



## Evidence on Global Rollback of Women's Rights

Katja Jobes, Erika Fraser and Maria Vlahakis

1 March 2019

**Query:** What is the data and evidence on whether there is a roll back of women's rights globally? How is this impacting on women's safety and security?

**Enquirer:** Lina Payne, Gender Equality Team

### 1. Introduction

**Women's rights and gender equality goals are increasingly being challenged on multiple fronts.** The hard-won gains made over recent decades – for example, since the historic Beijing Platform for Action, and UNSC Resolution 1325, and the continued advancement of women's rights and gender equality, can no longer be taken for granted. This report provides a rapid review of the data and evidence on whether there is a roll back of women's rights globally, and the impact on women's safety and security. It includes a brief 4-page summary, with annexes on the methodology (Annex 1), details of evidence reviewed (Annex 2), and contribution and case studies from Uganda and Zimbabwe from Womankind Worldwide (Annex 3).

### 2. Evidence on global rollback of women's rights

#### 2.1 Legislation:

- **Globally, there have been considerable improvements in legislations around women's rights** over the last two years. The World Bank's Women, Business and the Law (2018) tracked **87 reforms toward gender equality across 65 countries** since 2016. The most recent reforms have happened in DRC, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia and Iraq. However, progress in implementation is slow and not enough has been done to reach legal gender equality (Iqbal, 2018).
- **In some states, there has been a rollback or blocking of legislation protecting women against violence and discrimination**, for example:
  - **Russia** signing into law legislation in 2017 that decriminalises a first offence of violence committed against family members including children and spouses. The amendment reduces the penalty from two years in prison to a fine of up to 30 000 roubles (less than US\$500).
  - **Bangladesh** passed the Child Marriage Restraint Bill which introduces exemptions to the minimum age of marriage in 'special cases' or in the 'best interests' of the child – a legal loophole which campaigners have called a 'devastating step backwards' (Dearden, 2017). Similar proposed amendments to laws protecting children from early marriage have been recently suggested in Iraq, Turkey and Tanzania, as well as set-backs in various US states including New Jersey, New Hampshire and Maryland (Tsui, 2017).

#### 2.2 Global policy regression and push-back on women's rights

- **There have been increasing challenges to the international global consensus on women's rights**, with the rise of organised, conservative resistance (Womankind, 2017). In 2017, the Observatory on the Universality of Rights<sup>1</sup> noted an increase in concerted lobbying by conservative and religious fundamentalist groups to undermine international human rights agreements. It observed these groups are "now operating with increased impact, frequency, coordination, resources, and support" (Shameen, 2017:10). Examples of attempts to contest language in international agreements include:
  - **Opposition to Comprehensive Sexuality Education as a component of sexual rights** – with a coalition between the Holy See, ultra-conservative civil society organisations (CSOs), and Member States of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (Shameen, 2017).

<sup>1</sup> Collaborative project by feminist and human rights groups monitoring anti-rights initiatives threatening international and regional human rights systems.

- **The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** which has long been a ‘conflicted space, has seen renewed, emboldened conservative action’ (Womankind, 2017: 7) with watered-down language after intensive negotiations in recent years (Shameen, 2017).
- **Substantial push-back at the General Assembly on a proposed resolution on Human Rights Defenders** in November 2015. States including Russia, China, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, and Myanmar opposed the resolution, and a record 39 hostile amendments to the text were proposed by the African Group (Shameen, 2017).

### 2.3 Sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR)

- **Funding for SRHR is increasingly under threat**, for example the **USA Global Gag Rule** blocks US global health assistance to all foreign NGOs that use their own funding to provide abortion services, counselling or referrals, or advocate to decriminalise or expand these services.
- **A coalition of donors led by the Dutch government - the She Decides movement - has raised approximately \$450 million to fill the funding gap** (as of September 2018). However, up to \$2.2 billion in U.S. funding could be affected by the Global Gag rule, and the International Planned Parenthood Federation and Marie Stopes are facing an estimated \$100 million and \$80 million funding gap - a resource shortfall affecting contraception and safe abortion services which prevent maternal deaths and injuries (Amnesty International, 2019; Edwards, 2018).
- **Several countries are also rolling back women’s sexual and reproductive rights**, such as:
  - **Poland:** The governing conservative party ended public funding for in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) and made the morning-after pill prescription-only, and there have been attempts to tighten the country’s already restrictive abortion laws, including banning abortion completely (AFP, 2018). Women’s groups and shelters e.g. Women Right’s Centre have also been excluded from government funding because of the activities they carry out (Amnesty International, 2019)
  - **Italy:** Since the election of the new, populist coalition government, Italy’s towns are increasingly rolling back women’s reproductive rights. For example, Verona’s local council approved a motion “to prevent abortion and sustain maternity,” allowing the use of public money to fund anti-abortion Catholic organisations and encourages doctors to dissuade women from aborting (de Fazio, 2018).

### 2.4 Economic participation

- **Data shows that over the last 30 years, women’s labour force participation has fallen from 52% to 49% globally**, compared to 75% for men.<sup>2</sup> The 2018 Global Gender Gap Report finds that the gender gap in economic participation remains large, with minimal progress over the last year.
- **There remains considerable scope for improvement in women’s rights in the workplace.** Globally over 2.7 billion women are legally restricted from having the same choice of jobs as men. 104 economies still have laws preventing women from working in specific jobs, 59 economies have no laws on sexual harassment in the workplace, and in 18 economies husbands can legally prevent their wives from working (Iqbal, 2018).
- **Some countries have seen a recent roll back in women’s rights in the workplace.** For example, in the United States, federal regulations on equal pay and sexual harassment were dropped when the Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces was revoked in April 2017 (Burns, 2017). At the State level, there is a mixed but encouraging picture, with 38 states considering new equal pay bills; however, Montana and New Hampshire recently revoked equal pay laws (Novello, 2018).

### 2.5 Education

- **Globally, there has been considerable progress to enrol girls in school.** The 2018 Global Gender Gap Report reported that 36 countries have now achieved full parity and another 49 countries have closed at least 99% of the gap. 74 countries have reduced their gender gap, and 8 countries (Burkina Faso, eSwatini (Swaziland), Lao PDR, Liberia, Morocco, Mozambique, Senegal and Thailand) reduced their gaps by at least 2% in 2018.
- **However, there is some evidence that gender inequalities in education are starting to widen again in some regions.** UNESCO’s adjusted gender parity index fell steadily in the decade to 2011, but has started to rise over the last few years. The index shows that primary-aged girls face

<sup>2</sup> World Bank Data: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS>

the strongest barriers in Central Asia, Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (Guyatt, 2018; UNESCO, 2018).

## 2.6 Political participation and challenges to civic space

- **The evidence suggests a nuanced picture, reflecting the reality of increased polarisation, with a reaction creating a counter reaction.** The very success of advances on women's rights, gender equality, sexuality and inclusion may themselves be provoking the rollback. Gender equality and women's rights also provide a useful scapegoat in the most difficult economic and financial circumstances the world has seen since the Second World War and a time of great uncertainty and inequality (Civicus, 2018 a,b,c; Bishop, 2017; Global Fund for Women, 2019; Shameen, 2017).
- There is increasing evidence that in many countries **women's groups are working in a context of closing civic space** and there have been concerted efforts, some more successful than others, to rollback women's rights and gender equality. For example, 50 countries worldwide have implemented anti-NGO laws, with almost 40 pieces of legislation in the last 2 years alone, even in countries regarded as more open to civil society such as the UK, Ireland, Australia and the USA (Amnesty International, 2019). This has happened across regions and religious contexts, and at all different levels: from local, national to regional and international (Amnesty International, 2019; Civicus, 2018 a,b,c; Bishop, 2017; AWID, 2014).
- **The gendered nature of attacks on human rights and civic space and freedom** can be seen in the way that women's bodies, their choices and freedoms are often being used as key battlegrounds and proxies for capturing and maintaining dominance and power over key social, economic and political resources (Amnesty International, 2019; Bishop, 2017; Jewell, 2018; Shameen, 2017). There is also an increasing trend of sexual harassment, intimidation and violence being used against women's rights activists (see Section 3)
- **Evidence points to a mix of incremental, war-of-attrition tactics, with more overt, deliberate, systematic bullying, intimidation and violence**, with unlikely alliances between conservative, right wing, and populist governments/regimes e.g. the US, Myanmar and Russia, with religious fundamentalists across all religions and regions such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt (Amnesty International, 2019; Civicus, 2018 a,b,c; Bishop, 2017; AWID, 2014; Global Fund for Women, 2019; Shameen, 2017).
- In a recent letter<sup>3</sup>, **30 prominent female world leaders called for a concerted and coordinated pushback** against the organised rollback they are witnessing on women's rights and gender equality. One former minister **singled out countries led by "a macho-type strongman"** as part of the problem, naming Brazil, the Philippines, Italy and parts of Eastern Europe (Lyons, 2019).
- **On the other hand, the rollback and attack on women's rights is being met by a strong and sophisticated pushback by civil society, state and non-state, actors and institutions** (Bishop, 2017, Amnesty, 2019; Global Fund for Women, 2017; Stevens, 2019, Civicus 2018 a,b,c). There is evidence of increased and **more effective mobilising, organising and activism** with coalition building across boundaries and creating common cause across social justice issues. Evidence points to more and better use of new and existing redress mechanisms and legal frameworks, with creative methods to reach people that haven't dared to speak out before, for example:
  - **The #MeToo and Time's Up movements** have put sexual harassment and abuse on the international agenda at a scale and pace not seen before, and in new contexts women are speaking up publically about harassment (e.g. China, Pakistan).
  - **Brazil:** Women's organisations are shifting gears from pushing for advances in SRHR, to mass mobilisation to prevent a rollback of women's rights. The new president is seeking to limit women's access to basic health care with a proposed 20 year freeze on spending levels, as well as criminalising abortion, LGBTQI people, and restricting sex education and contraceptive access. SoS Corpo (a Brazilian women's organisation) has noted that this conservative rollback on women's rights is leading to "a very powerful surge in feminist organising, especially among groups of young people" (Global Fund for Women, 2019).

---

<sup>3</sup> Letter published here: [https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/feb/28/rise-of-the-strongman-dozens-of-female-world-leaders-warn-womens-rights-being-eroded?CMP=Share\\_iOSApp\\_Other](https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/feb/28/rise-of-the-strongman-dozens-of-female-world-leaders-warn-womens-rights-being-eroded?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other)

### 3. Impact on women's safety and security

- **Globally, women's rights are coming under increasing and persistent attacks from state and non-state actors, both offline and online**, threatening the hard won achievements by women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and women's rights activists over many decades (see Annex 3). WHRDs are being silenced, undermined and discredited, subjected to violence and their lives threatened. See Annex 3 for case studies from Womankind Worldwide's partners in **Uganda and Zimbabwe**.
- **In countries where there has been a roll back or backlash against women's rights, there is evidence that women leaders, activists and other prominent women are at increased risk of violence and abuse.** A survey of political party members in four countries (Côte d'Ivoire, Honduras, Tanzania, and Tunisia) found that women are increasingly being met by backlash, harassment and violence as they step forward to claim their right to participate in politics (NDI, 2018). Recent examples of the impact on women's safety and security include:
  - **Brazil:** Murder of a prominent Afro-Brazilian human rights defender, Marielle Franco in March 2018, which shows how the intersection of gender, race and participation in public life can endanger activist women (Human Rights Council, 2018).
  - **Libya:** The assassination of Salwa Bugaighis, a prominent lawyer and women's human rights defender, in 2014 on Election Day. There have also been recent attacks against NGO/CSO women members and founders, women parliamentarians, and women who are outspoken in the media on women's issues in Libya (Farhat, 2017).
  - **United States:** Although harassment of women candidates and politicians is not new, levels of abuse and death threats increased with the 2016 elections and during Trump's Presidency, particularly against women candidates from minority groups. Harassment became more sexualised and violent in the 2018 midterm elections, partly because there were more women candidates and partly as more women are speaking out about the abuse (Astor, 2018).
- Although there have been several studies recently which have collected data on violence against women in politics and WHRDs, **there is limited evidence looking at global changes over time** and whether there is a deterioration in women's safety and security associated with a rollback of women's rights.
- **Over half (54%) of young feminist organisations report feeling regularly unsafe or threatened** due to their work, according to a survey of more than 1,500 young feminist organisations (FRIDA, 2016) and research by Mama Cash/Urgent Action Fund found that the threat and use of sexual violence by opponents of their work was a universal experience amongst partner organisations (Bishop, 2017).
- **Threats to women's safety and security vary by region.** Whereas organisations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Asia-Pacific regions identified extremist or fundamentalist groups more prominently as threats, those from Latin America, the Caribbean and sub Saharan Africa thought the most common threat was from state, departmental and provincial authorities. Half of organisations from sub Saharan Africa felt unsafe due to threats and attacks by traditional authorities. Threats by members of organised crime gangs and cartels were also common outside of the MENA and Global North (FRIDA, 2016).
- **The rollback of women's rights has coincided with new forms of violence and harassment against women – increasingly online.** Amnesty International (2018) found that nearly a quarter (23%) of women surveyed in eight countries had experienced online abuse or harassment at least once, with a high of 33% in the US. 41% of women who had experienced online abuse or harassment said that on at least one occasion, these online experiences made them feel that their physical safety was threatened. Women who speak out about women's rights and/or are public figures are at high risk of online abuse and harassment, including journalists, politicians and women's rights activists. Violence is often intersectional, with women facing online abuse that is misogynistic, homophobic and racist.
- **WHRDs have emphasised the importance of an integrated concept of security**, that creates an enabling environment for women to feel safe at home, work in public and online, and where women can continue their work defending human rights (AWID, 2014).
- **Threats to women's safety and security are often gendered or sexualised, which can in turn discourage women from seeking public office and lead to a silencing of women's voices.** For example, nearly all participants in a programme for aspiring women leaders in the UK stated

that they had witnessed sexist abuse of female politicians online, and over 75% said that it weighed on their decision about whether to seek a role in public life (Krook, 2017).

- **However, there is limited rigorous evidence to compare women's safety and security over time** to assess whether the rollback of women's rights is impacting more generally on different forms of violence against women and girls, or on particularly vulnerable groups. Although data on the prevalence of violence began to be collected in the early 1990s, there remain methodological challenges in tracking changing levels of violence over time.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> For example, time lags between Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) conducted approx. every 5 years, with surveys conducted over 18-20 months with several months of data collection mean that it is hard to track changes associated with rollback of women's rights. Also comparability over time should take into account potential differences in survey methodology, population base, sampling strategy and measurement.

## Annex 1: Methodology and research gaps

**Search strategy:** Studies were identified through searches using Google and relevant electronic databases (PubMed, Science Direct, and Google Scholar) for priority sources. Key search terms included: women's rights, legislation, gender equality, AND cut back, roll back, reversal, civic space AND women's groups, activists, WHRD AND attacks, violence, threats, harassment, intimidation.

**Criteria for inclusion:** To be eligible for inclusion in this rapid mapping, studies had to fulfil the following criteria:

- **Focus:** Data and evidence on roll back of women's rights, and impact on women's safety and security
- **Time period:** 2000 – February 2019.
- **Language:** English
- **Publication status:** publicly available – in almost all cases published online.
- **Geographical focus:** Global

**Overall, the evidence base on the global rollback of women's rights to reduce VAWG is limited,** according to DFID's (2014) How to Note on Assessing the Strength of Evidence, i.e. moderate to low quality studies, medium size evidence body, low levels of consistency. There is a good selection of contextual studies based on qualitative methods, but limited quantitative or rigorous multi-country studies tracking change over time – important for picking up trends such as recent roll backs of women's rights.

**Evidence was assessed for quality using a set of criteria** including: clear research question; clear research methodology or design; clear conceptual framing; explicit consideration of cultural factors that may affect the analysis/findings; conclusions are clearly based on the study's findings/results; and study sample size is representative at a country level.

**Evidence was then categorised as low / medium / high, with details provided about research methodology.** The box below provides examples of the strength of different types of evidence considered, although it is a rough guide and the assessment was based on the criteria mentioned above.

| Low  | Medium   | High   |
|--|--|--|
| Blog postings<br>Newspaper articles<br>Research with no citations of references, or too few referenced cited | Expert opinion / consultation with experts<br>Small-scale qualitative research | Peer-reviewed journal article<br>Systematic review<br>Research/studies from well-respected organisations<br>Quantitative |

## Annex 2: Mapping of Evidence on whether there is a Roll Back on Women's Rights

| Citation  | Geographic focus              | Key findings  | Quality assessment and research methodology   |
|---|-------------------------------|---|---|
| <p>World Economic Forum (2018) <a href="#">The Global Gender Gap Report 2018</a>, Geneva: World Economic Forum</p>    | <p>Global – 149 countries</p> | <p><b>89 countries marginally closed their gender gap and 55 regressed.</b> In 2018, the Global Gender Gap score was 68%. The progress towards parity continues to be very slow - <b>virtually unchanged from 2017</b>, improving by less than a decimal point: “This slow but directionally positive trend at a global level is confirmed at a country level, too: for the second year in a row there have been more countries improving than going backwards” (p7).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Political Empowerment:</b> the gender gap remains wide: only 23% of the political gap—unchanged since last year—has been closed, and no country has yet fully closed political empowerment gaps.</li> <li>• <b>Economic Participation and Opportunity:</b> globally, just 58% of this gap has been closed, with minimal progress since last year</li> <li>• <b>Educational Attainment:</b> gender gap is significantly smaller. On average, only 5% of the gap remains to be closed</li> <li>• <b>Health and Survival:</b> the smallest global gender gap (4% on average). While no country has yet achieved full parity, 74 countries have already closed 98% of their gap, and all 149 countries have closed at least 90% of their gap.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>High:</b> the report benchmarks countries on their progress towards gender parity across four thematic dimensions: (1) Economic Participation and Opportunity; (2) Educational Attainment; (3) Health and Survival; and (4) Political Empowerment</p>   |
| <p>Iqbal, S (2018) <a href="#">Women, Business, and the Law 2018 (English)</a>, Washington, D.C. World Bank Group</p> | <p>Global</p>                 | <p><b>Women, Business and the Law 2018</b> captured</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>87 changes toward legal gender equality in employment and entrepreneurial activity across 65 economies, over the last two years</b> (<i>compared to 94 over 65 economies in 2016</i>).</li> <li>• Of 5 economies implementing most reforms, <b>4 in Sub-Saharan Africa:</b> the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia. <b>One, Iraq, is in the Middle East and North Africa.</b> Each of these economies reformed in three or more Women, Business and the Law indicators.</li> <li>• <b>Sub-Saharan Africa had the most reforms. South Asia had the highest percentage of reforming economies.</b> Half of the economies in South Asia had at least one reform followed by Sub-Saharan Africa (45%), Europe and Central Asia (44%), and East Asia and the Pacific (40%).</li> <li>• <b>The lowest percentage of reforming economies are OECD high-income economies</b> (16%). However OECD high-income economies also have the best average scores across indicators.</li> <li>• <b>Social media movements</b> such as China’s #我也是; Latin America’s #YoTambien; the Middle East’s; and the United States’ #MeToo have <b>highlighted the prevalence of sexual harassment and violence in the workplace.</b></li> </ul> | <p><b>High:</b> World Bank WBL Biannual Report based on seven indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessing institutions</li> <li>• Using property</li> <li>• Getting a job</li> <li>• Providing incentives to work</li> <li>• Going to court</li> <li>• Building credit</li> <li>• Protecting women from violence</li> </ul> |

|   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
|   |  | <p><b>But:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Women still have no legal recourse against harassment in the workplace, in many places.</b> WBL learn daily about industries that pay women less than men for doing the same work.</li> <li>• <b>Globally over 2.7 billion women are legally restricted</b> from having the same choice of jobs as men. <b>104 economies out of 189</b> economies still have laws preventing women from working in specific jobs, <b>59 economies have</b> no laws on sexual harassment in the workplace, and in 18 economies (<i>same as 2016</i>), husbands can legally prevent their wives from working.</li> </ul> <p><b>A nuanced picture:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2016 the Constitutional Court of Colombia struck down as discriminatory the labour code's prohibitions on women's work in mining and in jobs deemed hazardous and arduous. Bulgaria, Kiribati and Poland also eliminated all restrictions on women's employment. But at the same time in Russia a female navigation officer in the Russian Federation applied to work as a ship's helmsman and was selected. Later she was told she could not have that job as Regulation No. 162 lists helmsman as one of the 456 jobs deemed too arduous, harmful or dangerous for women.</li> </ul> <p>Over the past two years, 65 economies carried out 94 reforms increasing women's economic opportunities.</p>  |   |
| <p>Civicus (2018a), <a href="#">People Power Under Attack: A Global Analysis of Threats to Fundamental Freedoms</a><br/>Johannesburg, South Africa: Civicus</p> | <p>Global<br/>Bahrain,<br/>Egypt, Saudi<br/>Arabia<br/>Egypt, Iran</p> | <p><b>Overview: according to CIVICUS research</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Civil Society is under serious attack in 111 countries</b>, representing almost six out of ten countries worldwide.</li> <li>• <b>A quarter of all people in the world live in countries with closed civic space</b>, while just <b>4% live in countries with open civic space.</b></li> <li>• Countries in <b>Central and Eastern Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, Central Asia and parts of South East Asia</b> have the <b>worst civic space conditions.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Women's Rights Groups</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>attack on civic space does not affect all civil society groups in the same way</b> or to the same degree.</li> <li>• Monitoring clearly shows that <b>civic actors such as journalists, human rights defenders and those leading protests</b> on the ground are likely to bear the brunt of the assault on fundamental freedoms.</li> <li>• Women, including groups advocating for women's rights and women human rights defenders, <b>constitute 20% of all groups involved in civic space incidents.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Middle East and North Africa</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic space across much of <b>MENA is severely restricted.</b></li> <li>• Data shows that the fallout from the wave of popular protests across the Arab world in 2010 and 2011 continues to be mostly negative for civic space and civil society. As governments in</li> </ul> | <p><b>High:</b> Ongoing research collaboration between CIVICUS and over 20 research partner organisations which has tracks conditions for civil society for over two years and have posted 1,400 civic space updates in the last two years, data which is analysed in the report. In order to draw comparisons at the global level and track trends over time, they have produced civic space ratings for 196 countries. Each country's civic space is categorised as either:</p> |

|   |                                   |   |   |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|---|
|   |                                   | <p>countries including <b>Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE double down on repressive tactics</b>, attempts to challenge authority or criticise those in power remain highly dangerous for activists.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Monitoring shows that repression across the region has a particularly adverse impact on women and women’s rights activism.</b> In several countries, including Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia, <b>women have been specifically targeted</b> because of their attempts to promote the empowerment of women or oppose policies that discriminate against women.</li> </ul> <p><b>Saudi Arabia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2018, some of Saudi Arabia’s best-known women HRDs were arrested. Those arrested included several leaders and supporters of the #Oct26driving, #Right2Drive and #IAmMyOwnGuardian campaigns who spoke against human rights violations experienced by women in the kingdom.</li> <li>• These arrests came a week after Saudi Arabia lifted its ban on women driving.</li> </ul> <p>In July 2018, security forces arrested two more women HRDs, Samar Badawi and Nassima Al-Sadah.</p> | <p>closed, repressed, obstructed, narrowed or open, based on methodology that combines several sources of data on the freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression.</p>  |
| <p>Civicus (2018b) <a href="#">Democracy For All: Beyond A Crisis of Imagination – Findings and Conclusions From A Year- Long Initiative</a>, Johannesburg, South Africa: Civicus</p> | <p>Global<br/>Ireland<br/>USA</p> | <p><b>Overview</b><br/><b>Consultations with civil society activists revealed that many observed democratic regression and withdrawal of democratic freedoms</b></p> <p><b>But Citizen-led dialogues and discussions on democracy suggest</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those consulted want more democracy, not less.</li> <li>• arguing it enables better decisions to be taken and decision-makers held more accountable, and because there is a fundamental human need to have a voice and influence over the circumstances of their lives.</li> </ul> <p><b>Notable successes</b> for civil society and democratic movements include <b>The MeToo and Time’s Up movements mobilised huge numbers of women and men, changed the debate about the status of women in societies and workplaces, around the world.</b></p> <p><b>In Ireland, civil society showed how citizen assemblies and referendums can advance rights</b> with a successful campaign to change the abortion law, marking a victory for women’s sexual and reproductive rights.</p>  | <p><b>High:</b> Consultations heard the voices of people from 80 countries. Civil society leaders, activists and stakeholders shared 54 written contributions and provided 97 interviews, while 26 democracy dialogues- informal citizen-led discussions on challenges with and hopes for democracy- were convened in countries around the world.</p> |
| <p>Civicus (2018c) <a href="#">State of Civil Society Report 2018</a>, Johannesburg, South Africa: Civicus</p>  | <p>Global</p>                     | <p>The report recognises the systematic and global crackdown on the conditions for civil society <b>but focuses on the resistance and the fightback.</b> <i>‘Almost everywhere we look, we see signs of citizens organisations and mobilising in new and creative ways to defend civic freedoms’.</i> The report emphasises that the challenges are not just about reclaiming basic rights, to keep gains made to date and reviving weakening democracies; but is about <b>reimagining democracy for a radically changing, digital, world with rising populism and polarisation.</b></p>  | <p><b>High:</b> based on interviews and consultations with people close to the stories, events and Civicus’ ongoing programme of research and analysis. Draws on</p>  |

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
|   |  | <p><b>The report focus on 10 trends from 2017:</b> rogue markets; polarising politics &amp; divisions; personal rule and undermining democratic institutions; independent media under attack; online freedom; the rise of uncivil society; multilateralism under fire; private sector mandate creep; patriarchy under the spotlight and resistance works.</p> <p>It highlights the creative and increasingly effective ways civil society is fighting back and how common cause is helping to sustain and strengthen the pushback.</p> <p><b>In 2017 there were 81 reports on the Civicus Monitor</b> which related specifically to women involved in activism, <b>97 reports posted under minority groups, religious groups, refugees and migrants categories</b>, with <b>250 individual reports of peaceful protest 40.3%</b> demonstrating a strong culture of protest and activism on all continents <b>compared with 40.9% of reports on activists that were detained.</b></p>  | the Civicus Monitor, the online platform that tracks civil space across 195 countries   |
| Mannell, J and Hawkes, S (2017) <a href="#">Decriminalisation of Gender-Based Violence is a Global Health Problem</a> , BMJ Global Health, August 2017; 2(3). | Global   | <p><b>Notes there has been “a rolling back of legislation protecting against violence and discrimination”</b> for some states and that this presents a “global health problem because of the significant impacts the removal of this protective legislation has on the health of women, children and those with marginalised gender or sexual identities”.</p> <p><b>Examples of positive changes in legislation</b> protecting women against domestic violence with new laws cited in the article include: Rwanda in 2009, Uganda in 2010 and Saudi Arabia in 2013. However, there have also been <b>examples of roll back in legislation, or legislation being blocked</b>, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Russia</b> signing into law legislation in 2017 that decriminalises a first offence of violence committed against family members including children and spouses. The amendment reduces the penalty from two years in prison to a fine of up to 30 000 roubles (less than US\$500).</li> <li>• <b>Afghanistan</b> has seen strong political movements against safe houses, with the 2012 Justice Minister referring to them as ‘centres of prostitution’</li> </ul> <p><b>Bahrain</b> - a proposed bill to consider violence against women in national legislation has been blocked since 2007 because of disagreements over its compatibility with Sharia law. Bahrain has no legal reference to domestic or intimate partner violence; as is the case in Iran, Kuwait and Iraq.</p> | <b>Medium:</b> Commentary in peer-reviewed journal ‘BMJ Global Health’.   |
| Amnesty International (2019) <a href="#">Laws Designed to Silence: The Global Crackdown on Civil Society Organisations</a> , London: Amnesty International.   | Global<br>Russia,<br>Egypt,<br>Algeria,<br>Poland,<br>USA, Saudi<br>Arabia,<br>Turkey,<br>UK,<br>Australia,<br>Ireland | <p><b>Governments across the world are increasingly attacking non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights defenders</b> who speak out against unjust laws and government practices, challenge public opinion or those in power, and demand justice, equality, dignity and freedom.</p> <p><b>50 countries worldwide have implemented anti-NGO laws</b>, with almost <b>40 pieces of legislation in the last 2 years alone</b>, even in countries regarded as more open to civil society such as the UK, Ireland, Australia and the USA.</p> <p><b>Whilst there is no legislation that explicitly prevents Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) from forming organizations</b>, they are confronted with a <b>variety of barriers</b> including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Restrictive laws:-</b> which subject NGOs and their staff to surveillance, create burdensome</li> </ul>   | <b>Medium:</b> Based on testimonies (gathered between September and October 2018) from human rights defenders, as well as Amnesty International’s documentation of threats and attacks, and wider evidence. |

|   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|--|
|   |   | <p>bureaucratic hurdles, restrict funding sources, apply bullying techniques incl the threat of imprisonment and shut down.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Traditional notions about gender identity and roles</b> and entrenched patriarchy</li> <li>• <b>Fundamentalism</b> and other forms of religious and national extremisms,</li> <li>• <b>Militarisation of public security</b> and high levels of violence in society, and</li> <li>• <b>Privatization of services and austerity</b> policies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Concrete examples of obstacles, legal restrictions and bullying tactics being used to control, dissuade and prevent WROs from operating effectively include:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>USA Global Gag Rule</b> blocks US global health assistance to all foreign non-governmental organizations that use their own funding to provide abortion services, counselling or referrals, or advocate to decriminalize or expand these services.</li> <li>• <b>Marie Stopes is facing an 80-million-dollar funding gap</b> - a resource shortfall affecting contraception and safe abortion services which prevent maternal deaths and injuries.</li> <li>• <b>Russia</b> Head of <b>Women of the Don, was prosecuted under the Foreign Agents law</b></li> <li>• <b>Egypt</b> – Nazra or Feminist Studies had their <b>assets frozen</b> in Jan 2017</li> <li>• <b>Poland</b> – certain women’s groups and shelters e.g. Women Right’s Centre were <b>excluded from govt funding</b> because of the activities they carry out</li> <li>• <b>Saudi Arabia</b> 2015 Law on Associations excludes mention of human rights and can <b>deny licenses to new organisations and disband them</b> if deemed to be harmful to national unity</li> <li>• <b>Turkey</b> widespread repression post 2016 failed coup with <b>restrictions on activities</b> based on notions of ‘national values’ and ‘public morals’</li> </ul> |  |
| <p>Bishop, K (2017) <a href="#">Standing Firm: Women and Trans-Led organisations Respond to Closing Space for Civil Society</a>, Mama Cash and Urgent Action Fund</p> | <p>Global<br/>China,<br/>Egypt, India,<br/>Russian<br/>Federation,<br/>Turkey,<br/>Uganda</p> | <p><b>Women’s and trans-groups are working in a context of closing space but they are resisting and responding with increased creativity, resilience and courage.</b></p> <p><b>Closing space for civil society is a gendered phenomenon.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All groups reported that their organising has been restricted or repressed in ways that are related to the activists’ gender and/ or because of the gendered-focused nature of their work.</li> <li>• The use of <b>sexualised violence to silence or intimidate</b> them is a virtually universal experience</li> <li>• <b>Cumulative impact</b> has a disproportionate impact on the political voice of women and trans people</li> <li>• <b>Laws and policy are not neutral bureaucratic tools, but mechanisms for the state to silence critical voices and reinforce the social status</b> quo characterised by the systematic political marginalisation of women and trans people</li> </ul> <p><b>Societies with restricted civil society space actively promote patriarchal values and traditional gender identities and roles as part of conservative, nationalist rhetoric:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Framing women’s rights and LGBTQI rights as products of ‘<b>Western interference</b>’.</li> <li>• <b>Women’s bodies and behaviours are expected to function as repositories of conservative ideas</b> about society’s culture and morality (not new)</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Medium:</b> Interviews conducted with 15 grantee-partners of Mama Cash, Urgent Action Fund and Urgent Action Fund-Africa (UAFAfrica), and five funders working closely with women- and trans-led organisations and activists in the same countries; desk reviews of existing literature on closing space and on women and trans human rights defenders</p> |

|  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
|  |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closing space is being <b>driven by increased state-sponsored rhetoric</b> that prescribes / enforces narrow patriarchal and heteronormative gendered behaviour and sexual identity</li> <li>• <b>Maintained through violence, threats and stigma.</b></li> </ul> <p><b>But: the history of exclusion and repression that women and trans people have experienced has equipped them to creatively resist closing space.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawing on past experience &amp; expertise in navigating restrictions and political marginalisation</li> <li>• Increased strategic advocacy, national and international collaboration and networking, targeted use of international legal norms and frameworks, and inventive use of the media.</li> <li>• For example, activists in a community centre led a complaint in local courts to expose the use of defamation campaigns and sexual assault by law enforcement personnel.</li> <li>• Another feminist group has led a local lawsuit against a national security commission for raiding its office.</li> <li>• Activists are also taking local issues to international human rights bodies, such as UNGASS and the UN Human Rights Commission.</li> <li>• Protective strategies include financial planning, physical and digital security measures, and self-care and mutual support.</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendations for Donor Funding and Support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Donors to continue funding in difficult contexts and to stand firm with activists in challenging times</b> when the rise of conservative, right-wing and populist forces continue to negatively impact on the funding they receive to support their work and to their personal and organisational security.</li> <li>• <b>Increase funding to autonomous feminist organising</b> and ensure it is <b>core, long-term and flexible funding</b> so activists can adapt to rapidly changing contexts and strengthen their organisations and networking</li> <li>• Adapt funding mechanisms to <b>support particularly marginalised sections of civil society</b> whose voices are increasingly being targeted and silenced to support locally driven development agendas such as for trans women and locally-led women's groups</li> <li>• <b>Donors to share some of the risk</b> and not just report good news stories, but challenges and battles that have been hard won/ fought</li> <li>• <b>Resource and support networking and convening to create spaces of exchange and mutual support</b> to counter civil society fragmentation and divide and rule tactics.</li> </ul> |   |
| <p>Lyons, K (2019), <a href="#">Rise of the 'strongman': Dozens of female world leaders warn women's rights being eroded</a>, The Guardian Newspaper, 28 February 2019, UK</p> |  | <p><b>Call by 30 prominent women world leaders for a concerted and coordinated pushback against the organised rollback they are witnessing on women's rights and gender equality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>More than 30 female world leaders</b> - including current and former heads of state such as former Irish president Mary Robinson, Ethiopian president Sahle-Work Zewde and Christiana Figueres, former executive secretary of the UN framework convention on climate change -</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Medium:</b> Article based on an open letter by 30 prominent global women leaders, including former heads of state, calling for a pushback</p> |

|  |         |  |   |
|--|---------|--|---|
|  |         | <p>have signed an open letter <b>calling for the fightback against the erosion of women's rights</b>, with one former minister <b>singling out countries led by "a macho-type strongman" as part of the problem naming Brazil, the Philippines, Italy and parts of eastern Europe.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>They call for "the need to achieve full gender equality and empowerment of women across all ambits"</b> , which despite decades of advances, has still not been achieved.</li> <li>• They are seeing a <b>worrying trend, a regression, where basic rights for women are interpreted as direct and destabilising challenges to existing power structures.</b></li> <li>• <b>This can lead to efforts to roll back hard-won rights and frameworks agreed on in support of gender equality and women's empowerment</b>, including those in the historic Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 and Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.</li> <li>• <b>They call for collective efforts</b> under the banner of Women Leaders- Voices for Change and Inclusion to reinvest in policies and legal and social frameworks to achieve gender equality and inclusion</li> </ul>  | <p>against the roll-back of hard won women's rights and advancement of gender equality<br/>Guardian newspaper article.</p>  |
| <p>AFP (2018) UN Experts Warn of Women's Rights Rollback in Poland<br/><a href="http://www.digitaljournal.com/news/world/un-experts-warn-of-women-s-rights-rollback-in-poland/article/538902">http://www.digitaljournal.com/news/world/un-experts-warn-of-women-s-rights-rollback-in-poland/article/538902</a></p> | Poland  | <p>UN expert findings:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rollbacks of women's rights in Poland</b>, especially those regarding reproductive health and societal roles</li> <li>• <b>Since coming to power in 2015, the governing conservative Law and Justice (PiS) party ended public funding</b> for in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) and made the morning-after pill prescription-only.</li> <li>• <b>There have been attempts to tighten the abortion laws</b>, including a ban on abortion all together.</li> <li>• <b>While the traditional roles of women in the family are being actively promoted</b> through laws and policies - including efforts to improve child care services and social protection notably with the introduction of the "500+" programme granting families with more than one child a monthly 500 zloty (116 euros, \$132) per child - <b>advocates for gender equality are increasingly being characterised as 'anti-family' with increasing attacks on gender equality efforts</b></li> <li>• There has been a <b>rise of homophobic speech and other forms of hate speech</b>" and "regret that same-sex partnerships are not legally recognised."</li> <li>• <b>But there is evidence of increased activism of women at the grassroots level.</b></li> </ul> | <p><b>Medium:</b> UN experts' findings: Delegation from the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women in Law and in Practice presented their observations at the end of a 10-day visit to the EU member country.</p> |
| <p>Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018) <a href="#">Pressing for Progress: Women's Rights and</a></p>   | Britain | <p>Report by the Equality and Human Right Commission on the state of women's rights and gender equality in 2018 in the UK. It is the formal response to the UK's eighth periodic report to the UN committee on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women, assessing progress</p>  | <p><b>Medium:</b> Formal response to the UK Gov't's 8<sup>th</sup> Periodic</p>   |

|   |               |  |   |
|---|---------------|--|---|
| <p><a href="#">Gender Equality 2018</a>, Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission</p>   |               | <p>since 2013.</p> <p><b>Many international treaties affecting the rights of women, in particular CEDAW, do not form part of the UK's domestic legal framework and therefore cannot be enforced by domestic courts.</b> A number of CEDAW rights are given partial effect through the Equality Act 2010, which is not fully implemented, but there is a concern that there is no coherent plan for achieving the full realisation of CEDAW. The UK's withdrawal from the EU may mean that future equality and human rights protections from the EU are not binding in UK law and that existing ones may be removed.</p> <p><b>Employment rights and funding for women's services are areas of particular concern.</b> In the UK, women make up 32% (a record high following the 2017 election) of representatives in the House of Commons, which ranked the UK at just 41st globally in May 2018. Only 4% of MPs are ethnic minority women. Women's representation in local councils is also unequal: In England, 33% of council members and 17% of council leaders are female. In Wales, 33% of local councillors and 18% of council leaders are female. Poor public perceptions of politics and the intimidation of MPs are considered major barriers to women's enjoyment of the right to participate in political and public life.</p> <p>The number of women being appointed chairs of public bodies in England and Wales remains low (28%), although the overall trend in public appointments since 2012 has been positive; women made up 45.5% of all public appointments and reappointments in 2016/17 in England and Wales. The boards of private companies fare worse: in October 2017 the representation of women on boards in FTSE 100 companies was 27.7%. In 2017, the judiciary published an action plan to improve diversity. As of 1 April 2017, only 28% of court judges and 45% of tribunal judges in England and Wales were women.</p> | <p>report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)</p>   |
| <p>Womankind (2017) <a href="#">Standing with the changemakers: lessons from supporting women's movements</a>, London: Womankind Worldwide</p>  | <p>Global</p> | <p>The report focuses on women's roles as changemakers and lessons from supporting women's movements. The introductory section explores the <b>context of a rising global backlash against women's rights</b>. While noting the progress and global agreements that have been achieved, it also observes that considerable inequalities remain for women belonging to marginalised groups and who face multiple and intersecting discrimination because of their gender and other aspects of their identity.</p> <p>Examples of the global backlash and organised, conservative resistance to women's rights highlighted include the <b>Global Gag Rule and efforts of conservative and religious fundamentalist groups to undermine international human rights agreements</b>.</p>  | <p><b>Medium:</b> Desk research and interviews with women's rights activists and Womankind's partner organisations</p>  |
| <p>Shameem, N. (2017), <a href="#">Rights at risk: Observatory on the Universality of Rights trends report 2017</a>, Toronto: The Observatory on the Universality of Rights / AWID.</p> | <p>Global</p> | <p>The report notes that there is "an unprecedented level of engagement of anti-rights actors in international human rights spaces today" (p.16). It observes <b>an increase in concerted lobbying by conservative and religious fundamentalist groups</b> to undermine international human rights agreements with these groups "now operating with increased impact, frequency, coordination, resources, and support" (p.10).</p> <p><b>Key opposition actors</b> highlighted in the report include: religious / intergovernmental actors (e.g. Holy See, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation); CSOs (e.g. World Congress of Families, Center for Family and Human Rights, Family Watch International, World Youth Alliance); and State actors</p>  | <p><b>Medium:</b> No methodology section – unclear. Based on human rights trends produced by the Observatory on the Universality of Rights (OURS) initiative.</p> |

|  |        |   |   |
|--|--------|---|---|
|  |        | <p>(e.g. Russian Orthodox Church).</p> <p><b>Opposition discourses</b> mentioned in the report include: protection of the family; VAWG; right to life; SRHR; and gender ideology.</p> <p>The report also gives some <b>examples of anti-rights groups attempting to water down language in international forums</b>, such as CSW and the General Assembly.</p>  |   |
| <p>UNESCO (2018) <a href="#">One in Five Children, Adolescents and Youth is Out of School</a> , UNESCO Factsheet.</p>            | Global | <p>The data shows a global trend towards gender parity in out-of-school rates, although inequalities persist at regional and country levels. It also notes that at primary school level, the adjusted Gender Parity Index (GPI) of the global primary out-of-school rate fell from 1.31 in 2000 to a low of 1.13 in 2011, <b>but in recent years, there was a small uptick</b>. This was due to the continued decline of the male out-of-school rate combined with a small increase in the female out-of-school rate. This means that, globally, girls of primary school age are still more likely to be out of school compared to boys.</p>  | <p><b>Medium:</b> Based on the latest Unesco Institute of Statistics (UIS) data on education available as of February 2018</p>  |
| <p>Global Fund for Women (2019) <a href="#">Brazil's Feminist Activists Find New Strategies Under Conservative Crackdown</a></p> | Brazil | <p><b>Brazil – Conservative rollback on women’s rights is leading to a pushback through grassroots organising and mobilisation</b></p> <p>SoS Corpo – Feminist Institute for Democracy (a Brazilian women’s organisation) has noted that: ‘We face a contradictory situation. On the one hand, we have these strong expressions of misogyny and conservatism in society, but at the same time we’re seeing a very powerful surge in feminist organizing, especially among groups of young people’</p> <p><b>Conservative president Michel Temer is seeking to eliminate a woman’s right to choose</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• by criminalising abortion in all circumstances,</li> <li>• new proposals to restrict sex education and contraceptive access,</li> <li>• by criminalising LGBTQI people</li> <li>• limiting women’s access to basic health care with <b>a proposed 20 year freeze on spending levels</b></li> <li>• leading to harsh impact on rising number of women in poverty, particularly the Afro-Brazilians.</li> </ul> <p>But there is a <b>pushback through grassroots organising and mobilisation:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Global Fund for Women partners are having to ‘shift gears from pushing for advances in reproductive and sexual rights, to mass mobilization to prevent a rollback of women’s rights’</li> <li>• <b>Positive breakthroughs include building of grassroots movements</b>, linking organisations at local national and regional levels and supporting new expressions of feminism in Brazilian society – anti-racist, anti-systemic feminism - supporting women who suffer the most from inequality and attacks on women’s rights – black women, youth, indigenous women and lesbians.</li> <li>• Fighting for SRHRs are now seen as inseparable from the broader fight for social and economic justice and this resistance is giving feminists new energy and unity</li> </ul> | <p><b>Low:</b> Blog posting on Global Fund for Women’s website. Interesting case study based on Global Fund for Women grantee partner SOS Corpo—Feminist Institute for Democracy, a leading defender of human rights and democracy since 1981</p> |
| <p>Selby, D, (2017) <a href="#">Activists are worried Turkey’s new law signals future women’s rights rollback</a>,</p>           | Turkey | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Turkish parliament</b> recently passed a law allowing some religious officials to perform civil marriage ceremonies. This creates a potential loophole towards legalized child marriage and <b>undercuts Turkey’s secularism</b> which has been a key mechanism for protecting</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Low:</b> Blog posting on Global Citizen website.</p>  |

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| Global Citizen, Nov 16 2017  |  | <p>women's rights in the country</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>As a secular nation, Turkey only recognized civil marriages</b> setting it apart from Syria, Lebanon, Israel, and Egypt, all of which do not have civil marriage and only recognize marriages performed by religious authorities.</li> <li>• <b>Turkey's legal marriage age is technically 18</b>, though younger people can marry with parental or court permission. <b>According to UNICEF, 15% of children in Turkey were married by the age of 18 between 2008 and 2014.</b></li> <li>• <b>Activists and members of opposition parties are concerned that the new law will lead to an increase in child marriages</b> as many children are unofficially married by religious leaders like imams in rural areas.</li> </ul>  |   |
| Thomson, E (2017) <a href="#">Women in the middle east are more educated than ever before but still held back by discriminatory laws</a> , Reuters Foundation, October 2017. | Middle East  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Women in the Middle East and North Africa are better educated than ever before, but legal and social barriers are hampering their access to jobs and careers.</b></li> <li>• The OECD estimates gender-based discrimination in laws and social norms <b>costs the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region \$575 billion a year.</b></li> <li>• <b>Just under a quarter of women in the region are in employment</b> - one of the lowest rates in the world</li> <li>• <b>The region also has the lowest proportion of women entrepreneurs</b></li> <li>• <b>Girls' education is encouraged but professional aspirations are not.</b></li> </ul>   | <b>Low:</b> Blog posting on Global Citizen website        |
| Global Fund for Women (2017) <a href="#">Measuring a year in global resistance and interconnected movements</a> , Blog Posting on Global Fund for Women                      | Global<br>With examples from<br>Chile<br>Mexico<br>MENA<br>S Sudan | <p>The blog posting notes that <b>2017 was a year of rollbacks, threats, damaging and regressive policies, and fear. But also a year marked by new forms of resistance and resilience</b> examples cited:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>President Trump reinstated and expanded the Global Gag Rule</b>, which carries extreme implications for women's health and rights.</li> <li>• For the first time, the Global Gag Rule now applies to all global health funding—including HIV and AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis,.</li> <li>• <b>The expansion of this policy means that women around the world will lack access to reliable and comprehensive health care</b>, and will not be able to make informed decisions about their options when pregnant – resulting in a reduction of health services that save millions of lives , rolling back gains that have been made at the global level to improve women's and girls' health and rights</li> </ul> <p><b>But also a year marked by new forms of resistance and resilience.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Women are leading and building new movements, speaking out and demanding their voices be heard</b>, and not stepping down until action has been taken. There has been cross movement organising, building common ground for social justice. Examples cited include:-</li> <li>• In <b>Chile</b> Línea Aborto Libre, a collective of feminists working for abortion rights set up 24-hour hotlines to ensure that women have access to safe abortion information, care, medicine, and support. The women's movement also advanced a historic new abortion law when the Constitutional Tribunal voted to ease the country's total ban, passing legislation that legalizes abortion under three cases.</li> <li>• In the wake of earthquakes in <b>Mexico</b>, the Mexico's women's fund, Semillas, immediately began developing a reconstruction and rebuilding campaign to meet immediate and long-</li> </ul> | <b>Low:</b> Blog posting on Global Fund for Women website |

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
|   |  | <p>term needs, spearhead recovery, and rebuild Mexico in a participatory and sustainable way—all while advancing women’s rights.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the <b>Middle East and North Africa</b>, women human rights defenders are organizing into coalitions of solidarity, skills-sharing, and action, to mitigate the effects of government crackdowns on civil society, advance the safety and integrated security of activists, and hold governments accountable using national laws and processes, and UN mechanisms.</li> <li>• In <b>South Sudan</b>, partners are working to reframe humanitarian assistance with a feminist perspective, to ensure that the unique needs of women in crisis settings are met, that women are supported as front-line defenders and rebuilders of their communities, and that women are involved as leaders in reconstruction processes so that long-term change to advance women’s human rights and gender equality is not lost.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>  |   |
| <p>Stevens, M (2019) <a href="#">Judge Blocks Trump’s Attempt to Roll Back Birth Control Mandate</a>, New York Times Jan. 14, 2019</p>      | USA  | <p>The article notes that <b>there is evidence of pushback and resistance against the erosion of women’s rights at the highest levels in the USA.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contraception is covered by the Affordable Care Act as a preventive health service, something employers and insurers are generally required to provide at no charge. But the Trump administration developed rules to allow employers to opt out of the mandate if they had religious or moral objections.</li> <li>• A federal judge granted a request by more than a dozen states to temporarily block the Trump administration from putting into effect new rules that would make it easier for employers to deny women health insurance coverage for contraceptives.</li> <li>• Courts successfully blocked the changes in 2017 and are now blocking attempts in 2019 arguing they are likely to cause <i>‘irreparable harm as a result of this violation’</i> and <i>‘that the balance of hardships tips sharply in their favor, and that the public interest favors granting the injunction.’</i></li> <li>• In a statement, Xavier Becerra, the attorney general of California, which is listed as the lead plaintiff in the case, said: “The law couldn’t be clearer — employers have no business interfering in women’s health care decisions.”</li> </ul> | <b>Low:</b> Article in New York Times   |
| <p>Jewell, D (2018) <a href="#">After the Irish Referendum, the Debate Over Women’s Bodies Still Rages</a>, ActionAid Blog, 29 May 2018</p> | <p>Ireland and global trends</p> <p>USA<br/>India<br/>Bangladesh<br/>Iraq<br/>Lebanon<br/>Jordan</p> | <p>The blog posting on the result of the Irish referendum in 2018 to legalise abortion rights, <b>highlights how women’s rights and women’s control over their bodies, across the world, are being fiercely debated and fought over as proxies for deeper social and economic division and problems.</b> It notes:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disputes are being played out over ‘the relationship between women and their bodies, and their power – or lack of power – to decide what happens to them’.</li> <li>• It argues ‘women’s bodies are being used as proxies for deeper social worries over freedoms, ethnic tensions, and land.’</li> <li>• In concrete terms this demonstrated by <b>women’s access to public spaces being dented by funding cuts to women’s rights organisations</b></li> <li>• <b>Rise in fundamentalist attitudes:-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ terrorist attacks carried out by so-called “involuntarily celibate” men, to the rise in calls for the redistribution of sex,</li> <li>○ from US President Trump’s decision to reinstate the global gag rule restricting women’s</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  | <b>Low:</b> ActionAid Blog drawing on Actionaid experiences and other evidence. |

|  |               |   |  |
|--|---------------|---|--|
|  |               | <p>access to contraception, to the near-daily reports of rapes and sexually-aggravated murders in India,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bangladesh and Iraq have put forward plans to legalise marriage for girls under the age of ten, and in</li> <li>○ Jordan and Lebanon, feminist movements have been taking on laws that allow rapists to marry their victim in order to evade prosecution.</li> </ul>  |  |
| De Fazio, I (2018) ' <a href="#">Italian cities 'turn back the clock' on women's reproductive rights</a> ', PRI Global Post, October 15 2018.  | Italy         | <p>Short article which notes the growing <b>alarm amongst women leaders and activists that women's reproductive rights are being rolled back</b> since the swearing in of Italy's new, populist coalition government.</p> <p>It notes that in October 2018, <b>Verona's local council approved a motion "to prevent abortion and sustain maternity,"</b> which allows the use of public money to fund anti-abortion Catholic organizations and encourages doctors to dissuade women from aborting. The council also tried and failed to present a motion that would require all aborted fetuses to be buried in a cemetery, even without the consent of the woman involved.</p> <p>A few days later, <b>Ferrara (a town in northern Italy) presented a similar motion</b> enabling the local council to give public funds to private, Catholic organisations to use in anti-abortion campaigns.</p> | <b>Low:</b> Article on PRI Global Post website     |
| Edwards, S (2018) ' <a href="#">Forced to choose between US and Swedish funding, sexual health NGOs speak out</a> ', Devex, 12 September 2018. | Global        | <p>This Devex article explores the dilemma that SRHR NGOs are facing in delivering services after the Swedish aid agency, a key funder of sexual and reproductive health and rights, said it could not support organizations that go along with the US "global gag rule". The ruling has also led to some Sida subgrantees having their contracts cancelled.</p> <p>It notes that up to \$2.2 billion in U.S. funding could be affected by the rule. <b>Marie Stopes International had lost an estimated \$80 million and the International Planned Parenthood Federation had lost \$100 million in U.S. funding.</b></p>   | <b>Low:</b> Devex article                          |
| Burns, J (2017) ' <a href="#">Trump order drops pesky regulations on equal pay, sexual harassment</a> ', Forbes Magazine, April 4 2017         | United States | <p>This Forbes article reports that President Trump signed an <b>executive order revoking the 2014 Fair Pay and Safe Workplaces order</b>, which ensures businesses that receive federal contracts require wage transparency and bars forced arbitration clauses for sexual harassment cases, known as 'cover-up clauses'.</p>  | <b>Low:</b> Article in Forbes Magazine             |
| Novello, A (2018) ' <a href="#">States are the new proving ground for equal pay policies</a> ', The Century Foundation.                        | United States | <p>This article notes the 'significant setback' of rules for equal pay after Congress's repeal of the Fair Pay, Safe Workplaces Order. It finds that a <b>mixed and encouraging picture at the State level.</b></p> <p><b>Positive signs</b> include: 10 states have added 4 or more equal pay laws since earlier this year, and 38 states were considering new equal pay bills in 2018 alone.</p> <p><b>However, other states are going in the opposite direction.</b> E.g. Alabama and Mississippi have zero state-based equal pay laws; both Montana and New Hampshire have revoked equal pay laws in the past year; and Michigan and Wisconsin recently enacted laws to block localities from instituting some of these laws</p>  | <b>Low:</b> Blog posting on the Century Foundation |
| Dearden, L (2017) ' <a href="#">Bangladesh child marriage: New law will reduce minimum marital age to</a>                                      | Bangladesh    | <p>This Independent article reports that <b>Bangladesh's new Child Marriage Restraint Bill</b> keeps the legal age of marriage as 18 for women and 21 for men but <b>introduces exceptions</b> in "special cases" or for in the "best interests" of the adolescent.</p>   | <b>Low:</b> Newspaper article in the Independent   |

|  |               |   |   |
|--|---------------|---|---|
| <a href="#">zero</a> , The Independent, March 8 2017   |               | Critics saw the law is a 'devastating step backwards' in child marriage legislation as it introduces a legal loophole that sets no age limit.   |   |
| Tsui, (2017) ' <a href="#">In Fight over child marriage laws, states resist calls for a total ban</a> ', Frontline, June 6 2017. | United States | More than 200,000 minors were married in the United States between 2000 and 2015 – almost 90% of these were girls. This web article reports on the <b>mixed picture of different US states rewriting child marriage legislation</b> . It notes that 11 states have proposed measures to raise the minimum marriage age, with 4 bills succeeding – Connecticut banned marriage before 16 (June 2017); New York raised minimum marriage age from 14 to 17; Texas set new rules that limit marriage to minors who have been 'emancipated' (a court has granted them the same rights as an adult). It notes there have been recent <b>set-backs in child marriage legislation in New Jersey, New Hampshire and Maryland</b> . | <b>Low:</b> Article on Frontline website    |
| Guyatt, T (2018) ' <a href="#">Advocating for Girls' Education: Why we need Data</a> ', UNESCO website.                          | Global        | The blog posting notes that <b>UNESCO's adjusted gender parity index fell steadily in the decade to 2011 but has crept up in the last four years</b> . The index shows that primary-aged girls face the strongest <b>barriers in Central Asia, Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa</b> .   | <b>Low:</b> Blog posting on UNESCO website. |

### Annex 3: Mapping of Evidence - Impact on women's safety and security

| Citation   | Geographic focus                             | Key findings  | Quality assessment and research methodology  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>Frida, The Young Feminist Fund &amp; Association for Women's Rights in Development (2016) <a href="#">Young Feminist Action Program, Brave, Creative, Resilient: The Global State of Young Feminist Organising</a>, (Frida, The Young Feminist Fund &amp; Association for Women's Rights in Development Young Feminist Action Program, 2016).</p> | <p>Global</p>                                | <p><b>Challenges to the safety and security of young feminist organisations</b> include backlash and fundamentalism, threats to safety and security, political instability and shrinking democratic spaces with threats emanating from a wide range of both state and non-state actors. 35% of young feminists noted a backlash against feminism.</p> <p><b>Over half (54%) of young feminist organisations reported feeling regularly unsafe or threatened</b> due to their work in their respective contexts, with 1 in 8 saying they feel this way all the time.</p> <p><b>The threats to women's rights vary depending on region</b> - Whereas organisations in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and Asia-Pacific regions identified extremist or fundamentalist groups more prominently as threat, those from Latin America, the Caribbean and sub Saharan Africa felt the most common threat was from state, departmental and provincial authorities. Half of organisations from sub Saharan Africa felt unsafe due to threats and attacks by traditional authorities. Apart from organisations in the MENA and Global North regions, a quarter of respondents talked of insecurity due to threats by members of organised crime gangs and cartels. These threats or perceived threats to their safety discouraged them from formally registering as organisations, carrying out certain activities or engaging with State processes.</p>  | <p><b>High:</b> Research by FRIDA, the Young Feminist Fund, including analysis of global survey (in English, French, Spanish) of young feminist-led organising from more than 1,500 organisations around the world over three years.</p>   |
| <p>Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016) <a href="#">Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians</a>, Geneva: Inter-Parliamentary Union</p>  | <p>Comparative study across 39 countries</p> | <p><b>High prevalence of psychological violence against women parliamentarians:</b> 82% of respondents had experienced of psychological violence, with 44% having received threats of death, rape, beatings or abduction during their parliamentary term. 65% had been subjected several times, or often, to humiliating sexist remarks.</p> <p><b>1 in 5 had experienced sexual harassment during their term in parliament:</b> 20% had themselves been sexually harassed and 7.3% said that someone had tried to force them to have sexual relations.</p> <p><b>Physical violence is also widespread, particularly at political meetings:</b> 20% had been slapped, pushed, struck or hit with a projectile that could have injured them during their term; 13% said that someone had threatened to use or actually used a firearm, knife or other weapon against them; and one of the respondents said she had been beaten by the police during a peaceful political rally.</p> <p><b>Women parliamentarians had also experience economic abuse:</b> 14.5% said they had been denied funds to which they were entitled during their terms in office (their MP's salary indemnity, for instance), for instance); 12.7% had been denied other resources (offices, computers, staff, security) enjoyed by their male colleagues in parliament.</p> <p><b>Aggravating factors</b> include being young, belonging to the opposition, and/or belonging to a minority group, <b>National context is also key:</b> Some evidence that violence is most acute for women parliamentarians in contexts where there is a "general context of insecurity and/or</p> | <p><b>Medium:</b> Short issues brief, based on quantitative and qualitative data provided voluntarily by 55 women parliamentarians from 39 countries spread over five regions of the world: 18 in Africa, 15 in Europe, 10 in Asia-Pacific, 8 in the Americas and 4 in Arab countries. Good regional spread.</p> |

|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
|  |  | <p>hostility towards such rights” (p.3).</p> <p><b>The study does not compare violence over time or look at whether there has been a deterioration in women’s safety and security over time or with the roll back of women’s rights</b>, nor does it compare women’s and men’s experience. However, it does note that social media has created a new arena for violence against women parliamentarians.</p>  |   |
| <p>National Democratic Institute (NDI) (2018) <a href="#">No Party to Violence: Analyzing Violence against Women in Political Parties</a> Washington, D.C.: NDI</p>              | <p>Côte d’Ivoire, Honduras, Tanzania, and Tunisia</p>            | <p>The report reinforces other evidence which shows that <b>“as women step forward to claim their right to participate in politics, they are met by a backlash in terms of violence</b> that encompasses a range of harms, including persistent harassment and discrimination, psychological abuse - in person and increasingly online - and physical or sexual assault”. (p.2)</p> <p>70% of respondents, men and women, affirmed that violence occurred in their political parties. <b>44% of respondents thought that political violence was more likely to be experienced by women than men</b>, while only 4% believed it was more likely to target men. The report notes that violence experienced by women is underreported.</p> <p>The report <b>does not look at changes in violence over time</b>, or whether members of political parties have noticed deterioration in women’s safety or security.</p> | <p><b>Medium:</b> Survey of 64 female and 76 male members of political parties from four countries</p>  |
| <p>Womankind (2018) <a href="#">Breaking the Silence: Ending online violence and abuse against women’s rights activists</a>, London: Womankind Worldwide.</p>                    | <p>Zimbabwe, Nepal and Kenya</p>                                 | <p><b>Online violence and abuse against women’s rights activists and feminists is widespread on social media:</b> 50% of women have personally experienced online violence and abuse. 89% of women have witnessed another woman being abused online. The most common social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.</p> <p><b>Intersecting identities:</b> many of the women interviewed shared the discrimination they face as a result of their other identities, including sexual orientation, gender identity, race and age. The online abuse affects women’s health and wellbeing, and 71% of women who took part in the survey said the threat of online violence and abuse affects their participation on social media.</p>   | <p><b>Medium:</b> Mixed method approach, including a literature review, an online survey distributed to former and current Womankind partners, and semi-structured interviews with seven women’s rights activists</p> |
| <p>Rayman, P. et al, (2016) <a href="#">UNSCR 1325 in the Middle East and North Africa: Women and security</a>, Washington: United States Institute of Peace</p>                 | <p>Egypt, Iraq, Israel, the Palestinian territories, Tunisia</p> | <p>The report notes that <b>in the context of the ISIS escalation, “women’s rights are perceived as a humanitarian burden and beneficial for women alone”</b> (p.13) and security was seen in Iraq as more important than women’s rights, particularly by parliamentarians. The prevailing excuse is that now is not an appropriate time for women’s rights, which “will come later.”</p> <p>However, there has been <b>increased international funding for women’s organisations for projects related to SCR 1325</b> which they have struggled to obtain from local governments.</p>   | <p><b>Medium:</b> The report examines the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Egypt, Iraq, Israel, the Palestinian territories, and Tunisia</p>   |
| <p>Human Rights Council (2018) <a href="#">Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on violence against women in politics</a></p> | <p>Global</p>  | <p><b>Although more than 10,000 women today serve as national parliamentarians</b>, women remain significantly underrepresented at all levels of political decision-making. Data on violence against women in politics is limited, but the Special Rapporteur notes that some studies have revealed that such violence is widespread and systematic. She highlights two examples of women activists who have been murdered in recent years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Murder of a prominent Afro-Brazilian human rights defender, Marielle Franco, in Brazil</b> in March 2018 shows how the intersection of gender, race and participation in public</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Medium:</b> Informed by consultations with and information provided by various stakeholders and a range of national, regional and international organizations, following a call</p>                             |

|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
|   |  | <p>life can imperil activist women.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Assassination in 2016 of Honduran environmental activist Berta Cáceres</b>, one of the many women environmental activists killed each year.</li> </ul> <p>Notes that threats to women's safety and security due to roll backs come from <b>State and non-State perpetrators</b> including: members of political parties, fellow or opposition parliamentarians, voters, media representatives or religious leaders.</p> <p>The report highlights several examples of <b>progress to tackle violence against women in politics</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Pakistan</b>: the National Commission on the Status of Women began collecting official data on violence against women in politics in 2015.</li> <li>• <b>Tanzania</b>: the Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform monitored violence against women throughout the electoral process of 2015.</li> </ul>   | for submissions made at an expert group meeting on violence against women in politics  |
| Farhat, H. (2017) <a href="#">The status of women human rights defenders in Libya</a> , The WHRD Coalition in the Middle East and North Africa. | Libya  | <p>In Libya women's human rights defenders (WHRDs) have been particularly targeted by all sides of the conflict in order to silence the calls for gender equality.</p> <p>Militias and religious extremists view women's human rights defenders as a threat to their authority and ideologies and <b>attacks have been made against women who are members and founders of NGOs, women who are members or former members of parliament, female members of CSOs and women who are outspoken in the media on women's issues</b>. Many prominent women have been assassinated.</p>  | <b>Medium</b> : Paper analysing situation of WHRDs in Libya. Based on desk review.   |
| Krook, M.L. (2017) ' <a href="#">Violence Against Women in Politics</a> ', Journal of Democracy, 28.1: 74–88                                    | Global   | <p>Notes that <b>reports of physical attacks, intimidation, and harassment aimed at female politicians, activists, and voters have grown as women have become more politically engaged around the world</b>, including digital harassment.</p> <p>Includes examples of online sexist hostility and intimidation driving female politicians out of politics, or putting off potential leaders. For example, nearly all participants in a program for aspiring women leaders in the UK stated that they had witnessed sexist abuse of female politicians online, and over 75% said that it weighed on their decision about whether to seek a role in public life.</p>   | <b>Medium</b> : Peer-reviewed journal. Drawing on quantitative and qualitative data, academic research on gendered and political violence  |
| Amnesty International (2018) <a href="#">Toxic Twitter: A Toxic Place for Women</a> , London: Amnesty International                             | UK, USA, Spain, Denmark, Italy, Sweden, Poland and New Zealand (but drawing on wider data) | <p><b>Nearly a quarter (23%) of the women surveyed said they had experienced online abuse or harassment</b> at least once, ranging from 16% in Italy to 33% in the US. 41% of women who had experienced online abuse or harassment said that on at least one occasion, these online experiences made them feel that their physical safety was threatened.</p> <p>The report notes that <b>women who speak out about women's rights and/or are public figures are at high risk of online abuse and harassment</b>, including journalists, politicians and women's rights activists.</p> <p><b>Violence is often intersectional</b> - Scottish Parliamentarian and Leader of the Opposition Ruth Davidson told Amnesty International that the abuse she faces is both misogynistic and homophobic. Analysis of tweets before UK election found that online abuse targets different identities, with Diane Abbott, the Shadow Home Secretary and first black female MP in the UK - alone - receiving almost half (45.14%) of all abuse against women MPs active on Twitter in the UK during this period.</p> | <b>Medium</b> : Online poll with Ipsos MORI about women's broader experiences (n = 4,009) of abuse and harassment on social media platforms across eight countries (UK, USA, Spain, Denmark, Italy, Sweden, Poland and New Zealand). Also draws on analysis of 900,223 tweets in run-up to 2017 UK election to explore abuse of women politicians. |

|   |                      |  |  |
|---|----------------------|--|--|
| <p>Astor, M (2018) <a href="#">‘For female candidates, harassment and threats come every day’</a>, New York Times, August 24 2018</p> | <p>United States</p> | <p><b>A record number of female candidates in the 2018 election cycle</b> found that harassment and threats were ‘amplified in political race – especially if the candidate is a member of the minority group’</p> <p>The article notes that no <b>independent organisation formally tracks incidents of harassment</b>, and evidence is not available from the Democratic and Republican National Committees.</p> <p>The article notes that “Harassment is not new for women in politics, or anywhere else — and men face it too, especially if they are African-American or Jewish. But <b>for women, the harassment is ubiquitous and frequently sexualized, and it has come to the fore this election cycle</b>, partly because so many women are running and partly because more of them are discussing their experiences”.</p> | <p><b>Low:</b> New York Times article based on interviews with female candidates</p>   |
| <p>AWID (2014) <a href="#">Our Right To Safety: Women Human Rights Defenders’ Holistic Approach to Protection</a>, Toronto: AWID.</p> | <p>Latin America</p> | <p>In the consultation, participating “<b>WHRDs emphasized the need to advance an integrated concept of security that goes beyond just the physical protection of the individual</b>” (p.6) to include the need to feel safe at home, work, in public and online, as well as integrating the physical and psychological well-being of WHRDs, their organisations and families</p>  | <p><b>Low:</b> Consultation with women human rights defenders in Mexico City in June 2013. No methodology section – not clear how many interviews.</p> |

### Annex 3: Input from Womankind Worldwide – February 2019 (prepared by Maria Vlahakis)

#### Summary of key points and evidence

- Globally, women's rights are coming under increasing and persistent attacks from state and non-state actors, both offline and online, threatening the hard won achievements by women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and women's rights activists over many decades. WHRDs are being silenced, undermined and discredited, subjected to violence and their lives threatened.
- This is highlighted in the work of Womankind Worldwide (Womankind) partner women's rights organisations and is playing out in a number of different ways in the countries where they work (see **case study 1** on attacks on WHRDs and their organisations including in Uganda and **case study 2** on state-sanctioned violence against women in Zimbabwe).
- There is recognition of this worrying trend by the UN and other human rights organisations.
- In June 2018 the **UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women in Law and in Practice** submitted a report to the Human Rights Council in which they highlighted that women's rights are facing a global pushback from conservative and fundamentalist groups.<sup>5</sup> The report said that, "Not only is the advancement of women's rights and full equality too slow, uneven, and far from a global reality, but women's hard-fought achievements now risk being reversed." It highlights a global context of retrogressions as well as important steps being made to reclaim women's rights. It finds that the areas of family and culture as well as sexual and reproductive health remain the most significant challenges and where women face the biggest backlash.
- In 2018 **Womankind** published evidence about the silencing effect of online violence and abuse against WHRDs in Zimbabwe, Nepal and Kenya.<sup>6</sup> Also in 2018 the **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet**, highlighted the widespread attempt to silence and undermine WHRDs online.<sup>7</sup>
- In 2017 the **Association for Women Rights in Development (AWID)** highlighted that anti-rights actors are increasingly infiltrating and appropriating human rights norms and language on violence against women (VAW), including using anti-abortion arguments to claim that access to abortion following sexual violence in conflict is in itself a form of violence.<sup>8</sup>
- In 2018 **CIVICUS** highlighted some of the key current challenges for civil society, including unequal control of economic resources, the stability and security agenda being used to restrict democratic freedoms, the exclusion of marginalised groups including from political power, as well as the rise of anti-rights groups in civil society.<sup>9</sup> The report also highlights where civil society is leading the response, including women's movements such as Me Too and Time's Up.
- In 2019 **Amnesty International** highlighted the increase in government sponsored attacks on civil society by creating laws that subject them and their staff to surveillance, bureaucracy and threat of imprisonment, interfering with their right to freedom of association.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> [https://ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WG/A\\_HRC\\_38\\_46\\_EN.pdf](https://ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WG/A_HRC_38_46_EN.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.womankind.org.uk/docs/default-source/default-document-library/breaking-the-silence-policy-briefing.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.thenational.ae/world/the-americas/un-high-commissioner-for-human-rights-says-women-are-being-silenced-1.774871>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/rights-at-risk-ours-2017.pdf> (p71-73)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.civicus.org/documents/reports-and-publications/reimagining-democracy/democracy-for-all-en.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act30/9647/2019/en/>

### Case study 1: Persistent and deliberately targeted attacks on women human rights defenders and their organisations

- In December 2018, over 900 civil society organisations, including Womankind, signed up to CIVICUS's **Global Statement on the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (HRDs)**.<sup>11</sup> The statement highlights significant gaps in its implementation and the challenges faced by HRDs, including killings, attacks, harassment and intimidation. *"In all types of political systems, democratic and otherwise across the world, the settings in which human rights defenders work is becoming more contested and volatile. Very few states have promulgated laws on HRDs or developed policies that seek to recognise and protect them."*
- The statement highlights that "in many societies attacks on Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs), youth activists and those working on LGBTQI issues have increased." This has resulted in self-censorship, activists fleeing their homes and countries, and there is a culture of impunity driven by inadequate law enforcement response.
- Attacks on civil society are targeted at the workplace and at home in an attempt to intimidate those working on sensitive issues or seeing to be analysing or criticising the government, in areas such as women's rights and LGBTQI rights.
- In August 2018 the offices of Womankind partner **ISIS-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis WICCE)** in Kampala, Uganda, were broken into and computers and cash stolen. **Maria Burnett**, East and Horn of Africa Director at Human Rights Watch, said at the time: *"The attack on Isis-WICCE is the latest in a very troubling string of burglaries of human rights and development organisations offices' in Uganda."* **DefendDefenders**, a Kampala-based regional human rights organisation, has said that over 30 organisations in Uganda have experienced similar break-ins since 2012. Human Rights Watch have said that all the targeted groups are known for working on sensitive issues and for analysing or criticising government policies.<sup>12</sup>
- In 2011 Womankind partner **Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG)**, a women's rights organisation led by and for lesbian, bisexual and trans (LBT) women, also experienced a burglary.<sup>13</sup> In 2018 a number of staff working for FARUG had their identities exposed and they were subjected to sustained attacks online to discredit them and link them to foreign funding.
- Ugandan and international human rights groups have highlighted the inadequate response from police and cite a worsening pattern of attacks on Ugandan civil society.<sup>14</sup>
- Increasingly attacks on WHRDs are also now taking place in online spaces. In 2018 **Womankind published new research looking at the silencing effect of online violence and abuse on WHRDs in Zimbabwe, Nepal and Kenya**. The findings include:
  - 50% of women experienced online violence and abuse themselves and 89% had witnessed another women being subjected to it. Sexual harassment, cyber stalking and threats of violence on social media platforms were commonly cited.
  - Online violence and abuse causes significant **psychological harm**: women interviewed reported feeling anxious, insecure, fearful about their physical safety and had a sense of powerlessness.
  - 71% of women said the threat of online violence and abuse affects their participation on social media. As a result, women are **self-censoring** their responses, withdrawing from the debate or online spaces altogether.

<sup>11</sup> The UN Declaration sets out governments' responsibility to protect human rights defenders, including women's human rights defenders.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/08/07/uganda-string-burglaries-rights-groups>

<sup>13</sup> <https://ilga.org/uganda-suspicious-burglary-at-farug-offices>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/06/13/letter-31-ugandan-and-international-organizations>

## Case study 2: State-sanctioned sexual violence against women and girls during and after the government crackdowns on protesters in Zimbabwe in January 2018

- The **women's movement in Zimbabwe** has called the recent human rights violations against women during and after the government crackdowns a **threat to democracy** and breaching the Government's human rights commitments and obligations.
- The **Government of Zimbabwe has ratified international and regional human rights instruments** including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1984), Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1986) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol), amongst others.
- The **2013 Constitution** provides a comprehensive declaration of women's rights as human rights and establishes a Gender Commission to monitor and report on women's rights. The Constitution states that every person has the right to personal security which is bodily and psychological integrity and includes the right not to be subjected to any form of violence.
- In response to protests against increased fuel prices in January 2018, the Government ordered an [internet blackout](#) and security forces (police and the military) [responded](#) to demonstrations with live ammunition, rubber bullets and teargas. Womankind partner the **Female Prisons Support Trust (FEMPRIST)** reported that close to 100 women were arbitrarily arrested and tortured across the country, including young girls, and have been denied due process by the courts and some convicted in lengthy sentences in 'fast track kangaroo trials.'
- In addition, there have been reports of sexual violence, including rape and sexual assault. Human rights organisations have received reports from women who say they were raped by members of the security forces. However very few have reported this to authorities as they fear reprisals and reporting it to authorities who committed the crimes in the first place.<sup>15</sup>
- In response Womankind partner the **Women's Coalition of Zimbabwe (WCoZ)** started a petition to the Gender Commission highlighting deep concerns of the women's movement in Zimbabwe of constitutionally guaranteed rights and the impunity of security forces. The women's movement in Zimbabwe views this as a serious threat to democracy and fundamental human rights and freedoms and calls upon the Gender Commission to investigate alleged reports, guarantee survivor safety and access to justice.<sup>16</sup>
- Womankind partner the **Zimbabwe Women Lawyers Association (ZWLA)** issued a statement condemning the reports of violence against women and girls and calling on the Government to put survivors at the centre of the response and to develop a National Action Plan in line with UNSCR 1325. ZWLA also called on the Gender Commission to investigate violence against women that occurred during the protests and publish findings and recommendations, and to lead a multi stakeholder approach to preventing violence against women.<sup>17</sup>
- Womankind partner **FEMPRIST** issued a joint statement with Justice for Women Zimbabwe (JWZ) and Women's Academy for Leadership and Political Excellence (WALPE) highlighting the human rights abuses against women, including arbitrary arrest, torture and sexual violence. They took part in a #WearBlack #SpeakOut campaign to as a protest against rape.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/sally-nyakanyanga/alleged-army-rapes-women-protesting-zimbabwe-fuel-hikes>

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.change.org/p/zimbabwe-gender-commission-end-impunity-to-sexual-assault-against-women-and-girls?recruiter=897289563&utm\\_source=share\\_petition&utm\\_medium=twitter&utm\\_campaign=share\\_petition](https://www.change.org/p/zimbabwe-gender-commission-end-impunity-to-sexual-assault-against-women-and-girls?recruiter=897289563&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=twitter&utm_campaign=share_petition)

<sup>17</sup> <https://twitter.com/ZimWomenLawyers/status/1092452864843284486>

**About Helpdesk reports:** The VAWG Helpdesk is funded by the UK Department for International Development, contracted through Inclusive Societies Department (ISD). This helpdesk report is based on 4 days of desk-based research and is designed to provide a brief overview of the key issues and expert thinking on VAWG issues.

VAWG Helpdesk services are provided by a consortium of leading organisations and individual experts on VAWG, including Social Development Direct, International Rescue Committee, ActionAid, Womankind, and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS). Expert advice may be sought from this Group, as well as from the wider academic and practitioner community, and those able to provide input within the short time-frame are acknowledged. Any views or opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of DFID, the VAWG Helpdesk or any of the contributing organisations/experts.

For any further request or enquiry, contact [enquiries@vawghelpdesk.org](mailto:enquiries@vawghelpdesk.org).

**Suggested citation:**

Jobes, K, Fraser, E and Vlahakis, M (2019) *Evidence on Global Rollback of Women's Rights*, VAWG Helpdesk Research Report No. 230. London, UK: VAWG Helpdesk.