



**Universität
Zürich^{UZH}**

**Right
Livelihood**
CENTRE ZÜRICH

Sustainability Now!

**Inequalities as an Obstacle to Achieve
Sustainable Development**

«Importance of Gender Equality for
Sustainability Development»

Veranstaltungsbericht

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This Moderation has taken place as part of the Ring-lectures 2024, hosted by the Right Livelihood Center. The evening was directed by students at the University of Zurich. Organizing and preparing the panel discussion, inviting the panelists, and successfully carrying out the evening is the requirement for passing the course: "Sustainability now! Inequalities as an obstacle to achieve sustainable development". This evening's Right Livelihood laureate was Dr. Sima Samar, a doctor for the poor, an educator of the marginalized and a human rights defender from Afghanistan. Dr. Samar played a deciding role in advancing gender equality and empowering women to reclaim their rightful place in society.

Inequality is pervasive and deeply rooted in our societal structures. The system we operate within today perpetuates gender inequality. Unfortunately, the fight for gender equality is a long and challenging one. Dr. Samar notably stated that "justice does not need time." Yet, altering the patriarchal structures that perpetuate injustice does require time, especially to achieve sustainable change. The key to fostering this change lies in ensuring quality education, which not only enables girls and young women to emancipate themselves early but also incorporates education on gender issues and roles. As pastor Gisler-Fischer eloquently put it; "empower women and educate men." Gender equality is not solely a women's concern; it is also essential for men to educate themselves about this systematic oppression occurring in our society. Professor Dennerlein further emphasized the importance of incorporating critical transcultural literacy into the curriculum. Therefore, education holds the power for change, while the lack or misuse of education is "the root of all evil," as highlighted by Dr. Samar.

During the evening, we delved into the topic of militarism and the weapons industry, which counteract the promotion of peace or the advancement of Agenda 2030. Among the panelists, there was a consensus that for anything, including gender equality, to be sustainable, we must prioritize demilitarization and disarmament. This is crucial since such decisions are often made by those in power rather than the citizens who bear the consequences. A key revelation during this part of the discussion was that this issue stems from very patriarchal and outdated structures that are founded on misguided values and understandings of the world. We are employing incorrect diplomatic strategies and measures based on opposition rather than collaboration, which is crucial for the success of Agenda 2030, including gender equality. Additionally, the funds allocated to the war

industry are extremely high, while care work, predominantly performed by women, remains undervalued, including monetarily. This discussion further evolved into examining how the current structure of capitalism is detrimental to overall sustainability and, once again, to gender equality.

Looking back on an inspiring and successful evening, what fascinated us, was how Dr. Sima Samar filled us all with awe so that an underlying consensus evolved, that we'd all voluntarily sacrifice our speaking time to hear more of what she had to say. Nevertheless, that led to certain panelists forging their own paths, which on the one hand sometimes led to a rather one-sided input but on the other hand also allowed for a dynamic discussion. That therefore made it more difficult to include all panelists, but since they complemented each other so well, we as moderators let the discussion flow and assumed a rather passive role. Thanks to our exhaustive research and preparation, we were well equipped for the changes and the direction the panel took. Furthermore, we intervened when we felt it was necessary to get back to the common thread. Time passed by quickly and we were only able to touch upon our main topics briefly, yet the panelists weighed into the topics of importance to them. Especially Dr. Samar immediately captured the audience with her down-to-earth nature, telling her fascinating stories and somehow even managing to make them humorous. The two other panelists complemented Dr. Samar's inputs well and contributed to a natural and personal interaction.

In conclusion it may be said that the evening was very successful. For all visitors it was an honor to meet Dr. Samar and getting to know her views and insights. Because of having a harmonic student-moderation-group, the panel discussion felt really balanced and harmonic itself. We are thankful to have received such an opportunity, very refreshingly different from other university courses, acquiring a new set of skills. Most importantly, however, we got the chance to not only meet, but also discourse with a personality like Dr. Sima Samar, which characterizes nothing less than a once-in-a-lifetime experience, with far-reaching inspiration.