



## Women's rights: the hidden part of the Iceberg?

The Evening debate took place the 27<sup>th</sup> of March –6.30 pm  
House of Dutch Provinces- Rue de Trêves Trierstraat 59-61. The Debate was hosted by the Province of Flevoland and **Michiel Rijsberman**, elected representative opened the panel.

Women's rights and education were under the spotlight with brilliant women & role models as panelists namely **Cristina Gallach**, former undersecretary general of the United Nations and equal opportunity adviser at the Council of the European Union, **Jennifer Vasta**, Founder and Executive Director of PIKA foundation on Education and **Gauri Khandekar**, researcher at the VUB, Board member at PILOT4DEV, and Deputy Director of the Global Relations Forum.

### *Draft report*

#### Framework and Context by *Pascaline Gaborit Moderator*

Women's rights are getting more visible with S.D.G.5, women's march and social media campaigns. However, it also says a lot on the long way still to go for more equal rights in many areas: glass ceilings, gender violence, pay gap or work life balance issues still make it more difficult for women. Women's conditions have considerably improved in certain areas in the last decades: in relation to women's literacy, education...In Europe there is more and more women's empowerment at local level (civil society associations, mayors from large cities) However from a global perspective, women's rights are still backsliding in numerous areas and some stunning indicators show that. **85% of single parent families are led by women**, 80% of food in Africa is produced by women, 49 countries lack laws to protect women against domestic violence, and 39 bar equal inheritance rights. Women do 2,6 times more unpaid care and domestic work than men and they are exposed to social pressure on numerous areas (clothing, family, sexual and contraceptive rights or harassment). Progress may be hampered by extremisms, traditionalism but also conflicts, poverty, economic crisis... Most discrimination, inequalities and violence are invisible: there is often no evidence on gender discrimination or harassment.

**This is like a huge part of human rights (namely women's rights) are hidden.** In some countries, access to education, healthcare, water, contraception, freedom, employment are indeed additional burdens. But even in Europe we estimate that 2 women per week are killed

by their partners in countries like Sweden or the UK, 20% of women declares having been victim of gender or sexual violence...Women having a high-level position in the private sector are not numerous 23% for the Netherlands, 27% for Sweden...

**Several trends are conflicting with each other: progress and visibility on the one hand, regression and denial on the other. Can we analyze these trends for better gender and development policies? Is S.D.G.5 an impossible challenge?**

This event is an opportunity for us to have a conversation with key experts and speakers, but also to present PILOT4DEV. The slogan of PILOT4DEV is **“To Connect Stakeholders to Boost Sustainable Development”** Our priorities are Climate, some of the international S.D.Gs, Gender equality, Development... ..We want to gather active organizations and enthusiastic personalities.

Opening speech by host Michiel Rijsberman: Regional Minister Flevoland, and PILOT4DEV. This is with great pleasure that I open the session on the question on women’s rights. We are happy to be the hosts, and to provide the hospitality for this event at the House of the Dutch Provinces. Gender Equality is very important but still at stake. I am very pleased to provide this room tonight and hope that you will have fruitful discussions. I was just listening to the short interviews that were made before we started, and several persons mentioned that “women’s rights are also human rights.” Therefore, people should not be fighting for gender equality but for women’s rights to be granted: some people have access to human rights and others do not. We are happy to host an event from PILOT4DEV, because all these grassroots events and initiatives are not often represented. Women active in grassroots movements, do not get the representation that they deserve, do not get the rights that they deserve. Sometimes they go home and need to listen to their husband, because there are very patriarchal societies. I am very glad to host this event this evening, and I am also happy to see that there are some men around, because this is not about women’s talks... not only men are managing the logistics and technology tonight. I can see today, there are more men around...

My province the province of Flevoland has been on the edge in defending gender equality. Rights are going backwards in several countries for several reasons: conflicts, poverty, lack of economic opportunities, patriarchal visions and organizations...But other indicators are more encouraging: **1 billion unbanked women around the globe have a mobile phone with related more freedom and economic opportunities**...In Europe, we have not reached the end of the problems: work life balance questions are hindering opportunities for women, there are not enough women holding key economic power positions. Does it say that equality would solve all problems? No of course, we are not sure that women would do better or worse. But this would simply be fair, not to discriminate half of the population because of hidden obstacles, trends, customs...Despite much progress, the way to go is still long before we can come closer to equality...But this is my pleasure today to host this event, in partnership with PILOT4DEV which is a new think tank which slogan is “Connecting Stakeholders to boost Sustainable Development”. And Gender equality is part of it. This is also an honour to welcome distinguished panelists. I wish you lots of success in your debates.

**18:50: Panel session:**



**Short intervention by Cristina Gallach**, former U.N. Undersecretary General and Equal Opportunity Adviser-Council of the European Union

"Gender equality is a must. Hope and change will come with the Millennials..."

I am going to tell you about the dual mood I am in now. First of all, I am positive when we are talking about gender equality, but also diversity! And when I see the strong dominance and power demonstration at global level, I am however very worried...because what is at stake is the world development agenda: the goals (S.D.G.s) with related objectives: partnerships, people, peace, people and planet.

When we see what is happening, we will all need to take a very brave approach...I want to see the positive side in a number of factors: the young generations who are going to show the way forward: we saw it last Saturday in the U.S., we saw it in all the marches that were organized the 8<sup>th</sup> of March across the world.

The people said "We are here, we want our rights and we want to be part of a change of culture. We want to get organized." There are very interesting things that happened at many levels: cities, organizations, networks do compensate and do counteract the negativism that is happening at the global level. And this is a challenge. We are all very strong, and we know that we need to change: for development and also pilots...We need energy for dev and development. And we hope that we will be able to find solutions.

We have here in the European Union a wonderful union of 28 member-states (one will be out soon). It has the values, the institutions, the people and it should be leading on example.

- What has been your strongest personal experience working within European and UN institutions?

I could talk for hours. But if I remember something back in September when I stopped working for the UN, and started working for the European institutions is: that I found a place which I left in a very pessimistic state due to the economic crisis, and the financial crisis and the strong impact it had on citizens, and I find it better equipped to face the upcoming challenges, but however not enough organized.

I will give you an example: the mainstreaming approach that the Sustainable Development Goals would need to lead the way in 2030, has not been yet mainstreamed across. So, we see lots of work, in different areas, and the transformation, will come when we bring all the goals and initiatives together. So, we have more resources, the right tools and expectations, we just need to get more organized. We now need to put a lot of pressure on leadership.

We have a true momentum now, a year ahead of the next European elections. What will the EU bring, in addition to the legislation? Can we lead transformation? Can we lead by example? I saw that there is a huge turn in participation. There are more and more women active in their organizations, and men as well. **"Elbowness" is not there anymore as a value and is replaced by "togetherness"**. So these are interesting transformation which will go throughout...

- What advice would you give to women?

I think the advice need to be given to women and men. **Everybody is part to the transformation. We need to move forward, take less criticism and continue shaking things around...what is being given to us at different levels is what makes our robustness.** We want to continue being very collaborative...we want to continue the solidarity...and I think that now the next generations, and the **young people will bring much more...**and the work that the baby-boomers have done will benefit to the millennials...in terms of mindset and other types of views and they will go for it...

- Do you think that S.D.G. 5 is an impossible challenge?

**S.D.G.5 is the gender equality Sustainable Development Goal. It is not impossible. Because if we do not have Gender Equality, we will not be able to fulfill the other Sustainable Development Goals. Gender Equality is a must for the others to be achieved: to achieve water and sanitation, to achieve more equality, to achieve respect for the planet. All the objectives have this need of gender equality. There is a constant horizontal enforcement of the S.D.Gs.**



**Jennifer Vasta** Founder and Executive Director, of The Pika Foundation, which helps families in Bhutan and Laos to escape poverty by providing access to education.

**"At school, girls build ambitions and want a better future for themselves".**

**"With education, girls get the ability to dream for something else and to build a better future!"**

- Please could you give us your thoughts on education in general, girls and access to equality

Sure. I think it is nice to start with where you come from and what has been your experience. I am American, and I grew up in California with very supportive parents. I had no notion whatsoever that I should feel different because I was a girl or a woman growing up...I continued at university. I thought the same...I never thought "I will have fewer opportunities or experiences than a man". It did not even cross my mind...I went to law school and again, half the students were women. So, I went on thinking "what is all this talk about women and why is it still necessary to have movements in places like America?" Then I graduated from law school and I joined a large international law firm. And it all suddenly made sense because I was finally in an environment where your gender mattered.

I needed to wait to be 25 years old to realize this, which is fascinating to me...And it was obvious why: there were 50% of women at law school and women represented a good part of the associates but made only 10% of partners. And why was that? It was a question that women started to ask very early in their career because it was obvious that the path ahead was difficult. There were mentoring programs. Women were told that they needed to be assertive like the men, but if they followed that advice, they were called something else...whereas if a man was aggressive, it would be interpreted as a strength. There were small differences that seemed trivial but weren't (e.g. partners going to lunch with male associates, but not with women because they would be afraid of how it would look). And there were more obvious obstacles that de-railed womens' progression (e.g. a decision to have children). And then there were issues that were not directly within the law firm's control, but which affected women nonetheless (e.g. clients that would not take direction from female lawyers). As a Senior Associate I was assigned to an important case for a large Korean company and from the first meeting they made it clear that my expected role was to serve coffee. It was clear that I would not be able to manage the case in those circumstances and so the firm and I agreed to assign someone else to the lead the case.

So, for a variety of reasons, it was more difficult for women to succeed in that work environment. And to succeed, it was clear that you had to change a bit your character. So, you changed, or you did something else. And most women didn't change or did something else, so they did not end up as partners. Also, if they took a break to have children...it was clearly not compatible with making partner. And so I understood the need for these women's groups: women's lawyers groups for instance, whereas when I was at university I was wondering why we would need these groups.

I decided to retire early from legal practice, and I started a foundation to focus on providing education to children in developing countries. The fact that I did not realize that women's equality was still an issue until I was 25 shows how fortunate I was to grow up in an environment where women had made great progress over the past 100 years. Many women and girls are not so lucky. I focus on education, as I come from a family of educators, and I believe education is key to escaping poverty. I started working in two countries: namely Bhutan and Laos. These are very different cultures and different models, and it is difficult to understand that **you cannot just take a model and apply it somewhere else**. People would not realize for example that Bhutan is a matriarchal society. This is a society where women inherit property. It does not mean that they are necessarily equal there, as there are other issues, but property rights and access to basic education are not the issue...They have the

same access to school and education opportunities, but the challenge is to stay in the education system because families often lack the funds necessary to purchase the basic supplies required for school attendance. Laos is a different situation. There, you have a tradition of women being very much in the background and being very strong in the family. It is much more difficult to get them involved in education and training programs, and activities that would allow them to improve their chances of getting a good job. So, the way to promote their education and their development is very different in Laos than in Bhutan...

And about what you were asking: Is SDG5 feasible? I think from my own prospective (I am someone coming from a developed country, working with poorer developing countries), if you look at the whole goal and the timeline on it and say "we are going to achieve equality by 2030," it might seem unbelievable and impossible. **But it's important we have these goals, and that we keep them as something to aspire to.** Because it will not happen at once, it will start first with initiatives at the local level...you know everyone can inherit environments and think what can be done for women in this environment. Or to improve access to education, access to domestic violence programs: whatever the means are...And that's what anyone in the room can do every day: this is mentoring a girl that you know or a woman in your office. Helping them to find a career path and to succeed in it. This is being a role model for someone...**These are little things anyone can do every day...**And people can support the local programs doing work on the ground. It is all the little activities and local programs that will get us to the goals and nothing is too small....

You cannot expect the goals to happen at once. I always tell the girls that I work with that they can be whatever they want. I go there, and I sit with them and I tell them "If you want to be a doctor, well that's great!" what can we do to support you becoming a doctor? What are we going to do? These girls they go afterwards, and they tell their sisters, the people in their communities, and they are role models now throughout their village. And it spreads...**all little things spread. We can think anyway, equality is not going to happen: but we can do something and little things...If we would all do something, then we would make progress.**

- What are the main obstacles, you find for girls' education?

I would say there are cultural barriers that make it difficult. The expectations for instance of what education girls could attain, and what kind of jobs they will attain. So, I know that's true in many places, but I haven't really met girls telling me that they want to skip education and that they won't work...In Bhutan they do not have that issue. Now they have other issues that are serious there for women, culturally, things like "night hunting" where men would go to the house of a young girl of 12 or 13 years old at night, make them pregnant and that would derail their education. Those things are changing and fortunately do not happen very much anymore. But it still happens in rural remote areas, and it happened to a couple of my girls, which was very shocking for me...and very upsetting, and this is something we are dealing with. Fortunately I was alerted to the danger by a courageous young female teacher at the school who confronted the village men, an act that could have put her in some danger.

- It is related to danger...and I guess there is no easy solution

Yes, this is what you have when you deal with cultural issues, that they don't want to accept that it is still happening, because they are also horrified by this practice. And again, it is not anymore what it used to be, but this is still happening in many places. There are also migrant workers who are working on dam projects and they pose a similar danger. So, some of it is



just about safety of the girls and making sure that they are secure. So, we determined that the girls were not secure and made arrangements to relocate them to a better environment. Sometimes it is very basic before you can take them to the next step.



**Gauri Khandekar**, is Researcher at the VUB, Deputy Director of the Global Relations Forum and Board member of PILOT4DEV

"Women's rights are about not accepting inequalities, violence, discrimination... and about raising awareness"....

Thank you so much for inviting me. This is an interesting topic. Especially in Brussels, I have been involved in different initiatives, for instance with Shada Islam and other colleagues in the room. With the Brussels Binder, we want to offer women more equal opportunities. It makes me think that the gender equality problems in Europe are so different from elsewhere. It's more micro...and it's just not getting equal pay, and not being seen where women stand, or not being invited to participate to a conference, but more less there is a lot of equality...that is not the case elsewhere in the world...there is no gender equality overall. Even though we are in Europe, there is no equal pay...But inequalities are not mainstream, men can be unequal by not inviting women to speak, making all men panels for instance, or showing dominance by sexual aggression. It's more dominance behavior...

I had a very similar childhood to yours, my family...my grandfather was a chief of police, and so was my father...We, me and my sister were brought up as boys, with short hair, and we were never allowed to go into the kitchen...because we were supposed to become officers. That was the job we were planning to do, because there are women police officers in India. But India as well is a complete different picture: because you have families like mine, where girls are empowered, you have women in all sorts of leadership roles. There have been women president, prime ministers, chief ministers...women in politics are quite well represented. But also women in employment, and there are jobs women have been doing for centuries...also even if it's so easy as selling vegetables, that are the women who usually do it... the women provide sometimes...

The biggest issues in India are related to female feticide, and it's gotten so bad, that in some northern parts of India, two brothers can share a wife. And it's as bad as that. There is violence against women: real violence killing, burning...But on the other hand, and I see parallels here in Europe, it is not all widespread, it's not all bad...

I have had mentors, most of them were men. I have had more opportunities thanks to men than women, in my life...in India but also abroad...I think we already said positive things about millennials, and I am a millennial...and I think the attitude that most of us have is just that we don't accept it. We don't accept inequalities, we don't accept homophobia...I never accepted this unequal pay, or unequal treatment you know...I think I live more like a man in

my day to day life. I didn't accept less pay: I think I got more pay than my female colleagues, and it is because I never accepted it, and that is what millennials do: they do not accept homophobia, or any such thing. And not accepting this.

- Do you have advice on gender policies, since you are also working on policies, here in Europe?

Regulation is good in Europe, although it depends from country to country now, but that's already good: there is a lot of education, and in the political circles you may see more women than men. And that's good...there is not too much work to go here...I think...Europe has made progress rapidly, rapidly...in the past few decades I was watching a video on women in Germany and women could not open a bank account without permission, just a couple of decades ago...something else...I was shocked...Europe has gone very fast...Everything will more depend on the implementation, I would say...for instance from the European Commission...do we monitor the implementation? Outside Europe, S.D.G.S could also be improved by providing really the basics. Awareness campaigns, to prevent female feticide: the Indian government is doing quite a good job...By the way Modi has also launched the largest healthcare program ever...and access to healthcare...Other countries have also female feticide. About girls stopping going to schools, I noticed about Uganda, that they drop out schools when they are reaching puberty. So women's situation is really serious there, there is no sexual education in the schools there to start with...and another movie we should watch is called "Pac-man" and is about the man who created sanitary napkins...because he saw the troubles his wife went through...And now his machine is spread out by many NGOs across the world. So, things like things could help...little things...and also things related to the maternity issue...In Uganda most women have 8 or 9 children...

- Thank you very much for your comparison between India and Europe which is very interesting of course: we have the tendency to say that everything is perfect in Europe, which of course is not...Would you like to comment on this Cristina

## "Women's rights also include providing security..."

Well when you compare situations like this, girls who stop going to schools, because they do not have toilets, because they do not have sanitary napkins...it's dramatic...we talk about different realities...And we have to be aware that in some part of the planet, being a woman is very dangerous...the most challenging part...which is not the case in the Western world...the environment and safety is a different one. **There women's rights also include providing security...**Busses at night driven by women and for women...This is not the case in Europe...The question in Europe is more about power sharing. **And I guess this is the strength of the Sustainable Development Goals, that you can apply it whether you are in Norway, or in Bhutan, in India or in Uganda...**You always have something that fits your needs, and an objective to address the needs. This is why, this is such a powerful agenda, and such a positive agenda.



- We have a question from our partner in Tanzania the Meru cultural centre, which is a difficult question also about education, and related to what you say which is “how to make sure that girls are safe enough, and do not marry too early (have early weddings), that could prevent them from following a global education?”

Gauri: **Thanks to school, girls know that there is something outside of school, and that there is something else in life.** There are some examples of women who come from a village and will get a medal at the Olympics...The Most important is getting them to go to school, where they realize that life is more than marriage.

Jennifer: In my experience, the girls they want to stay in school. They want a better life for themselves. There was a girl which we heard would be removed from school by her mother. And so we went to talk to her and asked her whether she wanted to stay in school. And of course, she wanted to stay in school. And we told her “don’t worry: you’re going to stay in school...”. When we bring a child into the Foundation we meet with the parent or guardian and tell them that we will continue to support the child until they finish school, whether that is at 16 or after university. The parent in turn agrees not to take the child out of the school. So, we talked to the mother and reminded her of this...These girls they don’t want to drop out. They see automatically what their lives will be. **“Going to school gives them the ability to dream for something else. To build a future better than what they are going to have otherwise.** They see the opportunity and they want to take it. Sometimes this is just a difference, of let’s say 50 dollars, to keep a girl in school and buy her a uniform. **Sometimes it does not take a lot, but sometimes it also doesn’t take a lot for a girl to stop going to school anymore...** So, what we try to do is keep them in, because that’s what they want...Difficulties might also be that families would prefer having them close by so that the girls can help at home or do hard labor for low wages on the weekends, and that can be a problem too.

- This is interesting, because you also have the experience of working concretely in the field with these children and girls...

Not one of them wants to drop out school...**School helps us to have different aspirations...**

- This is a good transition: we are now going to open the floor to the audience...

Question : I think it is very interesting what you said about invisibility, and sort of the “hidden part of human rights” and we are talking about creating opportunities, and providing the basics, so how to make sure that women have opportunities if they are not able to go out? **How do you make that visible?** Because that would be the first step...Then you can ask how you could help them, we first need to know that these things exist...and there I wonder about education. It is a great tool, but is it enough? Also, with the girls you are supporting, is it only about money? And why do they need a uniform if they do not have enough money?

Jennifer: That's a good question. Actually, the education system is quite a good one. Their system is bilingual (local language and English), so they learn English from a very young age, which is important for them, because not everyone in their country speaks their national language...And if they want to study at university, they will need to leave the country, which means that they'll have to speak another language...And also tourism is growing, which is an important economic factor. None of the children I am working with has parents. Another problem in Bhutan is the lack of family cohesion: both parents could leave the kids and they would leave them with a family member. So, lots of these kids are orphans even if their parents are alive. They do not know where they are...So this is what we are working with. So, they do not have the support of their parents, they do not have parents. They don't have that environment. I think **most of the things that are invisible here, are not invisible there.** They are more obvious there. I think they are invisible here because we are at a different stage. There the issues that are happening are more visible. Here things would be much more "invisible". What we've seen with this "Me Too" Campaign movement, is that things were hidden right? **The things were visible to some people, but for the society at large invisible.** And these women with high level positions had their careers affected by just a few powerful men...And **everyone started reflected on their own experience.** I've met some women who experienced serious sexual harassment at work, and they hadn't thought about it for quite a long time...and then when it happened everybody started to look back and say...Well...**Everybody had an experience or knew someone who had an experience...** along the spectrum of just being harassed verbally or physically assaulted. And that's a long answer to say that the invisible part is more here...

Question: Thank you and thank you so much Pascaline for organizing this seminar. I think it is very important what all three of you have said regarding having a more inclusive approach. I actually am sick about the **"white approach" to women's empowerment.** The idea that white women get it, and the others don't. Sorry, I don't want to do identity politics, but this is not the reality of the harsh world we live in. I appreciate that the three of you have mentioned this is about women's empowerment, regardless of where they are. In Africa, in Asia or in Latin America there is more heart for women, than here in Brussels, in our Eurocentric bubble or Western bubble. Yesterday we were at the commemoration of an icon of human rights defenders. I was amazed that not many women who believed in human rights actually were there...They should have been there frankly, but were not...So I am actually sick of "feminism is what is happening in the West!", if we don't enlarge our view, we will be dying of a slow death, because the world is more than just Europe! There are women like Malala, and then there is my mother who at the age of 85 is still teaching and still enjoys it...So let's stop thinking that we in Europe, think what the world is about...We don't! And if Europe doesn't become more inclusive, in respecting diversity, in terms of women so there are women of different ethnicities, different religious backgrounds, different cultures, different sexual orientations, and they are all part of it! And I am fed up of women's panels where there are only white women...It's harsh, but this is the reality...

My second, or my third point is really about cities: and I thank you for highlighting that **it is at local level that it counts.** And for Friends of Europe for which (with whom) I work, this is going to be a priority to focus on the local level and millennials.... This is where change is coming from...And my final word will be about **solidarity.** So, I am very happy that Gauri is

here...because you bring in what's happening outside of this Schuman area, which is not only a Brussel's bubble, but also a European bubble.

Cristina : This is so true. You need to have inclusiveness, diversity and solidarity. We should move these processes with leadership. And the processes we have put into place to choose this leadership in the democratic processes do not play that game. They keep the worlds apart in terms of inclusiveness, right? We civil society, women's groups etc, are we going to show another part? The society is looking in the manner you described: you described a world much diverse. However, if we look at the EU fonctionnaires, they are mainly white men and white women. We have 55% of women at the EU Council and 45% of men. We are not getting young girls official through the system, through the concours...we do not get representatives from other cultural, ethnic and religious group what is very challenging. On the contrary, what seems is coming up, on policy making and legislation is exactly the opposite. We need to reconcile the inclusiveness, solidarity and diversity to be at the core of our decision-making. It's very challenging.

Question : I give an example. At Friends of Europe, we are actively promoting diversity, in all forms and facets. Our Managing Board is 3 women, and 3 men. 3 of them are ethnic minorities, and 3 of them are mainstream people. What we do, is different than all other think tanks in Brussels. Diversity brings different ideas, fresh ideas, and if you don't have that, you will always get "the same old, the same old, the same old". If you don't have that, in all its facets, you are going to kill Europe...and we are killing Europe...we are killing Europe every day, by repeating the same old mantras, all the time. If you want freshness and solidarity you need to include everyone in. If we don't do it, Europe will become a museum...Frankly, I don't want to live in a museum. The challenge is "life or death for Europe!" and our leaders do not come across that, this is not giving ourselves a service, or a service to the citizens.

- Exactly. You mentioned the millennials. The question is also what opportunities they have in a time of economic crisis. We need role models and role models like you, but we need expectations for this generation, and the generation to come: because if they do not have economic opportunities, or solutions for their work life balance, they will not be able to contribute as much as they could, and to fulfill their aspirations.

Question : In India you have these programs to educate all children. These children : they are willing to study, they are willing to stay in school. But the schooling is not that good in many countries. I come from London. My daughter is 8. I think my children should have education on periods, contraception, diseases and how do they care of themselves. If women in Africa had this information, they would not stay at home and have these children...How to reach your goals, your dreams...How do the children stay in school. Sometimes, girls leave school not only for early weddings, but also because the family needs them...

- It says also a lot on the social pressure, that children can get from a very young age, and on the balance between individual and collective aspirations

Gauri : In India nobody talks about sex. We are 1,3 billion but I don't know how, and we know nothing about condoms. What has been successful in India to bring children to school, has been talking to the parents, awareness campaigns, sensitizations. Talking to the mother: because this is the mother who can change the path of the family. On the other side, what you need is a strong national policy: what is lacking in many African countries. In India there are lots of policies, who have free education for girls, but they also get free board meal from school (biscuits, milk, lunch) and also for the parents. So, the parents do not have to worry. Education for girls now is for free in public schools, until university. If you have awareness...

Cristina: There are now EU programs to promote women and the problems you are just mentioning. These programs they got so politized that a number of things got different (conservative movements) and it goes in another direction.

Question : And now with the conservative islamists in Saudi Arabia, the Trump administration and the Vatican, this is a joint assault on women's rights.

Cristina: I think the Vatican is now on the right side: at least you don't see that in the debates in the General assembly of the UN. But yes, this is a very difficult issue, that impacts the funds that would benefit the women and girls. The funds are struggling for financing and the sustaining of the programs. They finance maternal health, campaigns against aids, access to birth control, the early marriage and genital mutilation (which is terrible).

- There is still the fantastic role of NGOS

How do you see the role of the European Union? What is it that we should do?

Cristina: the work of F. Mogherini and Mimica are trying to set up things on the right track. But still these organizations got budgets cuts. But more needs to be done...How are they prioritized? Are we giving priority to women and girls? Are we giving priority to water and sanitation which is another important problem? Are we giving priority to environment issues? And women are the ones who suffer most from the environmental problems. How can we put pressure on governments, so that they mainstream the policies...? The role of the European Union is indispensable, and we need to keep pushing the EU to do more...

- And national governments have also been pro-active...

Question : we don't tell the story and say what Europe has done...Policies represent so much...If you want to see what's happening, you have to go through the private foundations who have financed the media to report the stories. This is what Gates does: financing the media to write the stories about development projects (surrealistic situation...) ....

- Are there last minutes questions? I just may have a last one...Jennifer as you are American, do you see Europe like a museum?

I see it when I am travelling especially, and I return...At the same time, I think I come from a very particular part of America...I grew up in California and there was a lot of diversity and I was in the first class, where white was the minority. I grew up in a diverse environment, even for America. I had that experience. In some ways, Europe is getting more diverse now, so we start having this experience. And since you brought up America...I don't know what he is in the room: Trump. I would say the only good thing that came out of this, is that we've seen women rally in a way in America, that I've never seen this earlier in my life. People going to marches: I would never have thought it would happen. Women wearing the pink hat. When he pulled the funding for planned parenthood, the contributions were so fast that it ended up with more funding than what he pulled. We became complacent, and I'm not saying what this guy has done is a good thing, but it brought these movements and women together like we never had seen before...and I hope it will continue when he is gone...

Thank you very much for all your inspiring presentations.

We thank you for your participation and look forward to welcome you again soon at PILOT4DEV.

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