

STUBE Hessen seminar

**“Violence against Women and Girls“**

4<sup>th</sup> May until 6<sup>th</sup> May 2018 in Marburg

- Seminar instructor:** Eileen Paßlack, STUBE Hessen-Referentin
- Co-instructor:** Mr Suraj Adhikari, student of medical Science at Goethe-University Frankfurt, Nepal
- Target group:** Hessian students from Africa, Asia and Latin-America
- Educational purpose:** Getting to know SDG 5; connecting SDG 5 to other SDG like SDG 10 “Reducing Inequalities”; becoming familiar with the target that women married or in a union should freely make their own decisions about sexual relations; realizing that violence against Women and Girls is not only a problem of the “Global South”; understanding that Gender equality is a fundamental and inviolable human right and women’s and girls’ empowerment is essential to expand economic growth and promote social development; becoming acquainted with misconceptions and facts on sexual violence in conflict; dealing with the problem child marriage and its solutions; evaluation- and planning methods
- Participants:** The number of registrations totalled 49 and a number of 29 students participated in this English speaking seminar (16 women, 13 men). Out of 29 participants, 9 participants attended a STUBE seminar for the first time. All in all, the number of represented countries was 18. Divided by regions, 8 students from Africa, 11 students from Asia, 2 students from Latin-America, 3 students from the MENA-states and 3 students from European countries participated in the seminar.

**Progression of the Seminar:**

The seminar took place as planned.

Friday, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018

The seminar started with a welcome speech for the participating students by the instructor Eileen Paßlack and co-instructor Suraj Adhikari. The programme started at 7pm, after dinner. Ms Paßlack and Mr Adhikari introduced themselves. The instructor presented the various offers of STUBE to the new participants. She also gave a brief introduction of the rules at STUBE that need to be followed during the seminar. The co-instructor then assigned duties like taking pictures to some participants who volunteered. Following the more general introduction, Ms Paßlack gave an introduction to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5. Therefore she explained the various targets of SDG 5 like ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere; eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation, eliminating all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation and finally ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Afterwards Mr Adhikari prepared some games for the participants to get to know each other.

Saturday, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2018

After breakfast, the co-instructor started the first workshop session with a warm-up game and introduced the speaker Ms Dr. Rita Schäfer, who is an independent gender expert and researcher on gender, masculinity and violence. The presentation of Ms Schäfer was titled “Female fighters and gender-based violence: Girls and young women in guerilla groups, and war crimes against them”.

Starting from an introduction on settler colonies in Southern Africa, Ms Schäfer presented the colonial power holders as responsible for causing underdevelopment due to the fact that they restrained access to resources and did exploit and discriminate people especially in their private spheres, for example in the education sector or health sector which have been developed for the white population. This led to a racist hierarchy between white men and the African population with different consequences: difference in the numbers of child/maternal death between the white and black population; sexual harassment and violence; injustice as a motivating factor for women being fighters. The last aspect led to the example of Mozambique, where young women and girls were part of anti-colonial guerilla fighting groups. Furthermore Ms Schäfer referred to the UN-Resolution 1323, which addresses how women and girls are differentially impacted by conflict and war, and recognizes the critical role that women can and already do play in peacebuilding efforts. UNSCR 1325 affirms that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts and in the forging of lasting peace. In contrast to Mozambique the country Liberia implemented a national action plan.

The case study of Liberia showed that there were political, economic, social and gender inequalities leading to violence, for example did 4 % of the people own 60 % of land. Through the coup in 1980 health and education budgets were reduced and Krahn people were promoted. In 1989 the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) under Charles Taylor started the war against Doe. Approx. 30.000 female fighters joined the NPFL. 35 % of fighting forces were female and sexual and gender-based violence was common. In the 1997 elections President Taylor held executive power and the fighting continued until 2003. In 2001, the UN imposed sanctions on Liberian diamonds for Liberia's support of rebels in Sierra Leone. In the following years different peace talks took place and women organized themselves as peace activists. The peace agreement in August 2003 ended the war and prompted the resignation of president Taylor, who faced war crimes charges in The Hague 2007 related to his involvement in Sierra Leone's civil war. Women and girls haven't had enough information and were sidelined in the DDR-Programmes (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration). In 2005 The Truth and Reconciliation Commission investigated human rights abuses as violence against women was/is a big problem. After two years of rule by a transitional government, democratic elections in late 2005 brought President Ellen JOHNSON SIRLEAF to power as the first female president of Liberia. In 2009, the Liberian Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGD) issued the National Gender Policy (NGP), which seeks to promote gender-equitable socioeconomic development; enhance women's and girls' empowerment; increase gender mainstreaming in national development and create and strengthen structures, processes and mechanisms in which women participate equally and that ensure that women and men can equally access, control, and benefit from the country's resources. With this case study Ms Schäfer gave an example on how complex the problem of violence against women and girls is and showed that it is always important to keep the historical background and the context in mind when thinking and discussing about potential solutions. Additionally she presented short film sequences in which former fighters spoke about the diverse struggles they are facing today. In groups of 3, the participants had the chance to read different text types – interviews, newspaper articles, press releases – to explore and present the situation of women and girls in Liberia before, during and after war. The interviews were part of the book *Liberia's Women Veterans* (2018) by Leena Vastapuu. The author uses an innovative auto-photographic methodology to tell the story of two of Africa's most brutal civil wars through the eyes of 133 female former soldiers. Incorporating their testimonies, the book provides an in-depth account of these women's experiences of trauma, stigma, and the challenges of reintegration into post-war society, as well as their hopes and aspirations for the future. Vastapuu argues that these women, too often been perceived merely as passive victims of the conflict, can in fact play an important role in post-war reconciliation and peace-building.

The second workshop of the day was held by Ms Isabelle Bloedorn. The co-instructor Mr Adhikari welcomed the speaker who is a project manager at Stiftung Lesen in Mainz. At the beginning of her workshop, Ms Bloedorn introduced the term "gender-based violence" which refers to violence that targets individuals or groups on the basis of their gender. Violence against women is defined by the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December 1993, as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary

deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life". It is a form of gender-based violence and includes sexual violence. Sexual violence includes sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. It refers to any act, attempt, or threat of a sexual nature that result, or is likely to result in, physical, psychological and emotional harm. Sexual violence is a form of gender-based violence. The expanded Definition of Sexual and Gender-based Violence used by the UNHCR and implementing partners is Article 2 of the UN General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993): "Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following: A. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation; B. Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution; C. Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs."

In a group work the participants worked on misconceptions in conflicts. Each group had a to focus on a different key aspect, for example "countries", "strategy" or "ethnicity". The groups presented their results. Amongst the presented misconceptions was "Sexual violence in conflict as an African problem". Recent news coverage would seem to suggest that wartime rape is a uniquely African issue. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for example, has been repeatedly called the rape capital of the world, and many recent high-profile cases of widespread wartime rape have occurred in sub-Saharan African countries, including Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, reports of wartime rape are not limited to one geographic region. Indeed, high or very high levels of civil war-related rape were reported in nearly every region of the globe between 1980 and 2009. Another discussed misconception was "Perpetrators are Always Men". Recent research suggests that female combatants sometimes perpetrate wartime rape and other forms of sexual violence. One of the reasons why this evidence is only now beginning to emerge is that researchers typically have not asked respondents about the sex of their perpetrators, instead assuming that the perpetrators are always male. But in cases where researchers have asked these questions of victims, they have uncovered significant, and in some cases surprisingly numerous, reports of women participating in acts of wartime sexual violence. A possible reason for these patterns is that female members of armed groups may be subjected to the same pressures as their male peers to perpetrate sexual violence. Female combatants may seek to conform to norms of strength and masculinity within their armed groups, and performing acts of sexual violence is one means of fitting in. Other possible reasons may include the desire to redirect sexual violence against other victims or to humiliate an ethnic opponent or enemy. In her final remarks, Ms Bloedorn explained that for example Germany outlawed spousal rape only in 1997. Before 1997, the definition of rape was: "Whoever compels a woman to have extramarital intercourse with him, or with a third person, by force or the threat of present danger to life or limb, shall be punished by not less than two years' imprisonment". In 1997 there were changes to the rape law, broadening the definition, making it gender-neutral, and removing the marital exemption. In the final open round the participants discussed on the misconception that "a spouse or significant other cannot sexually assault their partner." The participants argued that sexual assault can occur in a marriage or other intimate partner relationships as well. The fact is, sexual assault occurs ANY TIME there is no consent for sexual activity. Being in a relationship does not exclude the possibility of, or justify, sexual assault. A person has the right to say "no" at any time and to anyone.

Sunday, 6<sup>th</sup> May 2018

The final day of the seminar began with an energizing activity. Then, the co-instructor introduced Ms Anastasia Rau, who works as a project coordinator in the organisation NETZ Bangladesh Partnership for Development and Justice in Wetzlar. NETZ Partnership for Development and Justice, in short NETZ, is a charitable and independent organisation registered in Germany and Bangladesh. Since 1979, full time employees, volunteers, individuals, supporter groups and enterprises have engaged in actions to end poverty in Bangladesh. Together with local partner organisations NETZ supports self-help for nutrition, education and human rights. Self-help capacities are strengthened, nutrition and health status improved, income generating activities and schools supported, women's rights and access to the legal system

demanding. Ms Rau presented a workshop on "Girls not brides!" and started with a short lecture on the situation and developments of child marriage in Bangladesh. 52 percent of young girls in Bangladesh are married off before reaching the age of 18, although there is a law that prohibits this practice. This is one of the highest rates globally. The consequences are often devastating: girls drop out of school. The marriages are often shaped by violence and abuses. The likelihood of a 14-year-old girl dying while giving birth is five times higher compared to 20-24 year-old women. The causes of child marriage are manifold. One of the consequences of the cyclones of 1991, 2007 and 2009 and after the floods of 1988, 2004 and 2007 was that a lot of families became extremely poor as the cyclones destroyed their houses and belongings. Apart from poverty, cultural traditions play a major role. Through early marriage parents hope to spare their daughters from physical harm and a loss of honour. And the law allows for "exceptions" far too often. The speaker also presented that all NETZ-supported projects contribute to a reduction of child marriage. Women taking part in the sustainable livelihoods programme get active, when they get to know that an early marriage is planned in their neighbourhood. Teachers and school committees support parents to prevent their daughters from dropping out of school.

The second part of the workshop was an interactive simulation game in which the participants were assigned to develop their own projects to reduce/eliminate child marriage. Therefore the participants were divided into different "project groups" to conduct a "Problem tree analysis" and to plan their own project with a "Planning Triangle" based on the findings from the problem tree. This kind of analysis is central to many forms of project planning and is well developed among development agencies. Problem tree analysis (also called Situational analysis or just Problem analysis) helps to find solutions by mapping out the anatomy of cause and effect around an issue in a similar way to a Mind map, but with more structure. The problem "child marriage" was written in the centre of the flip chart and became the 'trunk' of the tree. The different groups identified the causes of the focal problem - these became the roots - and then identified the consequences, which became the branches. One group had the assignment to be the evaluation group. Based on their Problem Tree they created their own evaluation grid. After hearing all project groups, they had the responsibility to decide according to their evaluation grid which project they would choose to fund.

At the end of the discussion, Ms Paßlack and Mr Adhikari closed the seminar and asked the participants to fill in a short evaluation form.

### **Used methods**

Following methods were used: different games to get to know each other, warming-up games, discussion and question rounds, teamwork in groups, Problem Tree Analysis, Planning Tree, power point-presentation, film sequences

### **Impressions from the seminar:**

- Everyone is open-minded, nice
- Knowledge 😊
- It was a very interesting weekend. From the lecture of Ms Schäfer I came to know about people in crisis and other important infos as well
- It was a nice seminar. Everybody was engaged in the discussion. I learned a lot.
- Meeting new people. Learn new problems and their solutions
- It would be better to have something organized in the free time, instead of planning it spontaneously
- Sometimes, people are generalizing on sensitive issues

18<sup>th</sup> May 2018

Eileen Paßlack

STUBE Hessen-Referentin