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ARE WE ALL BECOMING ORANGE?

GENDER ADVANCEMENT

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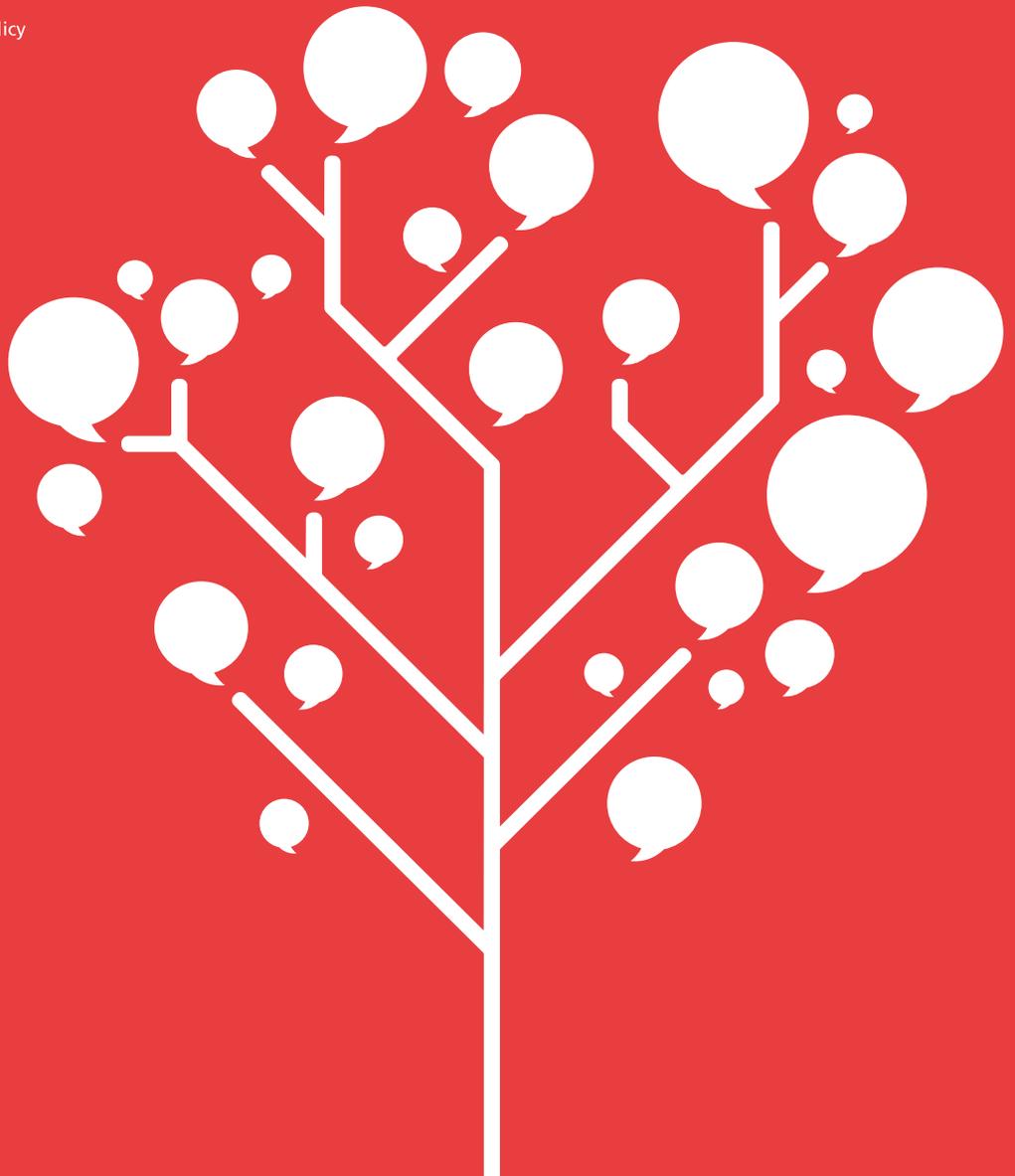
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Equality, peace and security: creating a new normal



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A vendor sells #MeToo badges at a protest march for survivors of sexual assault and their supporters in Hollywood, Los Angeles, California U.S. November 12, 2017

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As over seventy heads of state and countless world-leading chief executives, academics, technical pioneers and social entrepreneurs gathered in the snowy mountains of Davos, the ‘summit of summits’, to address the political, economic and social fractures we face, the Financial Times chose to run a different story on their front page. It was also one of politicians, philanthropists, business leaders and celebrities gathering for a noble cause. But there was significant difference.

At a men-only black-tie dinner run by the ‘Presidents Club’ in London, women were paid to hostess in skimpy outfits at *‘the most un-PC event of the year’*. Within days, evidence of sexual harassment by powerful and wealthy men towards young women gained public attention for the first time in the annual dinner’s 33-year history.

#Timesup on the Presidents club, and the event has joined many cases in the #metoo campaign that have opened up a debate about appropriate sexual behaviour online and offline, in office corridors, in meetings, and in homes, in countries all around the world. Does this social movement represent a watershed in history for women’s rights where norms truly shift?

And at a time when we are seeing increasing inequality and insecurity across the world, a crisis of trust across government,

business, NGOs and the media, and the liberal international system, what can we learn?

The point at which new norms are created is when socially acceptable behaviour becomes unacceptable, or, more positively, what was thought impossible becomes possible. It takes laws and policies, and hearts and minds. When traditions are embedded in institutional norms, and perpetuated through political and economic power and privilege, change is harder. Take for example slavery, a tradition; and colonialism, a norm. Inappropriate dinners might become unacceptable, but ridiculing society of misogyny, exploitation and abuse towards all sexes will take longer, and will be met with overt and subtle resistance. #MeToo has started a conversation, but there is a long way to go until we reach equality.

For organisations, grievance procedures alone do not provide the answer. The US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission found in 2015, that of 90,000 discrimination complaints made, 45% included a charge of retaliation, which suggests that the original report was met with ridicule, demotion or worse. The power of the perpetrator can silence victims, particularly in a hierarchy.

Whether the #meToo movement really marks a watershed moment, will depend on whether we can turn a culture of fear into one of trust. A space has opened to communicate new values and influence perceptions, thoughts and beliefs, but to get to a new normal we will need a significant mindset shift.

Firstly, we need to **see the problems**.

Just because you are not experiencing something yourself, does not mean that it isn’t happening. A recent survey within a UN agency found the perceptions of sexual harassment by men and women differed significantly: more women than men perceive a problem. As highlighted by Michael Kimmel, *‘privilege is invisible to those who have it’*, and furthermore, voices have been silenced. To see the problems, we need to create more spaces for those who are experiencing challenges to be heard, and adopt more inclusive behaviours in decision-making so that they are able to influence policy to meet their needs.

Secondly, we need the **courage to act**.

How many of us are complicit in turning a blind eye to behaviour that we can see

“A problem cannot be solved by the same mindset that created it.”
Albert Einstein.

happening, but which we do nothing about? Margaret Heffernan explains how **wilful blindness** has stopped us from confronting uncomfortable facts,

from the financial bubble and crash of 2008, to sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation. It is damaging in individuals, dangerous in collectives, and corrupting if embedded in institutional culture. Fear of change and conflict can keep us away from standing up to harmful norms, but a few courageous people can inspire others, and create an expectation that those with integrity will act.

Thirdly, we need to **design change and be creative**.

When discriminatory behaviour and bias is systemic and embedded in institutional culture and norms, Professor Iris Bohnet suggests that we need to better understand how it operates and design change. Just like grievance procedures, diversity and inclusion programs are not universally successful, and can even activate rather than eliminate stereotypes, and induce defensive reactions when people feel accused or threatened, so evidence of what works is key.

In a trial conducted by the Behavioural Insights Team to see if perspective taking could reduce discrimination towards pregnant women, line managers in a large police force participated in an on-line exercise. The results were surprising: male and female managers were actually rated by their female staff worse than those who had not received the intervention.

To really shift mindsets, improve empathy and communication, and decrease prejudice, behavioural science points to the need to truly understand another person's perspective – how they think and feel. We

need to build trust and bond with people presenting different social identities to ourselves. This requires dialogue, engagement, creativity, and time.

What are the implications of the #metoo movement for equality, peace and security?

#MeToo has put human dignity and respect back on centre stage. It offers a lens through which to better understand how power and privilege operate, and why different perspectives matter. In a fractured world, where technology and global trade have disconnected us from the consequences of our actions, it tells us to reconnect, see the problems, confront them, and be inspired to act.

At Davos, Jack Ma spoke of the need for EQ for success, IQ not to lose quickly, and LQ for respect – the IQ of love. The final panel was given to artists from around the world. Photographer Platon told the story of Sandra from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, raped in a war driven by the extraction of precious metals to fuel modern technology,

to tell the world her message: 'My body is not a weapon'. A shared future really will require us all to feel, understand and love.

As for a new normal? Movements and networks bring with them new power that might just help us to turn social evolution into transformation. Beatrice Finn, the leader of the coalition of NGOs that campaigned for the Nuclear Ban Treaty, ICAN, believes a nuclear free world is possible despite increasing state rivalry, polarisation and the highest threat level since the Cold War. If we are to avoid a zero-sum game and restore trust and integrity to our world, it is time to start imagining the seemingly impossible to be possible. ■

1 Fleur Heyworth leads the Gender and Inclusive Security Cluster at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. She works with the GCSP-CCL Leadership Alliance to equip leaders with the 'mindsets, skillsets and toolsets' to lead in complex and turbulent times. The GCSP offers 'Inspiring Women Leaders' courses and workshops, and a new course 'Leading Inclusive Teams' from 16–18 April, which is specifically aimed at Managers, who play a critical role in creating organisational culture and developing talent. On June 14, the GCSP will be collaborating with partners including the World YWCA, to bring 'Seven the Play' to Geneva to help us develop Safe Spaces for all.



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