

The World Humanities Report

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# Gender Studies in the Arab World: An NGO Phenomenon

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The introduction of women and gender studies (WGS) programs in universities and their institutionalization as academic disciplines started in the 1970s in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand, and then expanded and spread across the globe in the 1980s and '1990s. These programs responded to the demands of women's movements in these countries for the production of feminist knowledges to counter hegemonic, masculinist histories and epistemologies and to empower women's rights movements. The institutionalization of WGS research and programs followed various academic and political trajectories in different regions. Academic, political, and cultural differences affected the course of development and institutionalization of the new field of study.<sup>1</sup>

In the Arab world, WGS began in the 1980s and continued into the 1990s not as programs and institutes in universities but as independent research organizations that emerged and spread in the context of a relative political liberalization in many Arab countries. The noted exception was the Women's Studies Institute, established in 1973 at Lebanese American University in Beirut, formerly a women's college. The trajectory of WGS in the Arab world is a direct

<sup>1</sup> In Germany, the first professorship in women's studies was created in 1980, and the first MA in gender studies was established in 1997 at Humboldt University of Berlin (Helga Kraft, "Gender Studies and Wissenschaftlichkeit in Germany," *Women in German Yearbook* 30 [2014]: 109). Kraft contends that this relative delay in the institutionalization of the field in academia, despite the existence of a strong feminist movement, was partly attributable to persistent claims by academic colleagues that gender experts were not scholarly enough, were ideologically driven, and did not exercise intellectual critical objectivity (Kraft, "Gender Studies," 111). In Poland, the advent of WGS took place in the early 1990s after the end of one-party rule and the transition to democracy. It "was characterized by a strong pro-Western orientation as scholars in Poland were eager to catch up with Western scholarship," but subsequently, there was much discussion about "the hegemony of Western, and particularly American, feminist discourse" (Halina Filipowicz, "'Am I That Name': Feminism, Feminist Criticism, and Gender Studies," *Polish Review* 59, no. 1 [2014]: 11). In Latin America, the 1970s was a time of military regimes inimical to social movements and activist-oriented research. Research in women's studies emerged in the 1980s outside of academia and was funded by international organizations. In short, different histories, political systems, and academic contexts were instrumental in shaping the nascent field. For the challenges facing women's studies programs at universities throughout the world see Rekha Pande, ed., *A Journey into Women's Studies: Crossing Interdisciplinary Boundaries* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

consequence of political constraints in undemocratic postcolonial Arab states, as well as the status and histories of national higher education institutions. I argue that WGS in the Arab world is a nongovernmental organization (NGO) phenomenon: it developed and was nurtured by feminist activists who founded independent women's organizations in the 1980s and 1990s. They seized the opportunities that were available because of the political transformations in Arab regimes, the internationalization of women's rights issues, and the struggle for rights in the context of authoritarian postcolonial states.<sup>2</sup> The aim of this article is threefold: to shed light on the contexts and histories that were conducive to WGS programs emerging and developing in civil society institutions (i.e., NGOs) prior to their institutionalization in universities; to highlight the political, conceptual, and social challenges that constrain the field's development; and to chart some key trends and trajectories in the production of knowledge on WGS in the Arab world.

## NGOs as Incubators for Research on WGS: Challenges and Opportunities

Women's movements in the Arab world constitute the spark and force behind the growth of research in the field of WGS. The end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth witnessed the beginnings of feminist consciousness and women's activism, which was expressed in emerging media, specifically the publication of treatises and articles by women.<sup>3</sup> National liberation movements in the Arab world in the 1950s and 1960s were key enablers of women's struggle for rights. While they empowered women and accorded them social status and political legitimacy, these movements stopped short of meeting women's demands for rights in the private sphere. More importantly, Arab postcolonial states were authoritarian and undemocratic; they clamped down on dissent and

<sup>2</sup> The development of WGS in NGOs is not specific to the Arab region. In Spain, for example, where WGS started later than in other Western European countries, it "is strongest outside the academy, because of its alliance with groups who resisted the Franco regime." Caryn McTighe Musil, "Women's Studies Programs Worldwide," in *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge*, ed. Cheri Kramarae and Dale Spender (New York: Routledge, 2000), 2063.

<sup>3</sup> It is beyond the scope of this essay to list all the contributions of women in the Arab world to knowledge in the field of WGS. For a good overview of the contribution of women from the turn of the twentieth century, see Pernille Arenfeldt and Nawar Al-Hassan Golley, eds., *Mapping Arab Women's Movements: A Century of Transformations from Within* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2012); and Jean Said Makdisi et al., *Arab Women in the Twenties: Presence and Identity* (Beirut: Tajamu' al-bahithat al-lubnaniyyat wa markaz dirasat al-wihda al-arabiyya, 2003).

nationalized or appropriated social movements, including the women's movement. Consequently, the decades immediately after Arab states achieved national independence saw a decline in independent women's movements and a rise of state feminisms. Despite some noted achievements in education, employment, and legal protection for women, state feminism in the Arab world is associated with co-optation, appropriation, manipulation, and the stifling of independent civil and women's organizations.<sup>4</sup>

Two important developments took place at the end of the 1970s and 1980s that loosened the grip of authoritarian states on independent women's groups and allowed for the emergence of a new generation of women's NGOs in the 1980s and 1990s. The first is the economic liberalization policies adopted by some Arab states, which went parallel to political liberalization and the establishment of

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multiparty systems. The second is the internationalization of women's rights. The Second World Conference on Women (Nairobi, 1985) is viewed by many as the birth of global feminism, as it situated women's rights agendas at the center of world politics. The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women, declared women's rights as human rights and committed states to specific actions to guarantee their compliance with the agreed resolutions. It also committed governments to create national machineries for the monitoring and advancement of women at the highest level of government. In the framework of this global directive, National Councils for Women or other forms of national machinery were established in Arab countries.<sup>5</sup>

A second generation of Arab women's movements appeared in the 1980s and 1990s. Several founders of the first women's rights NGOs were women who had a history in political activism or were members of political parties. Many point

<sup>4</sup> See Nadjé Sadig Al-Ali, *Iraqi Women: Untold Stories from 1948 to the Present* (London: Zed Books, 2007); Hoda Elsadda, "Women's Rights Activism in Post-Jan25 Egypt: Combating the Shadow of the First Lady Syndrome," *Middle East Law and Governance* 3 (2011): 84–93 and "Against All Odds: Arab Feminisms in Postcolonial States; A Legacy of Appropriation, Contestation and Negotiation," *Journal of Feminist Scholarship* 16 (Fall 2019): 53–64; and Arenfeldt and Golley, *Mapping Arab Women's Movements*.

<sup>5</sup> For more details see Elsadda, "Against All Odds."

out that one reason for establishing independent women's organizations that were not affiliated with political parties was the tenacious leftist and nationalist position that women's concerns were not a priority compared with liberation or democratization.

NGOs in the Arab world created research and training opportunities for academics, who either established or joined the organizations as a way of circumventing the many restrictions and limitations imposed in academic institutions or as a source of supplemental income. Restrictions at universities varied in magnitude, but they included absence of safeguards for academic freedom, lack of autonomy, political intervention and manipulation, and ever-decreasing resources for national universities as governments moved toward a privatized educational module. There is a direct link between the crisis in higher education institutions in the Arab world and the exodus of scholars in search of relatively more independent forums for research inquiry and livable incomes.

Involvement with NGOs added to academic researchers' symbolic capital as they acquired the status of public intellectuals through their involvement with NGO agendas and activism. Women academic-activists stood at the forefront of knowledge production in WGS in the region. In Morocco, Fatima Mernissi, a renowned sociologist and pioneer of Islamic feminism, was an active member of the women's movement and a supporter and enabler of women's activism. She is an excellent example of a public intellectual and academic who invested her symbolic capital in enabling feminist activist organizations and disseminating feminist concepts and ideas to a wider public.

However, NGOs were not necessarily safe havens for research and activism, as they had to contend with many political, cultural, and financial challenges and constraints. NGOs in the 1980s and 1990s were established under the draconian laws passed in the 1950s and 1960s. Their legal status was precarious, and their ability to function was contingent on political considerations that were beyond their control.

NGOs in the 1980s and 1990s walked a tight line on the margins of power. Most of the women's organizations had minimal grassroots bases, even the ones who worked directly with poor communities. Most depended on international funding for their existence. This dependence made them easy targets for politically motivated smear campaigns and accusations of being the arms of Western imperialism. In addition, their dependency on international funding trapped them in a system where sustainability was an uphill struggle.

## Knowledge Production on WGS in Arab NGOs: Trends and Directions

A general survey of the trends and themes tackled by women's NGOs reveals a varied scene: a developmental focus on social and economic challenges to women and the effects of inequality on their lives and families; a cultural focus on identity issues; debates on the role of religion and the challenges of its interpretation from a gender lens; feminist postcolonial critiques of representations of Arab women and Muslim women in Western discourses and media; critiques of modernist discourses on "the woman question" in the Arab world; revisiting Arab histories through a gender lens and foregrounding the roles of women from earlier centuries. The opening up of political and cultural spaces also enabled the establishment of specialized journals, magazines, and publishing houses dedicated to women's issues.<sup>6</sup>

Knowledge production on WGS increased exponentially in the 1990s. The first issue of the feminist journal *Hajar* appeared in 1992.<sup>7</sup> In 1993, an Arab women's publishing house, Nour (1994–2003), was established in Cairo in conjunction with the establishment of the Association of Arab Women in Beirut. Nour's aim was to create a platform for women's voices and contributions to social and cultural debates in the Arab world. The Women and Memory Forum was founded in 1995 with a mandate to produce knowledge on women and gender in the Arab world.<sup>8</sup> There was a marked increase in knowledge production on WGS from a rights approach, with a particular emphasis on the legal status of women in personal status codes.<sup>9</sup> In Lebanon, the Arab Institute for Women at Lebanese American University first published the journal *al-Raida* in 1976. In 1992, the Lebanese Association of Women Researchers, Bahithat, was established and brought together independent women scholars who rejected forced divisions along religiopolitical lines.

<sup>6</sup> In Egypt, three important publications appeared in the 1980s: *al-Mar'a al-Jadida*, a newsletter published by the New Woman NGO, in 1986; *Nun*, a feminist magazine published by the Arab Women's Solidarity Association, led by Nawal El Saadawy, in 1989; and *Bint al-Ard*, a feminist magazine coedited by Iman Mersal and Jihan Abu Zeid, in Egypt in 1985.

<sup>7</sup> *Hajar*, edited by Hoda Elsadda and Salwa Bakr, was conceptualized as a specialized journal in women's studies and aimed at promoting research and knowledge production in Arabic. Six issues were published between 1992 and 1998.

<sup>8</sup> See the Women and Memory Forum, <http://www.wmf.org.eg>.

<sup>9</sup> See the Centre for Women Legal Assistance (<https://www.cewla.org/>) and the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (<https://ecwronline.org/>). NGOs in the 1990s tackled controversial and taboo issues, such as violence against women and the violations of their bodily rights. See also the El-Nadim Center for the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, and the New Woman Foundation, which pioneered research on women's reproductive health.

In Morocco, Le Fennec publishing house was established in 1987 and focused on publishing essays and books on women's rights, human rights, law, and Islam.<sup>10</sup> From 1987 to 2003, Le Fennec published *Collective Approaches*, a series of research on the status of women in Morocco, edited by Aicha Belarbi. In the Maghreb, women's NGOs founded in the 1980s and 1990s, such as Collective 95 for Equality in the Maghreb, conducted research grounded in women's lived experience, which was the backbone for modifying the *Mudawwana* (Moroccan family laws) in 2004. In Tunisia, the magazine *Nissa* appeared in 1985 and lasted for two years.<sup>11</sup>

The 1990s were an important decade for a vibrant expansion of feminist research in Islamic feminism, a feminist intellectual project that consciously challenges the dominance of masculinist interpretations and knowledges and rereads Islamic texts, interpretations, and histories through a feminist lens. This working definition includes the knowledge production of women scholars who engage with Islamic traditions from a faith-based position and scholars who do so strategically to counter the hegemony of orthodox masculinist knowledges that have adverse effects on societies trying to achieve gender equality. Islamic feminists in the Arab world have made significant contributions to the field of Islamic studies. They have also joined forces with the global Islamic feminist movement.

## The New Generation of WGS in Arab Universities

The new generation of WGS programs in Arab universities emerged in response to the focus of international organizations on gender education as a means of gender empowerment, which began in the 1990s and was emphasized in 2000 as one of the key UN Millennium Development Goals. As they found their way into universities, many of the programs were conceptually structured in a framework of neoliberal policies in higher education institutions and were thus entrenched in market logic and neoliberal language. A number of institutes

<sup>10</sup> The publisher, Laila Chaouni, was an active member of the women's movement in the Maghreb. For more information, see <https://lefennec.com/la-maison-dedition/>.

<sup>11</sup> For an analysis and overview of *Nissa* and the contribution of the Tunisian Association of Democratic Women and the Association of Tunisian Women for Research and Development, see Lilia Labidi, "The Nature of Transnational Alliances in Women's Associations in the Maghreb: The Case of AFTURD and ATFD in Tunisia," in "Transnational Theory, National Politics, and Gender in the Contemporary Middle East/North Africa," special issue of *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 3, no. 1 (2007): 6–34.



were established in universities at the end of the 1990s.<sup>12</sup> The stories behind the institutionalization of these programs feature the efforts of determined activists with strong ties to women's movements who have succeeded in establishing these programs, often against the desire of university leadership. In Yemen, the Gender and Development Research and Studies Centre was established in 1996 by Raufa Hassan, a prominent activist for women's rights. A second wave of programs and institutes in universities appeared in the second decade of the twenty-first century, and, like their predecessors, these had strong activist women behind them.<sup>13</sup>

Mariz Tadros and Akram Habib identify three key orientations of WGS programs in Arab universities: feminist literary and postcolonial studies, which "focus on theorization and problematization of representations of women in the Middle East in particular in Western discourses and paradigms"; a gender and development orientation that focuses on "contemporary political, economic and social challenges"; and a Muslim, family-centered orientation with a focus on

<sup>12</sup> This includes the establishment of the Women's Studies Institute at Birzeit University in 1994 and an MA in gender and development from the same university in 2000; the MA in gender and development at Ahfad University in Khartoum in 1997; the Center for Women's Studies at the University of Jordan in 1998 and an MA in women's studies in 2006. In Morocco, the Centre for Studies and Research on Women was established in 1998 in the Faculty of Letters Dhar El Mehraz, Fes, and the Centre for Women's Studies in the Faculty of Letters was established in Rabat (Fatima Sadiqi, "Facing Challenges and Pioneering Feminist and Gender Studies: Women in Post-colonial and Today's Maghrib," *African and Asian Studies* 7 [2008]: 464). In Egypt, the Cynthia Nelson Centre for Women's Studies was founded in 2001 at the American University in Cairo and a few years later offered an MA in gender and women's studies in the Middle East and North Africa.

<sup>13</sup> In Tunisia, the first gender studies program was institutionalized in 2015 at the University of Manouba by Dalende Largueche in cooperation with Amel Grami and Rajaa bin Salameh, all feminist researchers with a history of activism for women's rights. In Beirut, an MA in gender in development and humanitarian aid was founded in 2016 at Lebanese American University. In Egypt, an MA in gender and development was established in 2017 in the Faculty of Economics and Political Science at Cairo University. In the Gulf, an MA in Muslim women's studies was founded at Zayed University in United Arab Emirates and an MA in women, society, and development was established at Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Qatar. For a mapping of centers and programs in the Arab world, see Mariz Tadros and Akram Habib, "Mapping of Gender and Graduate Programmes in the Arab World: Best Practices and Lessons Learnt," *UN Women IDS Report*, 2015. They also note that some programs mentioned in the literature do not appear on the website of universities, making it unclear whether they materialized (Tadros and Habib, "Mapping of Gender," 6). Also see a report published by the Asfari Institute for Civil Society and Citizenship, *rasd wa tawthiq tajarub al-dirasat al-jinderyyya fi al-jami'at wa al-marakiz al-bahthiyya al-arabiyya* [A survey and documentation of gender studies programs in Arab universities and research centers], 2019, [http://www.activearabvoices.org/uploads/8/0/8/4/80849840/women\\_and\\_gender\\_-\\_v.2.2\\_-\\_digital\\_\\_1\\_.pdf](http://www.activearabvoices.org/uploads/8/0/8/4/80849840/women_and_gender_-_v.2.2_-_digital__1_.pdf).

identity issues.<sup>14</sup> With reference to the survey of trends and directions in WGS as developed within NGOs, these main orientations build on and complement the accumulation of knowledge produced by women's NGOs.

The mandates of WGS programs in Arab universities mirror those of NGOs, and their descriptions on university websites read like those of an NGO, using language of capacity building, empowerment, training, advocacy, and producing policy briefs. The mission statement of the Regional Institute of Gender, Diversity, Peace and Rights at Ahfad University for Women in Sudan describes the center as “dedicated to excellent education in peace, gender equality, management of diversity and respect for human rights, as well as capacity development, community outreach activities and advocacy for creating change agents to promote women's empowerment, leadership and gender justice in societies.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the Arab Institute for Women at Lebanese American University “advances women's empowerment and gender equality nationally, regionally and globally through research, education, development programs, and outreach.”<sup>16</sup>

WGS university programs are supported by grants from international donors who have funded and continue to fund women's NGOs established in the 1980s and 1990s. Because they rely on foreign donor funding, university-based centers and programs worry about sustainability, scarcity of resources, and the pressures of ensuring new funds—that is, NGO woes.

Furthermore, the integration of WGS programs in Arab universities did not necessarily result in a safe haven for research and critical thinking in the field. In 2016, after a controversy over a debate on the subject of women and Islam, Hatoon El Fassi, a Saudi academic at Qatar University, was accused of criticizing the Quran, put under surveillance, and then banned from teaching her course.<sup>17</sup> Raufa Hassan was forced to leave Yemen for fear of her life after a vilification campaign. In short, women scholars, researchers, and NGO workers in the field of WGS contend with social and political pressures if they are seen to cross political or cultural boundaries.

<sup>14</sup> Tadros and Habib, “Mapping of Gender,” 7.

<sup>15</sup> Available at <http://gender.ahfad.edu.sd/index.php/about-us/vision-mission-objectives>.

<sup>16</sup> Available at <https://aiw.lau.edu.lb/about/>.

<sup>17</sup> Huda Alsahi, “The Challenges of Teaching Women's and Gender Studies in the Gulf Region,” *Gulf Affairs* (Spring 2018): 2–4.

## WGS between NGOs and Universities in the Twenty-First Century

To what extent will the institutionalization of WGS programs in Arab universities result in gender sensitization among students and wider audiences and lead to a more just and equitable world? Academics in Western universities have expressed concern that the field has lost touch with its activist roots and that the shift from women's studies to gender studies has further depoliticized the field. The assumption that universities are safe havens for research and exploration of contentious and taboo issues, that they provide an enabling environment for researchers to think and work, is not very realistic, or at least has not been demonstrated as such yet, given the histories of universities in the Arab region. Feminist scholars have noted that "academic freedom is tenuous for academics who do critical work that challenges systematic racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism."<sup>18</sup> It is very likely that the neoliberalization of universities, in addition to the compromised track record of Arab universities due to political interventions, will continue to push cutting-edge and critical research in the humanities and the social sciences outside university walls to independent research organizations.

The early decades of the twenty-first century marked the emergence of a new generation of young feminist collectives in Arab countries that formed against the background of increasing

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discontent among the youth with dysfunctional and oppressive regimes. These collectives flourished and gained visibility during and after the wave of uprisings that swept the Arab world in 2011. The list of young feminist groups in the region is long, and their work is impressive and daring. They are mostly informal groups that chose not to opt for official status. The new generation of young feminist groups broke new ground in research and activism and initiated and led debates on sexualities, identity issues, and violence against women. From their position as feminist and political activists, they broached highly sensitive political topics, such as politically motivated sexual violence in times of conflict

<sup>18</sup> Sylvanna Falcon, Sharmila Lodhia, Molly Talcott, and Dana Collins, "Teaching Outside Liberal-Imperial Discourse: A Critical Dialogue about Antiracist Feminisms," in *The Imperial University: Academic Repression and Scholarly Dissent*, ed. Piya Chatterjee and Sunaina Maira (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 265.

and revolution, and foregrounded the issue of state oppression of women's rights defenders.<sup>19</sup>

The following questions arise. Will WGS programs in universities have the margin of freedom to engage with changing political and social challenges? Will they form links with NGOs to sustain the spirit of activism in the field? Will the general clampdown on independent NGOs in the Arab region dissuade academics from forging links with women's NGOs that are locked in political and legal struggles with states? Will scholars draw on the expertise in NGOs and include NGO publications in course assignments, given the global power dynamics of knowledge production and circulation?

The answer to the first three questions is dependent on the degree of autonomy of each university and the level of academic freedom negotiated with authoritarian states, particularly while the region is rife with conflicts, political upheavals, and wars. Political spaces that opened up in the immediate aftermath of revolutions have slammed shut in the face of independent social and political actors, and as of 2022, NGOs are experiencing an increase in repressive surveillance and control. University administrations keen on maintaining good relations with ruling regimes might discourage interaction and cooperation with NGOs, particularly activist women's groups. In addition, much depends on the profile of academics employed and their perceptions of their role as academics.

The fourth question is complex because it raises the issue of the "coloniality of knowledge production" and the "coloniality of power," an established regime of truth in global higher education, in which the North dominates the production and circulation of knowledge and the overriding assumption is that the South produces raw data and not theory. In this regime, knowledge production from the peripheries is not quoted, and scholars from the South must publish in

<sup>19</sup> It is beyond the scope of this essay to do justice to the contribution of young feminist groups in the region. For activism in Egypt after 2011, see Maissan Hassan, "Political-Social Movements: Community-Based: Egypt (Post-revolution)," in *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures*, ed. Suad Joseph (Leiden: Brill, 2016), [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1872-5309\\_ewic\\_COM\\_002053](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1872-5309_ewic_COM_002053). For more on the contribution of selected examples of young feminist groups, see the essays published in the *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*: "Nazra for Feminist Studies," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 11, no. 2 (2015), 238–39; "Qandisha," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 11, no. 2 (2015): 246–47; "No to Oppressing Women Initiative," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 11, no. 2 (2015): 240–41; "Sawt Al Niswa," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 11, no. 3 (2015): 371–73; "Rafidayn Women's Coalition Association," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 11, no. 1 (2015): 124–25; "Thawrat El Banat," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 11, no. 3 (2015): 374–75; "Helem," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 11, no. 3 (2015): 368–70; "Association Tounisset," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 11, no. 3 (2015): 365–67; and Fatima Sadiqi, "Emerging Amazigh Feminist Nongovernmental Organizations," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 12, no. 1 (2016): 122–25.

international journals in English. This state of affairs has resulted in a universalistic understanding of gender and a universalistic approach to gender studies in universities. This binary, which opposes the universal with culturally specific epistemologies, is a persistent challenge to WGS globally. To pin this down to the status of knowledge produced by NGOs in the Arab world, and the possibilities for its integration in course curricula, raises many issues.

From a practical point of view, NGO publications qualify as gray literature, that is, publications with limited circulation and access.<sup>20</sup> As of late 2022, there is no Arab database or library where a researcher can access all NGO gray literature in WGS in Arabic.<sup>21</sup> The challenge in integrating gray literature in universities is not limited to the difficulties in access and circulation; it is also an issue of what counts as credible knowledge, that is, knowledge that has gone through the global process of legitimation (peer reviewing and publishing in international accredited journals). In addition, most of this knowledge is written and published in Arabic; in the context of unequal power relations in the circulation of knowledge production, publishing in Arabic locates it on the peripheries of power centers. Research published in Arabic is rarely quoted in international publications on the Arab world.

Notwithstanding all of these challenges, WGS programs in the Arab world promise to be a vibrant field of knowledge production. In the short term, political and social constraints may limit research or undermine researchers, but in the long term they can be a force that energizes creativity and contestation of the status quo, crucial factors for the growth and strength of fields of knowledge. In addition, more and more feminist scholars around the world are joining efforts to undercut the unequal power dynamics in the production and circulation of knowledge by publishing their work in open-source venues, allocating more funds to translation, and publishing in multiple languages. The struggle continues.

<sup>20</sup> The more common forms of gray literature (which is not included in commercial publishing databases) are reports, working papers, and evaluations. In the Arab world, even books qualify as gray literature since most are not available for sale in bookstores or distributed free of charge to a limited list.

<sup>21</sup> This problem has been the subject of much discussion among NGOs. The Women and Memory Forum Library and Documentation Centre was established in 2008 to fill this gap and collect and catalogue all publications in WGS in Arabic in one location. As of late 2022, the library has over 5,000 publications in WGS in Arabic. However, work in the library has been hindered by various restrictions on NGOs in Egypt since 2011, and more resources are needed to continue the work.

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