



Introduction

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This special issue of *Gender Issues* is the outcome of The International Conference on Future Women'18 organized by the International Institute of Knowledge Management (TIKM), Sri Lanka, held on 6th to 7th February 2018 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. We are now well into the second decade of the twenty-first century and the condition of women worldwide is marked by contrasting gaps. Inequalities are evident in workplaces, familial spaces, public places, and digital/cyberspaces. Although progress towards gender equity has been made, advances have been slow and inconsistent.

The conference deliberated the question of next steps for women's' movements worldwide. Increasingly, civil societies, political parties, governments, the media and individuals are reconsidering and reworking newer strategies to tackle and repel persistent gender inequalities. Feminist movements the world over are strengthened and vitalized by the globally-approved 2015 Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals.

The five papers included in this volume were all presented at the conference. The first paper "Being Muslim: Unveiling the Voices of Asian Muslim Women Travelers" by PR Senutha and S Nor Hafizah, uncover the voices of Asian Muslim women and offer an alternate perspective about Islam and travel among Muslim women. The accounts of Muslim women travellers contest the view that gendered interpretations of religious texts promote patriarchal orientation in Muslim community that suppresses women's leisure.

The agricultural sector which shifted from being labor-intensive to capital-intensive brought about changes in economic structure and employment. The second paper, "A Study on The Impact of Commodity Changes to The Role and Strategy of Women's Livelihood" by Purbowo and Slamet Widodo studies the impacts of commodity changes on the role and strategy of women's livelihood.

The third paper "Influential Factors among Male Population, Which Associated with the Economic Violence against Women in Laos" by Dusadee Ayuwat and Som-souk Sananikone examines the factors that have influenced Laotian men in rural areas to inflict economic violence against women, particularly prohibiting the wife

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to work outside her home. The paper advocates for a strong family institution as the starting point to prevent economic and physical violence against women.

“Women in the Academic Arena: Struggles, Strategies and Personal choices” by Adefunke O. Ekine examines the underrepresentation of women in academic leadership positions. Even though teaching is viewed as an ideal profession for women, this work asserts that female academics are still in the minority compared to male academics.

The special issue concludes with “Delivery of Devolved Social Services: Its Contributions to the Socio-Economic Conditions of Women in Columbia, by Sultan Kudarat by Adora M. Alvarez, Joel Bedoya, and Brian Ven C. Bag Ao. This article identifies the major devolved programs/projects implemented by the Local Government Code (LGU) of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat. The study looks at the implementation of various devolved social services and how it has made a significant difference in the lives of the people of the Municipality of Columbio, Sultan Kudarat, the Local Government of Columbio, and the program implementers.

This present issue of *Gender Issues* covers a wide range of topics from narratives of Muslim travellers as subversive strategy, the effectiveness of the devolved social system in the context of Columbia, the academia as a male bastion space despite the growing presence of women in academics, causes that result in economic violence against Lao women, and how the shift in the mode of agriculture impacts women. Collectively this issue looks at underrepresentations and inequities rampant in all cultures and finding effective ways to combat it.

We hope that you enjoy this issue.

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(Editor, Special Issue)

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