, the authors of this paper agree that gender mainstreaming is a multi-faceted discourse that entails a wide range of interventions, different forms of public engagement, as well as multiple positions vis-a-vis gender, sustainable development and women’s empowerment. As we will see in the following sections, gender mainstreaming needs to be closely investigated as it reveals the complex and uneven paths towards gaining access in the university and other public sectors. A focus on gender mainstreaming will also demonstrate the ways in which women appropriate (infra) structures in order to make an impact on their communities.

Increasing women’s visibility in the development process, as Calkin (2015:297) argues, is an important step which can only be measured against specific contexts shaped by changing national, regional, as well as local policies. To demonstrate the role of gender mainstreaming in the context of three cities (Manila, Duhok, and Sanandaj), in the next section, we provide a detailed presentation of the policy landscape in each context, with particular focus on women’s access to HEIs. We argue that such an overview sets up a richer ground based on

which we can evaluate and critique gender mainstreaming and women's involvement into development projects in their cities and beyond.

### **3. Contextualising Gender Mainstreaming Policies in the Philippines, Iraq and Iran**

By focusing on women's empowerment, gender imbalances and women's roles in the development process, national and regional policies in the three countries investigated in this paper (the Philippines, Iraq and Iran) have worked on building (infra) structural space, enabling mechanisms and human capacities to tackle some of the most pressing challenges in each context. Official bodies and organisations have made significant efforts to develop gender-informed agendas in line with global initiatives and goals (as outlined in the previous section).

A significant area of intervention is the effort to increase literacy levels. In the Philippines, for instance, according to the 2008 Functional Literacy, Education and Media Survey (National Statistics Office, 2013), 96.1% of girls and 95.1% of boys are literate. The functional literacy is a little bit higher among girls (88.7%) than boys (84.2%). However, there are about 5 million illiterate individuals from ages 10 to 65. In Iraq, the figures call for more sustained interventions to reduce the illiteracy rates. Currently, the illiteracy rate in the three northern districts of Iraq is today still one of the highest in the country. An average of 26.3% of the whole population is illiterate, according to the Kurdistan Region Statistics Office, with an average of 36% to 40% for women above 15 (Kaya, 2017, p. 11). These figures include large differences between urban and rural areas and need to be approached carefully for a deep understanding of these phenomena. Based on the last national census in 2016, 87.6 % of the Iranian population of age six and above is literate (source: Statistical Centre of Iran). Of this percentage, 47.5 % are female and 52.5% male. Most of the population of six-year olds and above live in urban areas (74.5%), and it is not surprising with better access to educational facilities that a higher percentage of the urban population are literate with 90.7% compared to 78.5% in rural areas. In both urban and rural areas, the percentage of the literate male population of the age of six and above is higher (51.9% and 54.8%, respectively) than the female population (48.1% and 45.2%, respectively) but with a lesser gap in literacy levels of males and females in urban areas.

#### **3.1 The Philippines**

In the Philippines, sustained conversations, projects and initiatives focused on gender issues have supported a high Gender Gap Index (GGI), making the Philippines the only Asian country with such a high index. This demonstrates the country's commitment to equal access to resources, as well as a socio-political investment into helping women take on leading roles (see <http://www.pcw.gov.ph/statistics/201405/philippines-global>).

The focus on gender was the result of the hard work that Filipino women put into lobbying government and nongovernment bodies to set up a gender-oriented policy environment and to sustain the implementation of infrastructures (at the university level and beyond) that allow for raising awareness and intervening into gender challenges, inequalities and marginalisation. At the national level, a series of committees and initiatives have established the framework against which specific projects could be further developed. The Philippine Development Plan for Women (PDPW), 1989-1992, which continued with the Philippine Plan for Gender-Responsive Development (PPGD), 1995-2025, set up the legal framework of support for looking into women's challenges. These plans proposed policies, strategies and projects that aimed to focus on gender equality and women's empowerment. The "Women in Nation-Building Act" (Republic Act 7192) specifically promoted a paradigm whereby women and men are full and equal partners in the process of development and nation-building.

With the creation of the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) and, more importantly, the establishment of GAD (gender and development) programmes in different universities, the focus slightly shifted from a focus on women's issues alone to a wider and more complex agenda that included, on the one hand, a wide range of gender challenges, and, on the other hand, a more specific interest into the university's engagement role at the community-level (i.e., a gender-oriented third mission). GAD programmes and their champions work closely with the Philippine Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the national government agency that monitors higher education and higher education institutions (HEIs).

To align HEIs' activities with the Magna Carta of Women, CHED engaged with all state and local universities and colleges, ensuring the national implementation of a Memorandum on pathways to gender equality. To sustain gender and development projects, CHED supported the establishment of programmes such as Women Studies, Women and Gender Studies or Gender and Development, along with specialisation courses and general education courses. In the Philippines, Gender Mainstreaming and the establishment of Women Studies Program were possible because of the mandatory allotment of 5% GAD budget from the overall budget of public universities and colleges and government agencies.

In the late 80s and early 90s, there were seven universities that offered Women Studies as a specialization course at undergraduate or Master's level. The Philippine Normal University is one of the universities that pioneered Women Studies as a second specialization for students taking Bachelor in Secondary Education and Bachelor in Elementary Education (Reyes, 1999). Other universities included Miriam College, University of the Philippines, St. Scholastica's College, Philippine Women's University, Silliman University, De La Salle University, and Ateneo De Manila University. Moreover, feminist scholars from these universities have established the Women Studies Association of the Philippines (WSAP), an organization of women in the academe that have promoted discourses on feminist theories and practice, as well as the teaching of Women Studies through various symposia, demonstration teaching, and conferences (Guerrero, Patron & Leyesa, 1996).

With these structures in place, universities were able to begin and link their work in the academe with their respective communities by developing community engagement plans and creative activities such as film showings, exhibits of women’s achievements, exercise classes (running, dancing, self-defence), and creative arts (film making, art printing) (Valencia, 2017).

In universities, women’s access to higher education has gradually increased; yet significant differences are still to be noted across different groups of students. For instance, in HE (2005-2006), more female students (54.48%) attended classes than male students (45.52%), a trend which reflected similar patterns in elementary and secondary schools (Philippine Commission on Women, 2014). From July 2010 to present, the number of licensed professional women (1,860,901) exceeds the number of licensed professional men (1,060,404). However, it is important to note that these numbers include women in traditional female roles, such as teachers (819,377 or 44%) and nurses (504,902 or 27%) (Philippine Commission on Women, 2014). Other professions such as nutritionists and dieticians, social workers, pharmacists, librarians, and interior designers also figure quite prominently among the professional tracks pursued by women. Although overall the presence of women in HEIs would indicate a growing trend in access and representation, the professions women tend to follow seem to function as an extension of roles traditionally associated with home and the duty of care.

### **3.2 Kurdistan Region – Iraq**

Similar trends are to be found in the national and regional context of Iraq. Iraq, including the Kurdistan Region<sup>1</sup>, adhered to CEDAW in 1986, without fully embracing all the provisions related to family, marriage, divorce and inheritance. The High Council of Women’s Affairs worked at the government level to encourage high level support for the development of gender mainstreaming policies as well as strategies towards implementation (LSE Middle East Centre Workshop Report, 2014). The Ministry of Higher Education of KRG - Iraq has established programmes for Gender Studies that aimed to sustain research, training, capacity building and policy advice on gender issues. For example, the Centre for Gender and Development Studies (CGDS) at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS)<sup>2</sup> was formally launched on February 11, 2016 and, among its goals, it included specific aims related to community outreach and engagement. University efforts are linked with the United Nations Development Program and the High Council of Women Affairs, the Kurdistan Centre for Gender Studies and the Local Area Development Program (LADP), which provide much needed technical support. The MHE-KRG has established “The Gender Centre of Kurdistan Universities” for gender development and women issues in the regional and national academic research and development programs.

However, the socio-political situation of women’s rights and the empowerment agenda has

---

<sup>1</sup> The Kurdistan Region, composed of the governorates of Erbil, Duhok and Sulaymaniyah, is often referred to as a ‘de facto state’ (see Yaniv Voller (2014) and Denise Natali (2010)).

<sup>2</sup> <https://auis.edu.krd/center-gender-and-development-studies-0>

been significantly affected by the 1991 international intervention, due to conflicts between Kurdish forces and the Baghdad regime which impacted infrastructures, education provision, as well as health services and economic opportunities for women across a wide range of sectors. The general precarious economic situation in the region has also negatively impacted women's roles and actions.

In Iraq, the existence of policy guidelines do not always corroborate with figures that reveal a more complex reality. Just as in the case of the Philippines, female undergraduate students tend to have an equal chance to access and benefit from higher education in Kurdistan universities. This balance tends to change at the level of Master's students: with 64% men receiving degrees vs. 36% women achieving the same results (The Gender Equality Situation, 2015). If we take into account the level of leadership in universities, the gap between men and women tends to increase with 86% men occupying the role of head of departments while only 14% women have similar opportunities (The Gender Equality Situation, 2015).

National and regional interests have not aimed only gender mainstreaming and women's access to higher education. A special interest can be traced vis-a-vis the impact of violence in its many forms (domestic, political, social). In this sense, in the Philippines, the Committee on Decorum and Investigation (CODI), established by universities, was commissioned to investigate cases of gender-related violence in the workplace, sexual harassment and other forms of sexism on campus. A directory that looked into acts of violence against women was also established in Iraq where special domestic violence courts were formed in all three Kurdish governorates. Given the multiple effects of conflict in the region, these official structures are often complemented by Kurdish and Arab women's activism that focusses on addressing cases of violence against women and women's empowerment in a wide range of contexts. Governmental and non-governmental actions have contributed to pushing the agenda for gender mainstreaming and increasing awareness of women's rights (Efrati, 2005; Ismael & Ismael; 2008; Fischer-Tahir, 2010; Al-Ali & Pratt, 2011). Two Kurdish universities have established a Gender & Violence Studies Centre (GVSCs) and a Centre for Gender Studies,<sup>3</sup> both run with financial support from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and matching funds from UK institutions and other organisations, such as UNWOMEN, UNDP, the KRG High Council for Women's Affairs, and the Ministry of Planning.

### 3.3 Iran

The *Global Gender Gap Report 2017* produced by the World Economic Forum has placed Iran at an overall ranking of 140 out of 144 for gender parity ahead of only Chad, Syria, Pakistan and Yemen in the order mentioned. Four categories or sub-indexes are covered by the report: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival and Political Empowerment. Each sub-index has different indicators capturing the gap between men and women. The Health and Survival sub-index measures the two indicators of sex ratio at birth and the gap between women and men's healthy life expectancy,

---

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.soran.edu.iq/faculties-centres/centres/gender-centre.html>

taking into account “the years lost to violence, disease, malnutrition and other relevant factors” (p.5). The final sub-index, Educational Attainment, shows Iran in a better light with a ranking of 100. The aforementioned category measures the gap between women and men’s access to education through women-to-men ratios at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education and female-to-male literacy rates. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region, out of 17 countries, Iran surpasses only Syria and Yemen. According to the same report, the MENA region is placed last globally by closing only 60 % of the gender gap despite a slight improvement from 2016 (p. 21). Such numbers could be affected by the quality of the data reported (missing data or lack of up-to-date data) and need to be further investigated. Nevertheless, it is important to understand the general profile so we can better position the efforts and strategic plans acted upon in various parts of the country.

#### **4. Islam and Education**

Religious beliefs and in particular Islam is frequently blamed for gender gaps in education and the labour market in Muslim countries. Contrary to this belief, education is an important part of being a Muslim regardless of gender. The Muslim's Holy book, the Quran, mentions the word "ilm" (علم or knowledge) in its various forms over 770 times. Education or knowledge is considered so important that the first Quranic revelation commands read:

*Read in the name of your Lord who created, created man from a clinging form. Read! Your Lord is the Most Generous, who taught by means of the pen; taught man what he did not know. (Quran, 96:1-5)*

According to Quranic exegesists, the word “man” in the above verse and all verses laying out commandments actually refers to humankind (men and women) and is genderless. Moreover, the other major source of guidance for Muslims, the hadith or the sayings and teachings of the last Islamic prophet, Prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h) constantly reiterates the importance of education for all:

- "Acquisition of knowledge is binding on all Muslims (both men and women without any discrimination". *[Narrated by Ibn Maja in al-Sunan]*
- Acquire knowledge even if you may have to go to China for it. *[Narrated by al-Bazzar in al-Musnad]*
- Allah Almighty makes the path to paradise easier for him who walks on it for getting knowledge. *[Narrated by Muslim in al-Sahih]*

In the above quotations, it is clear that commandments are directed at both women and men, and education is deemed obligatory on all Muslims and part of their spirituality. In Islam, without doubt, to be an effective Muslim is to be an educated one. Iran is an Islamic country but whether or not religion has held it back in terms of gender equality is a question worth exploring in detail and should not be left open to common stereotyping.

In Chapter 5 of *Improving Educational Gender Equality in Religious Societies*, Sumaia

Al-Kohlani (2018) explores gender equality in association with religious conservatism and secularism in the two countries of Iran and Turkey. She accepts the hypothesis that "gender gaps in education and labour-force participation are smaller in Iran than in Turkey" and in contrast to "general perception, the gender gap in education in Iran is smaller than in Turkey, and the percentage of educated women who participate in the labour force is higher in Iran than in Turkey." Al-Kohlani concludes that "having a secular political system does not necessarily mean a higher percentage of females going to school or joining the labour force, and that having a conservative political system does not always have to be associated with having a high percentage of women who are deprived of their rights to be educated or join the labour force."

## **5. University Responses to the Gender Gap in Iran**

In March 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology (MSRT) and the Deputy Chancellorship for Women and Family Affairs (see [www.msrt.ir](http://www.msrt.ir)) for the implementation of Articles 2 and 13 of the General Family Policy (communicated by the Supreme Leader (2015)), Articles 64, 66, 80, 101, 102 of the Sixth Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan of the Islamic Republic of Iran (2016-2021), and Articles 85, 91 and 105 of the Citizen's Rights Charter, announced by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran (2016). The MoU aims to direct academic research towards priorities while recognizing the research needs of women and the family which could lead to the promotion of women's scientific and technical abilities and skills in the form of sustainable and balanced cultural, social and economic development. The objectives set forth in the memorandum include the following:

- "Promoting the status of women in scientific, educational and research fields in the framework of Article 101 of the Sixth Economic, Social and Cultural Development Plan [2016-2021]"
- "Conducting research activities and strategic and applied studies on the status of women and the family, the status of women at the level of the country's executive system as well as strengthening promotion and institutionalization theories contributing to women's empowerment, promote their contribution to decision-making and policy-making levels and in consolidation with the foundations of the family".
- "Expanding the fields of effective participation of graduated, elite, talented and researched talents in the economic, social, cultural and political fields of society".
- "Utilizing the scientific research and research capacities of universities and knowledge societies to empower women in consolidation with the foundations of the family".
- "Identifying and analyzing the progressive harm to women and the family in terms of the specific cultural and ethnic differences of different geographic regions and different groups of women in terms of age, care status, employment status, and health status (disability)".

If we look at the numbers that represent women and men ratios in the university, the University of Kurdistan can serve as a good example of the gender distribution. Of the total student population of 9,348, the female student population comprises 54.3%. The university has seven faculties on the main campus in Sanandaj (the capital city of the province) and one off-campus faculty in Bijar, another city in the province. Table 1 illustrates the percentage of male and female students by faculty. As it can be observed, the percentage of female students is higher in all faculties except the Faculty of Engineering and the off-campus Bijar Faculty of Science and Engineering where the percentage of female students are 30.2% and 48.4% respectively.

Faculty Name	Total Student Population by Gender and Faculty (%)	
	% Female Students	% Male Students
Humanities & Social Sciences	59.4	40.6
Literature & Foreign Languages	66.1	33.9
Agriculture	58	42
Natural Resources	66	34
Science	65.2	34.8
Engineering	30.2	69.8
Art & Architecture	56.7	43.3
Bijar Faculty of Science & Engineering	48.4	51.6

**Table 1. Total student population of University of Kurdistan by gender and faculty (source: Vice Chancellor's Office for Educational and Academic Affairs, University of Kurdistan)**

The faculty with the highest percentage of female students is the Faculty of Literature and Foreign Languages (66.1%) followed by Faculty of Natural Resources (66%), Faculty of Science (65.2%), Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (59.4%), Faculty of Agriculture (58%), and Faculty of Art and Architecture (56.7%). This does not fit in with the stereotypical perceptions of Muslim societies barring women from studying subjects not deemed appropriate for women such as sciences, law and agriculture. There are currently no restrictions placed on women for enrolling in any subject areas. If less women are studying engineering subjects are due to cultural factors and not religious or policy related.

Table 2 shows the percentage of female and male students by degree level and faculty. At undergraduate level, the number of female students is greater in once again all faculties

except Engineering and the Bijar Faculty of Science and Engineering. At postgraduate level, the picture is slightly different. The number of female Masters students is higher in the Faculty of Science (67.8%), Faculty of Natural Resources (63.3%), Bijar Faculty of Science and Engineering (62.5%), and Faculty of Agriculture (52.2%) (Table 2). Of the five faculties offering PhD programmes, the Faculties of Science and Agriculture have the highest female student percentages in the order mentioned. To reach educational and economic parity more women need to pursue STEM subjects and, although there have been dramatic increases in the numbers of women studying sciences and mathematics, they are as yet to reach this rate of increase in engineering and computer sciences.

Faculty Name	% of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students by Gender and Faculty					
	Female BA/BSc Students	Male BA/BSc Students	Female MA/MSc Students	Male MA/MSc Students	Female PhD Students	Male PhD Students
Humanities & Social Sciences	64.8	35.2	48.8	51.2	37.7	62.3
Literature & Foreign Languages	72.2	27.8	49.1	50.9	43.2	56.8
Agriculture	60.9	39.1	52.2	47.8	52.8	47.2
Natural Resources	67.4	32.6	63.3	36.7	-----	-----
Science	65.2	34.8	67.8	32.2	59.2	40.8
Engineering	29.8	70.2	32.7	67.3	21.7	78.3
Art & Architecture	59.8	40.2	45.7	54.3	-----	-----
Bijar Faculty of Science & Engineering	47.6	52.4	62.5	37.5	-----	-----

Table 2. Percentage of University of Kurdistan students by gender, faculty and educational level (source: Vice Chancellor's Office for Educational and Academic Affairs, University of Kurdistan)

However, as in the case of the Philippines and Iraq, when it comes to leadership roles, women are yet to enter the top-level management of the university. The University of Kurdistan Council is comprised of Heads of Faculties and, since the establishment of the university, there has been no female Head of Faculty. There have been a few Heads of Department but

the numbers are not significant. This lack of presence of females in top-level management is important as it limits the prospects of change in relation to gender issues and policies. The numbers demonstrate that the role of women in HEIs remains an important area of struggle and the gender mainstreaming agenda needs to remain at the forefront of university-level debates.

Although the statistics demonstrate greater presence of women in HEIs, this has not translated into employability. The numbers are alarmingly in favour of male academics. Currently, the university employs 345 permanent academic staff members and only 24 are female (6.9%) (cf. Vice Chancellor's Office for Educational and Academic Affairs, University of Kurdistan). There are no written discriminatory policies against employing female academic staff, and women and men applicants go through the same centralized process for academic position recruitments. The reason why numbers of female academic staff at the University of Kurdistan, and indeed in the rest of the country (30% nationally), are so low is a matter that needs to be investigated.

The number of HEI students in the Kurdistan Province is just under 61,000 and female students comprise 42.4% of that number. Overall, the rates of female university students are lower at all degree levels in the province. As educational attainment is often linked to greater chances of employability, this is alarming for gender parity and perhaps the reason why numbers of female academic staff at universities in the province are so low. 9.5% of the female population over the age of 10 are employed which is a staggeringly low number compared to the 60.9% of the male population over the age of 10 who are employed. Of those in employment only 34.5% and 15.1% of females and males in the province respectively have degree-level education (cf. Statistical Centre of Iran). This contradicts the idea that the higher the level of education, the greater the chances of employability.

Another gender-related issue is the type of posts women are likely to be employed in. At the University of Kurdistan, the number of administrative staff directly employed by the university totals 218, and of this number 83 are women. All the female employees have High School Diploma and above qualifications, with the majority holding undergraduate level degrees and one female member of staff holding a PhD. Only one female employee holds a mid-managerial level position and 20 hold senior administrative officer positions. The remaining female employees are low-grade administrative staff. In terms of pay, all pay grades are equal except in child allowance which is allocated to male staff and women who are legally considered heads of families.

## **6. Gendered spaces and the importance of gender-based interventions**

This section has highlighted the policy landscape in the Philippines, Iraq and Iran where gender issues have taken front stage, at least at the level of policy discourse and through the establishment of various national, regional and university structures. To enable community outreach and public engagement with a focus on gender challenges, HEIs need to continue towards increasing access to higher education, to allocate critical space for women to gain

visibility and leadership positions. Various policies have led to an increasing number of undergraduates and Master's level female students. However, the same trend is yet to be noted at the level of PhDs, as well as in the number of leadership roles and employed women. Universities continue to operate under precarious conditions and cultures of competition and aggression that tend to discourage women from pursuing their goals (Morley & Crossouard, 2016, p. 162). The effects of gender mainstreaming agendas are traceable in the university contexts and some changes are worth considering; yet, more critical work needs to be done in order to further support women and gender-based issues which require sustainable support and interventions.

More importantly, as mentioned in the sections above, gender mainstreaming goals in these contexts have been challenged by a series of factors that have called for immediate action. Environmental and human-made disasters (such as war, forced migration, displacement, and natural disasters related to climate change) have added to the tasks that universities need to address in a timely manner. In this sense, enabling mechanisms in the universities need to provide access to HEIs and a platform for discussing gender issues, while, at the same time, they should support researchers and activists to move into their communities and respond appropriately to the needs of various groups. In the context of disasters and environmental crises, gender mainstreaming plays a crucial role in “reducing disaster risk through considering women’s needs and concerns” (Ginige, Amaratunga, and Haigh, 2009, p. 23). As we will see in the next sections, projects that aim to address these aspects are often conducted at the intersection of emergent structures of support, uneven access to resources and individual efforts that make an impact on communities and carry out the third mission of universities (i.e., public engagement).

## **7. Examples of city-level interventions**

The reality of female representation in university structures and leadership roles is further complicated by the pressing needs to support various communities. If we look at different forms of city-level interventions, a range of projects which target gender-related issues reveal the critical role of such activities, as well as the need to continue and support efforts towards gender mainstreaming at the university-level. This section briefly presents three examples of public engagement in each city: Manila, Duhok and Sanandaj.

### **7.1 Case study one: Manila**

The University Centre for Gender and Development (UCGD) at the Philippine Normal University (PNU) has been one of the leaders in conducting community engagement projects on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the city of Manila. The Centre, together with students in the Women Studies programme, regularly develop action research projects to support women’s empowerment in their local communities. These projects are paralleled by training programmes which aim to raise awareness and sensitivity to gender aspects and challenges which have an impact on various local communities (*barangay-s*). These programmes often bring together university staff, teachers from various schools or teachers-

in-training, community leaders and citizens in the local communities.

The focus of many of the projects initiated by the Centre for Gender and Development has been on health and wellbeing, skills, child rearing, and nutrition. One such project was an extension service that involved UCGD, PNU staff, doctors, dentists and other members of the PNU Health Clinic. The service entitled “Gender Equality and Proper Hygiene” took place at Hospicio de San Jose and involved 29 children in the orphanage as beneficiaries. The children identified for this service had lost their families in various circumstances, such as abandonment, death and gender violence. The learning session provided by the project team aimed to help children understand and respect the rights of individuals, to increase their awareness of sex and gender preferences while upholding respect for individual choices, and to develop a sense of self-respect towards one’s own body.

Each partner in the extension service took an active role in contributing to these goals. The scholars from PNU used storytelling of a gender-sensitive story (“Ang Sabi ni Nanay, Ang Sabi ni Tatay”; trans., “What mother told me, What father told me”) as a way to challenge and critically explore traditional gendered notions of jobs or occupations. The PNU Health Clinic representatives demonstrated how to care for one’s body by showing child-friendly videos (e.g., how to brush teeth). These activities were followed by dance exercises with the participation of all the children involved. The session culminated with a lunch which enabled the participants and the beneficiaries of the service to meet at a more personal level. These activities had a significant affective impact on the children as they had the opportunity to learn about gendered roles, girls’ and boys’ rights, social justice and gender equality through customised activities which directly engaged them.

## **7.2 Case study two: Duhok**

In the city of Duhok there are three displacement camps which host more than 46,000 survivors of conflict (United Nations Population Fund, 2016). Beyond these camps, thousands of people try to reconstruct their lives after they arrived to Duhok as refugees, after being forced to leave their homes due to war, political, social and physical insecurities. Many of these people bring with them stories of violence and trauma. Women, in particular, are more exposed to acts of gender-based violence and their vulnerability increases in such circumstances (Ginige, Amaratunga & Haigh, 2009, p. 29).

As a way to support women in these precarious circumstances, academic representatives and city stakeholders come together to act quickly and provide much needed support. Interventions happen within and beyond official structures and infrastructures of the universities. For instance, Nagham Nwzat is a 38-year-old Iraqi gynecologist who, through her own experience of displacement, realised the vital role of her skills in helping women who have suffered from physical abuse, sexual violence and even slavery (United Nations Population Fund, 2016). Nwzat’s work began in difficult conditions because she provided support on a voluntary basis in different camps without having any financial assistance. Examples like hers which demonstrate individual voluntary action in the city of Duhok, as

well as a growing awareness of the dire need to provide assistance to women, triggered the establishment of the Duhok Survivors' Centre in 2014, under the coordination of UNFPA and the Directorate General of Health. The primary mission of this centre is to address “the needs of women and girls fleeing ISIL” (United Nations Population Fund, 2016). The centre became a key structural support because it not only created a space with professional support for all forms of gender-based violence (e.g., sexual abuse, exploitation and domestic violence), but it also gave voluntary workers an environment where they could carry out their activities in a more sustainable way. The Centre works with Iraqi and Syrian women and the support provided ranges from medical treatment, counselling and legal services to cultural support and long-term recovery plans.

The staff includes a number of doctors from the universities (both men and women), as well as, in particular, lecturers from the University of Duhok, the College of Medicine and graduate student-doctors. Due to the pressing need for intervention and support, these professionals mostly provide voluntary services which have so far attended to 850 cases of gender-based violence (United Nations Population Fund, 2016). As Duhok experiences a pressing need to respond quickly and support women in vulnerable situations, the staff use the Center as the main hub for action.

### **7.3 Case study three: Sanandaj**

Dar-el-Ehsan Charitable Foundation is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-political organization founded by a group of philanthropists in the city of Sanandaj. The charity has a Board of Trustees consisting 23 businessmen, merchants, doctors, academics, teachers and government employees. Every three years, the Board of Trustees members are selected by the Board of Directors and external auditors. The academic staff members of University of Kurdistan University who are on the Board of Trustees are Abdullah Salimi, Nematollah Azizi and Mohammad Taaher-Hosseini who is also on the Board of Directors. The aforementioned academics have been involved with the charity for the past 12 years.

The social responsibilities approved and adopted by the by the Dar-el-Ehsan Charitable Foundation are as follows:

- Helping orphans and children in need of protection

Currently, the charity has a building complex (called "Nikan") which houses 50 children. The children of this complex have almost all been affected by severe social harm, and some suffer from severe mental illness. In addition to providing appropriate nutrition and medical and psychological services, the children are also trained and educated suitably. After reaching legal age, the children leave the orphanage but the charity's responsibility does not end there; the children are still supervised by charity organisers in the community. In Nikan complex, educated trainers supervise the children and are available 24 hours. The children are also provided with leisure activities and sports programs.

- Blind girls

In this complex, blind girls who are in need of education are also housed. They are taught in braille and put through primary and secondary education and assisted with entering higher education. Thus far, six of these blind girls have successfully entered university and are studying at the University of Kurdistan. The building is supervised twenty-four hours a day, and all necessary educational and rehabilitation equipment are provided for their training.

- Gender empowerment

Poor and low income unmarried women and women who are the heads of households are identified, and then empowered with the necessary skills for entering employment. After assurance that the women have gained the necessary skills, funding is provided to them for creating a small-scale business unit to help make a profit and meet costs of living.

- Monetary contributions to poor and low income families
- Poor and low income families are identified and given monthly financial assistance.
- Assistance offered to low income students
- Low-income talented students are eligible for financial support in continuing their education.

The involvement of the University of Kurdistan academics in this Foundation is purely voluntary, out of a profound sense of care and responsibility towards the community that they feel compelled to support in as many ways as they can.

## **8. Learning from city-level interventions**

The three examples provided above demonstrate that for many academics in Manila, Duhok and Sanandaj not engaging in gender-related challenges in their respective cities is not an option. The needs are too pressing and actions must be taken as soon as possible to support women and address gender problems in various contexts of precarity. The infrastructure in the three cities is not evenly distributed and developed. While Manila has the policy and organisational context that facilitates universities' engagement in various communities, the policy context in Duhok and Sanandaj is not always matched by similarly developed structures that would support and remunerate so many key stakeholders who voluntarily engage in critical work in various parts of the city. The three examples of city-level interventions demonstrate that individuals in the university have a strong sense of civic duty and use their professional expertise to make a difference where they are needed the most.

In the context of larger critiques of gender mainstreaming, presented in the first part of this paper, the cases of city-level interventions above show that women's vulnerability across different contexts and socio-political challenges demand immediate action. While the researchers and practitioners in the university context may still operate within patriarchal structures of knowledge formation and distribution (Alston, 2014), the work deployed is crucial and aligns with key SDGs, in particular SDG five: *achieve gender equality and*

*empower all women and girls*. Within this goal are three targets: end all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere; eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation; eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

The responsive work of academics in the public sector moves towards these goals and, while there is still more work to be done, universities recognise the critical areas where expert knowledge can be of service. While providing substantial and sustainable access to women in the academic environment remains a critical area to be addressed (as discussed in the first part of this paper, especially at the levels of leadership access), individual researchers take their academic work into the city and make their expertise matter beyond teaching and research.

Such decisions, indeed, have multiple implications both for the beneficiaries, as well as for the service-providers. Because universities address and respond to gender-related challenges, the vulnerable positions that academics themselves often inhabit (through their unpaid work and against financial hurdles that they need to overcome) are not always brought under discussion. Many academics, men and women, are yet to fully challenge the degree to which their own academic positions are embedded in already institutionalised structures of power and influence, as well as in a culture of competitiveness (Morley & Crossouard, 2016:152). Yet, the actions and projects that academics carry out in the city go beyond this complicity and challenge us to recognise the many dimensions and impact that these academics have *through* rather than *against* university structures. The contexts in which academics work in the three cities have recently been challenged by frequent environmental and human-made crises and strategic actions oftentimes need to be taken with and against precarious (infra)structures. To disentangle and reform the discourse of gender mainstreaming and the public engagement role of universities may require a multi-dimensional approach that looks not only at traditional roles that women have occupied within the universities and beyond, but also at how these traditional roles may be complicated from within by actions and interventions which go beyond traditional actions. The next section will explore the profile of such academics who may constitute the emergent new generation of academics, highly attuned and involved in the mechanisms of public engagement.

## **9. An emergent generation of graduates**

Gender mainstreaming, as we hope to have demonstrated so far in this paper, is not simply about “mainstreaming” gender. More than creating a space for women in the universities and giving them access to resources, current and future graduates in universities work hard with and beyond the structures of the academia and other official (infra)structures. For instance, the graduates in Women and Gender Studies at PNU aim to develop their profile and contributions to the university along three key dimensions as:

- gender advocates;

- feminist scholars;
- GAD practitioners

As gender advocates, graduates are expected to “collaborate with various institutions and organisations addressing women/gender issues.” Their work is not only about (research and teaching/learning) resources and access, but about campaign work and public engagement. As feminist scholars, graduates are invited “to disseminate new ideas and discourse about women and gender issues and concerns.” Finally, as GAD practitioners, future graduates of Women and Gender Studies need to be able to engage in “responsive policy development, planning, budgeting and administration,” as well as to “develop specific competencies in specialised fields such as feminist counselling, psycho-social assistance, disaster risk reduction and management, climate change adaptation, macro-economics, energy, transport, and many others” (Reyes, 2017). The overt recognition of competencies related to environmental and human-made crises demonstrates an emergent understanding of the key role that gender plays in relation to these events, as well as the critical role that academics fulfil in HEIs. Having this framework in place allows graduates to develop profiles already attuned to the realities beyond the academia and to get actively involved in projects with immediate public impact. Students have the support of the Community Partnership and Extension Office in the university that facilitates robust links with communities in Manila where students have the opportunity to apply knowledge on gender and development.

At the same time, it is important to note that these transformations do not target only individuals and their unique professional development. Graduates become part of a community, an emergent generation of professionals. In 1989, a critical mass of faculty members formed themselves into an organization called *Urduja*. *Urduja* was taken from the name of a legendary warrior princess who is recognized as a heroine in the province of Pangasinan during the pre-Spanish Philippines (Ang, 2013). In early 90s, Kabataang Urduja (Urduja Youth) was established. Kabataang Urduja is the student arm of the faculty to advocate gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. This student organization works closely with the UGDO (University Gender and Development Office) to implement gender activities, particularly for students and the youth in the adopted communities (Valencia 2017). Both the faculty and students became active in pushing for women’s agenda through various fora, symposia, rallies, training workshops, drama presentations, and group discussions, among others. These seminars were both conducted in the university and in the affiliated communities.

In the Women Studies programme, students have developed action research projects that will empower women in their specific communities across Manila. The students asked women to join in their livelihood project, wellness, and nutrition program. After the women performed their tasks in various projects, the students asked about their insights and the skills that they have learned from the activities. Most of them felt confident and strong to face future trials. A number of them were able to encourage their husbands to help them in their housework and childrearing activities. Similarly, a group of graduate students specializing in counselling held several parenting sessions and counselling to young mothers. Young mothers welcomed the program and valued their experience while discussing their concerns with the counsellor

students. While women gained competencies and well-being, the students who ran the programs also learned from their experiences. They were able to acquire several learning outcomes such as self-knowledge, application of theories, literacy skills, and a set of emotional dispositions. These are some of the manifestations of the transformative process of education (Mezirow et al, 2000; Mezirow, 2003), which is important in GAD advocacy.

The profile of these graduates is, indeed, a new and rich area, and PNU together with other universities in the city of Manila require specialists to help this new generation of activists-practitioners-graduates to find their voice and expand their line of work. At the same time, the model proposed has the potential to become an important tool in helping shape new modes of engagement. The close links between activism, research and social impact has the potential to lead to new forms of feminisms which currently come under labels such as “gender mainstreaming” and “gender and development” but promise to deliver much more than what past discourses have managed to deliver.

## **10. Discussion: Gender mainstreaming and future steps**

Women’s spaces and roles in universities are critical; yet, equally critical is the need to recognise and support what women do outside universities. The examples of city-level projects demonstrate the importance of involving academics (men and women) in gender-related issues in various communities. Frequently acting on a voluntary basis and in connection with different city stakeholders, researchers know the impact of their efforts on the dire circumstances in which some of the groups that they work with find themselves. New structures of support in the universities, such as GAD programmes or Women’s Studies courses, contribute to opening new opportunities for women to access resources and use their specialisations and knowledge in the community. However, as we have seen in previous sections of this paper, structures alone do not always guarantee sustainable access to leadership roles and/or opportunities for financial and infrastructural support in public engagement projects. For this reason, the agenda behind gender mainstreaming ought to be kept at the forefront of university debates, especially at the level of university management. To see more public engagement in the city and beyond, gender-related debates need to build institutional memory, long-lasting and stable spaces in the academia, as well as socio-political and financial support. Projects need to be led not only by individual academics (Valencia, 2017, p. 92), but by collectives and teams of researchers who understand the wider socio-political dimensions of gender. Emergent generations of feminist activists need to consolidate links among themselves, in the university forum, as well as outside, with city stakeholders and immediate partners who share similar goals.

The examples of city-level interventions presented in this paper are often linked to the private sphere and to women’s sensibilities to care for others (be they children or other women-victims). This focus is critical given that in some contexts, cases of ‘honour’ killings, female genital mutilation and domestic violence remain significant challenges that need to be

continuously addressed. However, Cornwall and Rivas (2015) note that this type of engagement reflects a “desire to assist” and may negatively add to the image of gender-related interventions. Projects that aim to support women and/or families risk relegating those involved to traditional roles. In other words, if researchers assist women on women’s issues, projects that contribute to development in these areas establish a closed circuit of public engagement where women help other women and gender interventions are only linked to the private sphere. To challenge, critique and intervene in other public spheres, the scope of such projects needs to widen and/or refocus their goals.

One potential direction forward would be to take on a ‘postfeminist’ lens and explore avenues for social impact and agency through ‘Smart Economics’ and ‘neo-liberalised feminists forms [that] function as biopolitical technologies of governance’ (Calkins, 2015, p. 302). However, before fully switching from one paradigm to the next, we may have to recognise that in cities such as Manila, Duhok and Sanandaj, projects of public engagement emerge out of complex relationships, embedded in competing discourses and entangled in structures of need which ought to be resolved both at the level of universities, as well as the community-level. For this reason, we suggest that public engagement projects expand into new partnerships. As Cornwall and Rivas (2015) argue, the promise of “new possibilities for alliance building [...] can take feminist engagement with development out of those cul-de-sacs and onto pathways taken by fellow travellers with a shared concern with social justice” (p. 408). In other words, universities can encourage academics to integrate a gender lens into other types of projects that are not necessarily related to women’s issues alone or the private sphere of family, motherhood, and the duty of care. Various city stakeholders can be approached to take on a gender-informed perspective on the major challenges that they are faced with, and university researchers, practitioners and activists can all contribute to this agenda.

### **10.1 Policy Recommendations**

Based on the previous presentation of the role of gender mainstreaming and other key policies and discourses in universities in three cities (Manila, Duhok and Sanandaj), the authors of this paper make the following recommendations for policy change and university strategic planning:

- Establish strategies for integrating women into employment upon completion of university degrees;
- Develop and strengthen care-related policies to help with childcare and elderly relatives, career breaks, flexible working hours and work-time.
- Support women to transition into leadership and entrepreneurship roles in HEIs, workplace and leading city/community structures;
- Develop instruments, processes and mechanisms to monitor gender mainstreaming activities, as well as tools of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls for quality assurance systems of universities and colleges.

- Conduct regular re-evaluations of gender-based policies in light of environmental or human-made disasters in order to promote individual and collective resilience;
- Acknowledge and make space for new forms of feminisms, especially those that are conducive to public engagement and city/community work;
- Link city stakeholders with universities to formulate localised responses to gender-based challenges, as well as to challenges of other nature;
- Showcase individual projects of public engagement in the city and encourage systemic interventions and links between universities and various communities in need across the city;
- Sustain public engagement projects that do not focus only on the “poorest of the poor” or the heroines who lead on gender and development actions (cf. Cornwall and Rivas, p. 400). Instead, policies should support women across a wide range of initiatives, and gender should become a perspective through which development challenges can be tackled by all, rather than by women alone (see the involvement of men in Duhok and Sanandaj).

## References

- Al-Ali, N. & Pratt, N. (2011). Between Nationalism and Women's Rights: The Kurdish Women's Movement in Iraq. *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 4, pp. 339–355.
- Al-Kohlani, S. (2018). *Improving Educational Gender Equality in Religious Societies: Human Rights and Modernization Pre-Arab Spring*. UAEU: United Arab Emirates.
- Ang, T. (2013). *Princess Urduja*. Film. <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3205014/> Accessed 12 January 2019
- ASEAN Committee on Women. Retrieved from <http://www.pcw.gov.ph/international-commitments/acw/> Accessed 12 January 2019
- Alston, M. (2014). Gender mainstreaming and climate change. *Women's studies international forum*. 47: pp. 287-294.
- Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/> Accessed 14 September 2018
- Calkin, S. (2015). Feminism, interrupted? Gender and development in the era of 'Smart Economics.' *Progress in Development Studies*, 15.4: pp. 295–307.
- Calvo, J. (May, 2018). Women's access to higher education. Global University Network for Innovation. Retrieved from <http://www.guninetwork.org/articles/womens-access-higher-education> Accessed 12 January 2019
- Cornwall, A & Rivas, A.-M. (2015) From 'gender equality and 'women's empowerment' to global justice: reclaiming a transformative agenda for gender and Development. *Third World Quarterly*, 36:2, pp. 396-415, DOI: 10.1080/01436597.2015.1013341
- Dankelman, Irene (2010). Climate change, human security and gender. In Irene Dankelman (Ed.), *Gender and climate change: An introduction*. London: Earthscan.
- Efrati, N. (2005). Negotiating Rights in Iraq: Women and the Personal Status Law. *The Middle East Journal* 59/4, pp. 577–595.
- Fischer-Tahir, A. (2010). Competition, Cooperation and Resistance: Women in the Political Field in Iraq. *International Affairs* 86/6, pp. 1381–1394.
- The Gender equality situation in Kurdistan Region education and Higher Education Policy*. (2015). EMA. Retrieved from <http://emmaorg.me/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/gender-equality-in-education-sector.pdf> Accessed 14 September 2018
- Ginige, K., Amaratunga, D., Haigh, R. (2009) Mainstreaming gender in disaster reduction: why and how? *Disaster Prevention and Management: An International Journal* 18.1, pp. 23-34, DOI: 10.1108/09653560910938510

Guerrero, S.H., Patron, M. C. & Leyesa, M. (1996) *Women's Studies in the Philippines: An Assessment of the Impact of Women's Studies Association of the Philippines in Promoting the Gender Perspective*. Quezon City: Women's Studies Association of the Philippines, C1DA, DIWATA Foundation and University of the Philippines Centre for Women's Studies.

Ismael, J.S. & Ismael, S.T. (2008). Living through War, Sanctions and Occupation: The Voices of Iraqi Women. *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 2/3, pp. 409–424.

Kaya, Z. (2017). *Gender and statehood in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*. LSE Middle East Center Paper Series 18. Retrieved from <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/69197/1/GenderandStatehoodKRG.pdf> Accessed 14 September 2018

LSE Middle East Centre Workshop Report. (2014). *Statebuilding and Gender in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq*. London: London School of Economics. Retrieved from [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/59019/1/Statebuilding-and-gender-in-the-Kurdistan-region-of-Iraq\\_workshop-report.pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/59019/1/Statebuilding-and-gender-in-the-Kurdistan-region-of-Iraq_workshop-report.pdf) Accessed 14 September 2018

*Magna Carta of Women*. Retrieved from <https://pcw.gov.ph/law/republic-act-9710> Accessed 12 January 2019

Mezirow, J. & Associates (2000). *Learning as transformation: critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (2003). Transformative learning and discourse. *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1.1, pp. 58-63.

Morley, L. & Barbara Crossouard (2016). Gender in the neo-liberalised global academy: the affective economy of women and leadership in South Asia. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 37:1, pp. 149-168, DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2015.1100529

National Statistics Office. (2013). Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS). Retrieved from <https://psa.gov.ph/content/functional-literacy-education-and-mass-media-survey-flemms> Accessed 14 September 2018

Natali, D. (2010). *The Kurdish Quasi-State: Development and Dependency in Post-Gulf War in Iraq*. New York: Syracuse University Press.

PCW-NEDA-DBM Joint Circular No. 2012-01. Retrieved from <http://www.pcw.gov.ph/publication/pcw-neda-dbm-joint-circular-no-2012-01-guidelines-preparation-annual-gad-plans-and-budgets-and-accomplishment-reports-implement-Magna-Carta> Accessed 12 January 2019

The Philippine's Gender Gap Index (GGI). (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.pcw.gov.ph/article/ph-maintains-rank-7th-worldwide-1st-asia-closing-gender-gap>

Reyes, Z. (1999) *Toward a shared vision for higher education: developing an agenda for gender-fair Education*. Institute of Sociocultural Studies, University of Kassel, Witzenhausen, Germany, pp. 211-238.

- Reyes (2017) *Academic and Curricular Programs: Developing a Gender Studies Program*  
<https://ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/ACADEMIC-AND-CURRICULAR-PROGRAMS-PHILIPPINES.pdf> Accessed 12 January 2019
- Philippine Commission on Women. Statistics on Filipino women and men's education. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.pcw.gov.ph/statistics/201405/statistics-filipino-women-and-mens-education> Accessed 14 September 2018
- United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/> Accessed 14 September 2018
- United Nations. Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform. Retrieved from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs> Accessed 12 January 2019
- United Nations Population Fund (2016). Iraq Centre brings specialized care to gender violence survivors. Relief-Web. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-centre-brings-specialized-care-gender-violence-survivors> Accessed 14 September 2018
- Valencia, Minda I. Cabilao. (2017). Gender Mainstreaming in a Teacher Education Institution in the Philippines. *EDUCARE: International Journal for Educational Studies* 9.2, pp.85-94. Bandung, Indonesia: Minda Masagi Press owned by ASPENSI, ISSN 1979-7877.
- Voller, Y. (2014). Countering Violence against Women in Iraqi Kurdistan: State-building and Transnational Advocacy. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46/2, pp. 351–372.
- World Economic Forum. (2017). The Global Gender Gap Report 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017> Accessed 12 January 2019



## Strengthening Urban Engagement of Universities in Africa and Asia

### **TPS 104/19: The role of gender mainstreaming in city-level interventions and leadership: Examples from Manila, Duhok, and Sanandaj**

Hirsu, L., Reyes, Z., Hashemi, L., Ketuly, K.A. and Mohammad, S. A. (2019) The role of gender mainstreaming in city-level interventions and leadership: Examples from Manila, Duhok, and Sanandaj. SUEUAA Thematic Paper Series, TPS 103/18. CR&DALL, Glasgow, UK, ISSN 2517-5548 (online) ISSN 2517-553X (Print)

[www.sueuaa.org](http://www.sueuaa.org)