

## Project Day Reports

### Gender and Human Security

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This session chaired by Embla Eir Oddsdóttir was aimed at re-assessing and re-discovering gender relations and their implications in the wider context of human well-being in the Arctic. Seven formal presentations given during the session stimulated numerous questions, exchange of opinions, and lively discussions among the seventeen participants. The presentations and discussions evolved around the central topics of gender equity, human rights, and human security in the North. These concepts were scrutinized on the individual, group, community, and institutional levels and illustrated by concrete case studies from different Northern countries, including Greenland (Denmark), Norway, Sweden, Finland, Canada and Russia. According to their thematic focus, the presentations and resulting debates can be subdivided into three main groups.

The first theme was devoted to examples and manifestations of gendered violence and measures of protection against it. In her opening presentation Embla Oddsdóttir talked about violence and colonial relations between aboriginal and Danish population in Nuuk, Greenland. Such relations often result in multidimensional tensions between aboriginal and non-aboriginal populations, in transformation of the language and culture, and in psychological phenomenon of "inner suppression" experienced by indigenous inhabitants. The problem of gendered violence and sexualized harassment, was also raised in relation to schoolchildren. In her presentation based on the survey held in public schools in Finland and Northern Russia, Vappu Sunnari stressed a necessity for a definition of sexual violence among children and special educational programs, helping to prevent it.

The most representative thematic block included papers and discussions on gendered aspects of citizenship and forms of women's political participation. In her speech Saami researcher and activist Jorun Eikjok ex-

pressed concern that the discourse of gender is almost absent in both politics and social scene of indigenous communities of the Arctic, whereas gender is crucial to understanding present day situation of indigenous societies. In fact, her presentation provoked discussions on gender as a dividing line between femininity, high adaptability to social changes and leadership, on the one hand, and masculinity, lack of adaptability and low social status, on the other. Nevertheless, women playing the roles of informal leaders in many Northern communities, often have a limited access to official political, financial, and other significant resources. Findings of Mervi Heikkinen contributed to understanding the topic of gender, women's rights and active citizenship in the context of third wave feminism, gender studies, education, and research networking involving women themselves. In such a context, desegregation of the labor market, providing sustainable working places and developing women's entrepreneurship are among the practical steps that should be taken on the way to active citizenship among women. The issues of active citizenship and political participation of women, theoretically approached by the previous presenter, were illustrated by the case study materials of Elana Wilson. She spoke of human security and participation of indigenous women in governmental and decision-making processes at the dawn of a newly established Nunavut territory. She analyzed the social, institutional and political setting of the Gender Parity Proposal initiative, which was aimed at equal representation of men and women in the Nunavut Legislative Assembly but failed. In this presentation, a right to political participation is perceived as a "way of overcoming voicelessness" and achieving adequate human security and empowerment.

Two concluding papers examined educational policies, strategies, and models, fostering gender equality and multiculturalism, with a geographical focus on the

Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), North-Eastern Russia. The starting point of both presenters was that preservation of indigenous languages, some of which are on the brink of extinction is closely related to the issues of cultural determination and ethnic identity of populations speaking these languages. Both linguistic and cultural diversity are key factors in human security in Northern indigenous and multi-ethnic communities in Russia, as was demonstrated in the report of Darima Badmat-syrenova. The idea of achievement of human security through multiculturalism policies was further developed in the presentation by Anna Elivanova, who analyzed the advantages of cross-cultural education model recently introduced in kindergartens, schools and universities in Sakha. Both presenters share the concept of the Arctic as an international region with the strongest potential for adaptation, resilience, and progress in the global era, and the concept of Arctic education as a unique worldview based on the triad “nature-man-society”, with its underlying principles of partnership and equality.

The comments and discussions, accompanying presentations, addressed such questions as: *What is violence and security in the context of gender and human rights? How do these Western concepts work, if they do, in indigenous and so called “traditional” societies? What are the interpretations*

*of “tradition” and perspectives on the future of indigenous societies? What kind of challenges these communities meet and what roles women and men play in the post-modern globalized world? What kind of meanings and forms may violence and sexual harassment have for schoolchildren and other age groups? What is the concept of active citizenship and how can we achieve stronger political participation of women of Northern communities? How do feminism, gender studies, education, and research networking contribute to empowerment of women in different societies? What role does multicultural and multilingual education play in ensuring human security and equality?*

The concluding point of the session’s participants was concerned with the necessity of further research in the field of gender and human security, considering the challenges, which both men and women presently face, as well as diversity of views and discourses of gender, spread among various groups and stakeholders in the North. Establishing a network of individual researchers and institutions from all levels and regions and pulling our resources would play a crucial role in filling the gaps of knowledge and recognising priorities of research on gender and human security. Therefore, we suggest that this research to be continued as a thematic workshop within the 5th meeting of the Northern Research Forum.