



SOA MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2019

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN



BACKGROUND GUIDE

Agenda:

Priority Theme: Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

Review Theme: Women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution in post – conflict peace building



Letter from the Executive Board

Greetings Delegates!

It is an honor to be serving as a part of the Executive Board of United Nations Commission on the Status of Women at SOA Model United Nations from 9th – 11th August, 2019. We hope to be a part of an enriching academic simulation and engage in a constructive discussion on the priority and the review themes in the committee.

The background guide shall only be an instrument of assistance to the delegates instead of being the sole basis for your research. The given list of topics is not exhaustive and it is not intended to be. The list is simply indicative of pressing issues and topics of concerns, which must be addressed and will give you a bird's eye view of the gist of the issue. The delegates are at full liberty to bring up any other relevant point for discussion. We understand that MUN conferences can be an overwhelming experience for first timers but it must be noted that our aspirations from the delegates is not how experienced or articulate they are. Rather, we want to see how he/she can respect disparities and differences of opinion, work around these, while extending their own foreign policy so that it includes more of comprehensive solutions without compromising their own stand and initiate consensus building.

New ideas are by their very nature disruptive, but far less disruptive than a world set against the backdrop of gender stereotypes and regional instability due to which reform is essential in order to integrate gender perspectives in policy making and conflict resolution. Thus, we welcome fresh perspectives for intelligent management of human capital of this planet which shall finally shape the direction of this world.

We sincerely hope that the UNCSW of SOA Model United Nations 2019 will help you gain experience to become better professionals and persons in future.

May the force be with you!

Regards,

Karishma Kharbanda

Chairperson

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SECTION A

BASIC SUGGESTIONS BEFORE YOU START RESEARCHING:

A few aspects that delegates should keep in mind while preparing:

Procedure: The purpose of putting in procedural rules in any committee is to ensure a more organized and efficient debate. The committee will follow the UNA-USA Rules of Procedure, a link for which has been provided in the last section of this Guide. Although the Executive Board shall be fairly strict with the Rules of Procedure, the discussion of agenda will be the main priority. So delegates are advised not to restrict their statements due to hesitation regarding procedure.

Foreign Policy: Following the foreign policy of one's country is the most important aspect of a Model UN Conference. This is what essentially differentiates a Model UN from other debating formats. To violate one's foreign policy without adequate reason is one of the worst mistakes a delegate can make.

Role of the Executive Board: The Executive Board is appointed to facilitate debate. The committee shall decide the direction and flow of debate. The delegates are the ones who constitute the committee and hence must be uninhibited while presenting their opinions/stance on any issue.

NATURE OF SOURCES/EVIDENCE:

This Background Guide is meant solely for research purposes and must not be cited as evidence to substantiate statements made during the conference. Evidence or proof for substantiating statements made during formal debate is acceptable from the following sources-

1. United Nations:

Documents and findings by the United Nations or any related UN body is held as a credible proof to support a claim or argument.

2. Multilateral Organizations:

Documents from international organizations like NATO, NAFTA, SAARC, BRICS, EU, ASEAN, OPEC, the International Criminal Court, etc may also be presented as credible source of information.

3. Government Reports:

These reports can be used in a similar way as the State Operated News Agencies reports and can, in all circumstances, be denied by another country. However, a nuance is that a report that is



being denied by a certain country can still be accepted by the Executive Board as a credible piece of information.

4. News Sources:

(i) UN News Centre: An article that clearly makes mention of the fact or is in contradiction of the fact being stated by a delegate in the committee. Link - <https://news.un.org/en/focus>

(ii) State operated News Agencies: These reports can be used in the support of or against the State that owns the News Agency. These reports, if credible or substantial enough, can be used in support of or against any country as such but in that situation, may be denied by any other country in the council. Some examples are – RIA Novosti (Russian Federation), Xinhua News Agency (People’s Republic of China), etc.

Note- Under no circumstances will sources like Wikipedia, or newspapers like the Guardian, Times of India etc. be accepted. However, notwithstanding the aforementioned criteria for acceptance of sources and evidence, delegates are still free to quote/cite from any source as they deem fit as a part of their statements.



United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. A functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it was established by Council resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946.

The CSW is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

In 1996, ECOSOC in resolution 1996/6 expanded the Commission's mandate and decided that it should take a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and in mainstreaming a gender perspective in UN activities. Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015, the Commission now also contributes to the follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development so as to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women (ECOSOC resolution 2015/6).

During the Commission's annual two-week session, representatives of UN Member States, civil society organizations and UN entities gather at UN headquarters in New York. They discuss progress and gaps in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the key global policy document on gender equality, and the 23rd special session of the General Assembly held in 2000 (Beijing+5), as well as emerging issues that affect gender equality and the empowerment of women. Member States agree on further actions to accelerate progress and promote women's enjoyment of their rights in political, economic and social fields. The outcomes and recommendations of each session are forwarded to ECOSOC for follow-up. UN Women supports all aspects of the Commission's work. The Entity also facilitates the participation of civil society representatives.

Methods of Work

The Commission adopts multi-year work programmes to appraise progress and make further recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action. These recommendations take the form of negotiated agreed conclusions on a priority theme.

Under its current methods of work, established by ECOSOC resolution 2015/6, at each session the Commission:

- Holds a ministerial segment to reaffirm and strengthen political commitment to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as well as their human rights and to ensure high-level engagement and the visibility of the deliberations of the Commission;
- Engages in general discussion on the status of gender equality, identifying goals attained, achievements made and efforts under way to close gaps and meet challenges in relation to the priority theme and the review theme;



- Considers one priority theme, based on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly and possible linkages to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Evaluates progress in implementing agreed conclusions from previous sessions as a review theme;
- Addresses emerging issues, trends, focus areas and new approaches to questions affecting the situation of women, that require timely consideration;
- Plays a catalytic role for gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system and contributes gender perspectives to the work of other intergovernmental processes and functional commissions;
- Considers in closed meeting the report of its Working Group on Communications;
- Agrees on further actions for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women by adopting agreed conclusions and resolutions; and

Sets aside time for the observation of International Women's Day on 8 March, when it falls within its session.

Mandate

UNCSW has been in existence since 1946, preparing recommendations and reports to ECOSOC on promoting women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields. Its mandate was expanded in 1987 to include the functions of promoting the objectives of equality, development and peace, monitoring the implementation of measures for the advancement of women, and reviewing and appraising progress made at the national, sub-regional, regional and global levels.

Following the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women the General Assembly mandated the Commission to integrate into its program a follow-up process to the Conference, regularly reviewing the critical areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action and to develop its catalytic role in mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations activities.

In 1996, ECOSOC again modified the Commission's terms of reference (ECOSOC Resolution 1996/6) deciding that the Commission should;

1. Assist ECOSOC in monitoring, reviewing and appraising progress achieved and problems encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at all levels, and should advise the Council thereon.
2. Continue to ensure support for mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations activities and develop further its catalytic role in that regard in other areas.
3. Identify issues where United Nations system-wide coordination needed to be improved in order to assist the Council in its coordination function.
4. Identify emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men that required consideration and make substantive recommendations thereon, and



5. Maintain and enhance public awareness and support for the implementation of the Platform for Action

Reference for further information: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

SIXTY-SECOND SESSION (2018)

The sixty-second session of the Commission took place from 12 to 23 March 2018. The Commission addressed as its priority theme ‘Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls’. In addition, it evaluated progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions from the forty-seventh session (2003) on ‘Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women’. The Commission also considered and made a recommendation on how best to utilize the year 2020, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, so as to accelerate the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The ten-day session included a ministerial segment with round tables and other high-level interactive dialogues, a general discussion, as well as interactive and expert panel discussions. Stakeholders will organize many side events to draw attention to critical aspects of the work on gender equality.

Details are available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw62-2018>

SIXTY-THIRD SESSION (2019)

The sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 11 to 22 March 2019. Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world attended the session.

Details are available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw63-2019>

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

A path towards global prosperity, human well-being and a healthy planet

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals, are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The goals are interconnected – often the key to success on one will involve tackling issues more commonly associated with another.

The SDGs work in the spirit of partnership and pragmatism to make the right choices now to improve life, in a sustainable way, for future generations. They provide clear guidelines and targets for all countries to adopt in accordance with their own priorities and the environmental challenges of the world at large. The SDGs are an inclusive agenda. They tackle the root causes of poverty and unite us together to make a positive change for both people and planet.

Today, the Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG) in the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) provides substantive support and capacity-building for the SDGs and their related thematic issues, including water, energy, climate, oceans, urbanization, transport, science and technology, the Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR), partnerships and Small Island Developing States. DSDG plays a key role in the evaluation of UN systemwide implementation of the 2030 Agenda and on advocacy and outreach activities relating to the SDGs. In order to make the 2030 Agenda a reality, broad ownership of the SDGs must translate into a strong commitment by all stakeholders to implement the global goals. DSDG aims to help facilitate this engagement.¹



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by world leaders in 2015, embody a roadmap for progress that is sustainable and leaves no one behind.

Achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment is integral to each of the 17 goals. Only by ensuring the rights of women and girls across all the goals will we get to justice and inclusion,

¹<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>



economies that work for all, and sustaining our shared environment now and for future generations.

“Turning promises into action: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, UN Women’s flagship report, provides a comprehensive and authoritative assessment of progress, gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from a gender perspective. The report monitors global and regional trends in achieving the SDGs for women and girls based on available data, and provide practical guidance for the implementation of gender-responsive policies and accountability processes.²

²<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/2/gender-equality-in-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development-2018>



SECTION B

Priority Theme: Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls

Achieving gender equality has been set out as a key objective in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which lay out social protection, infrastructure and public services as the three main focus areas that can lead to gender equality and women's empowerment. While gender equality denotes an outcome or a goal, women's empowerment can be best understood as a dynamic process through which women gain control over resources and are able to challenge the patriarchal structures that sustain and reproduce inequality.³ According to Eyben et.al. (2008), there are three dimensions of empowerment: economic, political and social; but all three dimensions encompass 'the process by which, those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability' (Kabeer 1999, 437). In other words, women's empowerment is a process through which gender equality can be achieved. Gender inequality and women's disempowerment can be understood as arising because of structural factors which operate through social norms, macro-economic and political processes and structures, skewing power relations adversely for women. This implies that redistribution of power in order to achieve gender equality or to initiate a process of women's empowerment is critical. While equality in legal provisions do go some way in providing an enabling environment for this, these are insufficient (UN CEDAW 2004). Therefore, changes in power inequalities and structural factors are necessary for women's realization of their rights and achievement of gender equality.⁴

It is important at the outset, to present the definitional boundaries of these three focus areas. Social protection, perhaps, is one of the terms with the widest scope – it can cover anything from cash or in-kind transfers to insurance and labour legislation. Literature also recognizes that social protection can be provided by diverse sectors and be encompassed in formal and informal measures. In order to achieve an in-depth discussion about the relevance of social protection measures to gender equality and women's empowerment, this paper has limited the concept of social protection to include only State-funded or State-implemented measures that deal with structural inequalities – what has been coined as 'transformative social protection'. These include four categories of instruments: a) provision measures, which provide relief from deprivation; b) preventive measures, which attempt to prevent deprivation; c) promotive

³Sardenberg 2016; Cornwall and Edwards 2016; Cornwall and Rivas 2015; Kabeer 2005

⁴ Initiating women's empowerment; achieving gender equality: Interlinkages amongst Social Protection, Infrastructure and Public Services, Background Paper by Deepta Chopra, Expert Group Meeting CSW 63



measures, which aim to enhance incomes and capabilities; and d) transformative measures, which seek to address concerns of social justice and exclusion.⁵

Both infrastructure and public services conjure up the role of the State in their provision. In fact, 'infrastructure services often are public goods or natural monopolies, or both. Basic infrastructure encompasses amenities such as roads, information and communication technologies, sanitation, electrical power and water (UN 2018). Public services are provided by the State, while infrastructure is the physical, human and financial set up and organisation that is required in order to deliver these services. Infrastructure can be understood as physical, human, and financial. For example, the State can provide services such as education, health, water and sanitation – through physical infrastructure (roads, schools, hospitals, water pipes), human resources (teachers, doctors, engineers) and by putting in the requisite financial infrastructure (budgets) into place. The role of the state in providing infrastructure and public services is especially emphasized through the international human rights system (UN CESR 1990). The human rights approach speaks about the duties of States to respect (i.e. not interfere directly or indirectly) the enjoyment of human rights; to fulfil and to protect rights. It is in the 'fulfil' obligation, that it becomes critical that States adopt measures that enable the realisation of women's rights when providing infrastructure and public services, as well as in the provision of social protection. It is also important to note here, that while there is growing privatisation of infrastructure, public services and social protection measures, a rights-based approach also establishes the role of the state to protect rights – through regulation of private sector, such that everyone can enjoy these rights. In this way, States are critical as 'arbiters of social and economic rights' through direct provision and regulation of the three focus areas – social protection, infrastructure and public services.

Gender equality and women's empowerment denote a redistribution of gendered power relations. This necessitates therefore a consideration of three main dimensions:

a) How women's role/s are envisaged: women can be seen as carers (for their families and communities); as workers (both paid workers in the market and unpaid workers in families), and as rights-bearers (able to exercise agency to challenge social injustices, claim their rights and actively participate in public and political life). Meaningful participation implies access to information and accountability – which are underlying principles of the rights-based approach.

b) How women are defined and framed – in other words, which of women's interests, needs and priorities are understood/ encompassed and how these are articulated – this includes both short term practical needs (which arise as a response to immediate and perceived necessity as identified by women in a given context. These are often related to survival and living conditions, such as water, healthcare, childcare and employment) and longer term strategic needs (which are needs that women identify because of their subordinate position in society - these relate to

⁵ (Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux 2007), <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1759-5436.2007.tb00368.x>

gender divisions of labour, power and control, may include issues such as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages, and women’s control over their bodies) (Moser, 1995). A focus on women’s strategic needs implies a focus on asymmetries of power that create women’s subordination – which comes from the Human Rights approach.

c) The importance that is accorded to transforming the economic, political and social institutions in order to secure and transform women’s position (and voice). A rights-based approach recognizes that institutions and structures often reinforce and reproduce unequal power relations amongst women and men – and this constrains the enjoyment of rights by women. Transformation therefore can only come about through two aspects: collective action and specific measures that redress specific disadvantages faced by women. This highlights the role of two types of actors – firstly, women’s rights organisations, who can legitimate, highlight and foster capacity for advocacy on, women’s rights concerns and secondly, accountable States which are the primary duty bearers for protection and fulfillment of human rights.⁶

In these contexts, CSW 63 featured discussions on gender equality and the SDGs as part of its review theme on ‘women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development,’ including on SDG 1 (end poverty), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) and SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities).

Social protection systems for gender equality

Social protection systems have the potential to transform social and economic gender dynamics. However, to achieve this end, they must be designed taking into account the different types of risks and vulnerabilities to poverty experienced by men and women; the underlying causes of discrimination against and exclusion of women; and explicitly integrate women’s specific needs throughout their life cycle.

The gender gap in social security access is due to several factors: women have less access to labour markets, especially formal labour markets which limits their ability to access contributory schemes as well as employer-provided benefits; women have less access to political power, and due to structural discrimination women tend to have lower levels of education, which means even when social assistance schemes are available, they may be unaware of them.

To eradicate the difference in coverage for men and women, social protection systems should include contributory and non-contributory schemes, as well as pay particular attention to reaching those who are economically dependent, such as women who perform the bulk of unpaid care work. A gender-sensitive approach to rights-based social protection systems should consider

⁶ Initiating women’s empowerment; achieving gender equality: Interlinkages amongst Social Protection, Infrastructure and Public Services, Background Paper by Deepta Chopra, Expert Group Meeting CSW 63

income security to be an individual right, rather than a familial one, in order to ensure full coverage for women, who due to social dynamics may otherwise be unable to access benefits.

Social protection programmes that mainstream the inclusion of women require policy makers to assess the underlying causes of exclusion, and take deliberate measures to address women's gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities. For example, States must pay particular attention to eligibility criteria and targeting methods used to ensure that the programme does not exclude or disadvantage women. For example, a common problem in non-contributory pension systems is using household targeting methods; as these can put women at a disadvantage by ignoring the fact that women, in particular older women and girls, often receive fewer resources than men and boys regardless of household income.

States must acknowledge that the impacts of social protection programmes are not gender neutral, and accordingly should:⁷

- Design and implement social protection strategies which recognize the multiple forms of discrimination that women experience, and ensure that programmes address women's specific needs throughout their life cycle. To this end, before designing a social protection programme, policy makers must conduct a comprehensive and disaggregated gender analysis that assesses the vulnerabilities of both genders as potential beneficiaries.
- Ensure that social protection programmes respect and acknowledge the role of women as care providers without reinforcing patterns of discrimination and negative stereotyping.
- Establish accessible, gender-sensitive good quality social services which take into account the obstacles faced by women in accessing such services. At minimum, this requires investment in public services and training for public service providers on culturally appropriate practices and on the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women.
- Ensure that all social protection programmes are subject to gender-sensitive eligibility criteria which take into account intra-household dynamics and distribution of resources and do not impose requirements that disproportionately disadvantage women.
- Take all measures necessary to ensure that the social protection interventions mitigate gendered power relations and address the unequal roles both within the household and in the community. Policy makers should ensure the effective participation of women in the administration of social protection programmes by, for example, establishing sex quotas in the governance structures of programmes and ensuring a gender balance at all levels of social protection programmes.

⁷<https://socialprotection-humanrights.org/key-issues/gender/gender-sensitive-policy-design-and-implementation/>



- Ensure that participation and accountability mechanisms are designed and implemented with gendered power relations in mind in order to facilitate the meaningful participation of women in all programme stages.
- Programmes should take every opportunity to promote gender equality and facilitate the mobilization of women. Policy makers should invest in capacity-building to ensure that those designing and implementing social programmes at both the national and local levels are aware of gender issues.

Access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality

Good access to quality and sustainable infrastructure is an essential determinant of people's wellbeing and a basic requirement for businesses to prosper. High-quality infrastructure from digital, transport, energy and water to public parks and museums underpins inclusive growth and supports sustainable development, in line with the 2030 Agenda. Infrastructure is essential to foster equal opportunities, to connect left-behind regions, ensuring easy access to public services for citizens and, in general, to improve life quality. It is often assumed that women will automatically benefit from new infrastructure projects in the same way as men do, without acknowledging possible distinct impacts on women and men according to their needs and social roles. For example, urban design plays a major role in people's life, but the risks of uncontrolled urbanisation, urban sprawl and slums are often greater for women as they are more likely to be targets of assaults and harassment. Improved urban infrastructure with a gender perspective would demand public lighting, safe public spaces, and safe public transport to help mitigate safety-related risks that women have to face in their everyday life. The ongoing technological revolution and the associated digital infrastructure also require fostering equal access to digital services and ensuring opportunities to acquire technological skills. There is also a need to address risks that arise in a digital environment, such as girls' and women's exposure to cyber bullying, sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women facilitated by online services.

Women are often also more important users of and contributors to social infrastructure such as education, health, childcare centres, and other social services, as well as public spaces such as parks and recreation centres. This often arises from women's traditional role in children and elderly care and the employment patterns in these sectors. The location of these services, the design of public transport grids and the frequency of transport must therefore be thought with a gender lens in mind. Infrastructure, its users and contributors are also among the biggest contributors to carbon emissions and environmental damage. Developing future infrastructure projects must therefore take into considerations the sustainability goals embedded in the 2030 Agenda. The negative gender-specific effects of infrastructure are worsened in some countries by discriminatory legislations and social norms. For instance, in low income countries, the gender



challenges of infrastructure are compounded by inadequate access to basic services such as water, sanitation and energy, and the concomitant role of girls and women in collecting water and biofuel. Inadequate access to sanitation facilities also affects teenage girls school attendance because of stigmas associated to menstruation.

Considerations for gender equality call for an integrated policy approach to quality and sustainable infrastructure development with a gender lens, taking into account other societal goals such as economic growth, employment creation, environmental sustainability, and well-being. Such an approach must recognize the gender-sustainable infrastructure nexus, and thereby manage the inherent trade-offs and synergies that may arise between different goals and policies, in line with SDG target 17.14 (policy coherence for sustainable development). The first pillar of an integrated approach is to consider the specific gender aspects of infrastructure strategies, policies and projects. This demands understanding women's needs and preferences, as well as trends, such as urbanisation, changes in women's participation in the labour force, the growth of part-time employment, the trend to single parent households, and migration. An integrated agenda must also focus on necessities, especially in developing countries, given infrastructure's potential to bring about massive improvements in the well-being of girls and women, while ensuring more sustainable development. The second pillar, the "how", is to ensure the engagement of women in the design of infrastructure strategies and plans and in implementation, as well as due consideration of the well-being of female employees along infrastructure supply chains. This requires reviewing the presence of women in decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors, in particular ministries of planning and infrastructure, but also at different levels of government, as well as boosting women's presence in the boards and top management positions of infrastructure companies. It also requires welldeveloped consultation processes that engage women from different socio-economic backgrounds. The private sector plays a central role by ensuring responsible business conduct within and across borders, respecting basic human rights, promoting equal labour rights between men and women, improving working conditions for women and avoiding negative environmental externalities, both within the company and along its supply chain. For example, infrastructure companies should be aware of gender issues when operating in contexts where women face severe discrimination or where enterprise activities significantly affect the local economy, environment and access to land and livelihoods.⁸

Capacity building for Health Considerations

Women and girls in all their diversity face heightened discrimination, victimisation and social isolation. They have fewer supportive resources because of limited mobility, access to education and social support and financial resources. They have reduced access to providers who are comfortable with, or have accurate non-judgemental knowledge about, the treatment and services

⁸ Gender Equality and Sustainable Infrastructure, OECD Council on SDGs, 2019



they need. This can expose them to harmful discrimination and potential abuse, putting their health at risk.

Ensuring the right to access safe and affordable abortion services as an essential component of social protection system and a comprehensive and integrated package of public health services.⁹

A WHO report on unsafe abortion shows that legal restrictions on abortions do not reduce the number of abortions but rather increases the risks of maternal mortality and morbidity due to unsafe abortions carried out in clandestine and unhygienic environment by unskilled attendants, this is particularly concerning in rural areas where most of the time, they don't have access to quality healthcare services. The consequences of such abortions are often appalling for adolescent girls and young women given the legal, social and cultural barriers and the abortion-related stigma that limits their access to quality sexual and reproductive health services.

According to the 2011, WHO report, about 2.5 million adolescents have unsafe abortions each year, often with complications more serious than those experienced by older women. About 13% of all maternal deaths annually are due to unsafe abortions, 14% of all unsafe abortions in low- and middle-income countries are among girls aged 15-19. Due to the legal restrictions on abortion in many countries coupled with the stigma and shame associated with it, many such cases go undocumented - leaving women with lifelong risks and complications. However, as noted in WHO's 2012 'Safe Abortion: technical and policy guidance for health systems', when young women and adolescent girls' right to sexual and reproductive health is fulfilled, including access to a range of modern contraceptives, abortion prevalence rates are lower.

Adolescent girls and women members of key populations and other marginalized groups, such as female sex workers, women who inject drugs and transgender women, migrant women, are at a high risk of acquiring HIV or being subjected to gender-based violence. Women who are living with HIV or who are members of key populations often experience stigma and discrimination, including in health-care settings. Women and girls also provide the bulk of unpaid care for the family members living with HIV, with little access to and control over the economic resources and decision-making power, undermining their opportunities for education, participation in the formal labor market and receiving pension in old age, and thus increasing the vulnerability to HIV. Women also make up much of the health workforce, including community health workers, critical to the HIV response and yet often facing significant challenges, including inadequate salaries, poor training and discrimination. There is a need to address all these challenges and empower women and girls in all their diversity, including those living with HIV and in key populations, if we are to achieve the commitment of ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030, as part of the SDGs. Governments should develop policies that will involve and mention LGBTQIA+

⁹Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, Statement, CSW 63



people in the social protection policies. It is also important to include HIV and AIDS in public health services and social insurances.¹⁰

Women, girls and LGBTQIA+ in Poverty

There has been a link with higher percentage of poverty for marginalized groups. The governments must be committed to eliminating inequalities, including eradicating poverty by 2030. We believe that all people must enjoy a basic standard of living, including through social protection systems. Resources must be devoted in developing rural areas and sustainable agriculture and fisheries, supporting smallholder farmers, especially women farmers, herders and fishers in least developed countries. The governments should implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and marginalized.

Moreover, the governments should develop policies and programmes which provide underprivileged groups with financial, employment, and land security, as well as securing a place in decision-making forums, encouraging more female leadership in organisations pertaining to food and agriculture through mentoring opportunities and training.¹¹

Conclusion

While there is increasing awareness of the differential gender impact of infrastructure projects, few countries carry out effective mainstreaming in a sector that is essential for the well-being of women and families and for sustainable development. In fact, infrastructure projects still most often are made to cater for the average working person, and take little account of the different use and access needs and preferences by gender.

A first step in building the case for applying a gender lens in infrastructure projects involves putting in place systems that ensure a systematic collection of relevant gender disaggregated data (usage and provision) on access to and use of infrastructure by type (transportation, energy, water and sanitation, digital, safety and resilience, financial, health, education, culture, green spaces, etc.) to inform infrastructure project planning and design.

A second step requires developing frameworks for infrastructure design that take into account interlinkages between infrastructure and women's and men's well-being as well as societal goals regarding environmental protection. As part of this process, there is a need to undertake a gender analysis during project development and design phases, as well throughout the project life cycle.

¹⁰ Social Protection Systems, Access to Public Services and Sustainable Infrastructure for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls, UNAIDS 2019 Statement

¹¹Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, Statement, CSW 63



Such analysis should be linked to the strategic vision for infrastructure, which should include gender-specific priorities, needs and usage of different facilities (e.g., water, energy or health facilities) as well as environmental objectives. There is a strong potential in using government tools such as gender-smart procurement and gender budgeting to enable gender-sensitive infrastructure projects (by better taking into account the needs of different groups of population in procurement decisions, greater gender balance in evaluation panels for specific bids or infrastructure related contracts etc.).

A third step involves addressing the gender sensitive governance deficit in decision-making and throughout the value chain of infrastructure projects. It is essential that women are well represented in the public positions that matter for decision-making all along the infrastructure investment cycle in order to ensure that infrastructure projects take into account the different needs and use of infrastructure by different groups of women and men, as well as environmental considerations. Infrastructure companies also have to ensure that women employees are not discriminated against and offered opportunities for training and career development.

References for further research

https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/20190318_UNAIDS-statement-CSW63_en.pdf

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw63-2019/preparations/expert-group-meeting>

<http://www.youthcoalition.org/un-processes/csw-63-written-statement-social-protection-systems-access-to-public-services-and-sustainable-infrastructure-for-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-women-and-girls/>

<http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/63/egm/csw%2063%20egm%20concept%20note.pdf?la=en&vs=4211>

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Review Theme: Women’s equal participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution in post – conflict peace building

“Women are a potential bearer of peaceful messages in communities, we empower them to find their voice, to be involved in policy-making in their respective areas, be that villages, the town they live, or to be active politically on a national level. The aim is to empower women with the hope that by empowering them it will change the dynamics of their communities, and lead to the promotion of peace and tolerant messages.”¹²

Terrorism and violent extremism is seen by many as a persistent threat to development, national and personal security, and socioeconomic opportunities. Peace and security actors are increasingly focused on the roles of women in both supporting and preventing violent extremism. The Security Council, through various resolutions, called for increased attention on the roles of women in promoting international peace and security. For example, Resolution 2129 urged the inclusion of women, peace and security (WPS) issues in all relevant work of the Council and Resolution 2178 called on member states to strengthen engagement with civil society, women and youth to prevent the outflow of foreign terrorist fighters. Recently, Resolution 2242 called for further integration of various peace and security agendas – WPS, counter-terrorism, and preventing violent extremism (PVE).¹³

Women's Role in Peace-building

Women can be either survivors of conflict or agents of peace building. Many a time, women have averted conflicts and have been responsible for resolving conflicts. Peace building needs the involvement of women. During violent conflicts and wars women are forced to assume new roles as heads of families, providers, combatants, and freedom fighters.

Women’s roles in peace building across conflict areas, in the last decade, highlight the importance of moving women beyond the “humanitarian front of the story.” Women have and can continue to influence peace building processes so that they go beyond defining peace as the absence of violent conflict and focuses on the principles of inclusion, good governance and justice. Women need to be present to discuss issues such as genocide, impunity and security if a just and enduring peace is to be built.

¹²Yenny Wahid, “Engaging communities in approaches to countering violent extremism and incitement, UN Women

¹³THE ROLES OF WOMEN IN PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM: ADVANCING INTEGRATED APPROACHES, April, 2016, UN Headquarters



Women's involvement in peacebuilding is as old as their experience of violence. Women are not "naturally" peaceful. Women have played a variety of roles throughout history that support war and other forms of violence, from warriors to supportive wives and mothers calling men to the battlefield. However, their gender identities allow them to do some forms of peace building that men cannot do. In addition, some women have found it advantageous to draw on skills, assets, and capacities that are available to them in oppressive patriarchal systems and harness these for productive use in peacebuilding.

However, communities that use all the talents, experience, and wisdom of both men and women are more able to address the needs of their members. If women are excluded from participating in community decisions and leadership, or are so busy with household responsibilities that they do not have time to go to community meetings, then the talents, experiences, and wisdom of half of the population will not contribute to community life.

These reasons were highlighted by Lisa Schirch and Manjrika Sewak in their paper on "The Role of Women and Peacebuilding" (2005), written for the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict:

- **Because women are half of every community** and the tasks of peace building are so great, women and men must be partners in the process of peace building.
- **Because women are the central caretakers of families** in many cultures, everyone suffers when women are oppressed, victimized, and excluded from peace building. Their centrality to communal life makes their inclusion in peace building essential.
- **Because women have the capacity for both violence and peace**, women must be encouraged to use their gifts in building peace.
- **Because women are excluded from public decision-making**, leadership, and educational opportunities in many communities around the world, it is important to create special programs to empower women to use their gifts in the tasks of building peace.
- **Because women and men have different experiences of violence and peace**, women must be allowed and encouraged to bring their unique insights and gifts to the process of peace building.
- Because sexism, racism, classism, ethnic and religious discrimination originate from the same set of beliefs that some people are inherently "better" than others, women's empowerment should be seen as inherent to the process of building peace. Like other social structures that set up some people as superior to others, the sexist belief that women's lives are less valuable than men's lives leads to violence against women. When women engage in peace building, they often challenge these sexist beliefs along with other structures that discriminate against people.
- **Because the United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1325 created a mandate to include women** in peace building, women now have the opportunity to use this policy to open doors to new opportunities for women in peace building.
- **Because women have already proven themselves to be successful peace builders**, basing their strategies on the principles of inclusivity and collaboration, and producing peace building outcomes that are broad-based and sustainable, their efforts should be acknowledged and expanded.



The reality is that “resolving conflicts and building peace, particularly in situations of internal war, are too complex and clustered to be left to any one sector. The international community and those in the formal political sector need to understand the work of women, what the potential impact could have if supported and sustained.” Women’s positioning in society offers a unique opportunity to affect the multidimensional factors that contribute to an individual’s trajectory into radicalization and mobilization. Women have a key role to play in finding and implementing new, alternative approaches to ending violent extremism. Their voices, experiences, and ideas have been utterly neglected to date, but their close proximity to potentially vulnerable youth through their roles as the main caretaker in most societies provides them with a unique point of view that can lead to vital insights into how to steer youth away from violence.

Women in peace processes

Although women’s roles in society are often greatly enhanced during conflict and uprisings at a local level, compared to men, relatively few women become involved in formal peace processes, from negotiations that begin in the midst of the conflict through all the phases of the transition to peace. This is a particularly big draw-back for women “because it is precisely at the peace accords where the foundations for a future society are often set, where important gender issues should be addressed and where a gender perspective on peace should be incorporated.” This panel examines possible explanations for this absence and explores counter strategies. Through case studies from countries that underwent conflicts and popular uprisings, the panel examines post-conflict phases and asks whether there is a return to the (patriarchal) pre-conflict status quo? It furthermore sheds light on the strategies used by women in order to achieve greater representation in political decision making processes and inclusion in peace and security processes. Related to that it poses the question to what extent women in decision-making positions defend women rights and establish processes that lead to a greater representation of women in the political sphere. It also critically assesses the international community’s role in advocating for equal participation of women and men and asks whether external pressure to open political spaces for women has proven effective in supporting women’s aspirations for greater participation. Thus, we must view post conflict as an opportunity to change existing power structure.

Contributions of Civil Society

Multilateralism and regional integration are absolutely vital in our world today representing an opportunity to promote prosperity as well as advance human rights and the rule of law. Preventing extremism and countering terrorism is a truly complex challenge requiring a multifaceted, dynamic approach that integrates a host of UN agencies and entities, in partnership with governments and civil society. While it is commonly acknowledged that women can play significant roles in conflict management, reconciliation and reconstruction, due to their limited access to formal politics and access to peace talks, women tend to engage in informal peace processes. This panel aims to critically assess perceptions on women’s engagement in informal peace processes as an opportunity for more visibility or an extension of her “natural” role in

society? Does capitalizing on women's strength in informal peace processes become tantamount to perpetuating traditional gender stereotypes in the sense that women are only active in informal processes and men in formal processes? What are the strategies used by women civil society organizations for broadening the spaces for women's participation? How can links between women's organizations and actors in formal peace processes be strengthened?

The role of civil society initiatives should be recognized and supported in advancing the unique and significant roles women can play in their families, communities, educational institutions, law enforcement agencies and in the broader public sector to counter extremism. Governments should engage with civil society organizations— in particular women's organizations and organizations working in the fields of conflict and violence prevention, peace-building or humanitarian assistance. Governments should ensure that engagement with women's organizations is based on a sophisticated understanding of the culture, religion and gender roles within a community that is free of stereotypes and without negative consequences for the women engaged. Governments should ensure that the conditions and processes for grant allocation allow women's civil society organizations to access funding, particularly those at the grassroots level and in vulnerable areas. This may include adjusting reporting and auditing requirements to reflect the limited institutional capacity of women's organizations; requiring larger grant recipients to provide several smaller grants to local organizations; reviewing grantee portfolios to ensure that funds are also being given to women's civil society organizations; and recognizing that certain efforts to counter violent extremism require longer-term project timelines.

The access of women and girls to educational institutions should be strengthened and improved, including by increasing the number and training of female staff. This can help minimize conditions of socio-economic inequality conducive to terrorism; reduce susceptibility to violent extremist narratives; and enable women to counter violent extremist narratives in their families and communities. The staff of educational institutions should be trained to handle incidents related to violent extremism, by students, their parents, or other staff members. Such training can address topics such as extremism and its gender-specific dimensions. The curricula of colleges and universities teaching education and social work could include topics that specifically address gender issues, including through case studies. Curricula should be reformed, educational materials developed, and the capacity of all educators/instructors built to promote tolerance, conflict transformation, peace-building, interfaith dialogue, mediation, and respect for human rights, especially women's rights.

Women mediator networks

The demand for more women in peace processes is being met by an expansion of women mediator networks. These networks work to strengthen women's leadership, provide coordination and create synergies among actors, and share tools and knowledge to strengthen the capacity of women mediators.¹⁴

UN Women is supporting the establishment and work of networks such as the African Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediation (FemWise-Africa), the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network, the Commonwealth Women Mediators Network, and the African

¹⁴<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/conflict-prevention-and-resolution>



Women Leaders Network. For further research:

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/9/news-experts-call-for-stronger-support-for-networks-of-women-mediators>

Missed Opportunities for Peace & Sustainable Development

In conflict-affected settings, women and young people are particularly challenged to find decent work, access services and social protection, and are often left out of peace building and political processes. Nor are their specific concerns adequately addressed by humanitarian assistance, such as protection from sexual assault and the need for quality education and health care, including sexual and reproductive health services. Women, girls and young people are also especially at risk after conflict has formally ended, including of gender-based violence, criminal networks, gangs and trafficking.

During and after conflict, women often become primary breadwinners, many of them widowed, but the economic opportunities available to them are scarce or low-paying, and many women and girls turn to transactional sex for survival. Their unpaid care work may also increase as family structures shift and family members sustain injuries and disabilities. Discriminatory inheritance laws and practices often mean women cannot reclaim the land or property of their male family members once conflict is over, perpetuating their poverty. Women are often excluded from receiving financial protection and preparations as part of transitional justice plans, and most post-conflict job creation programs target men and ex-combatants.

Sexual and reproductive health problems, including maternal mortality from pregnancy and childbirth complications, unsafe abortion and HIV/AIDS, can multiply and intensify during and after conflict, due to health system collapse, as well as generalized and sexual violence.

Sexual violence as a tactic of warfare leaves individuals, families and communities with devastating and lasting consequences. In addition, in some conflicts, forced marriage and impregnation of women and adolescent girls are additional tools of warfare. Once conflict has ended, many adolescent girls and young women end up as young mothers, without education, skills or supports to sustain themselves or their children.

The international community has a crucial role to play in supporting national efforts to achieve sustainable development in conflict-affected settings and states emerging from conflict. Political commitment and international cooperation are vital to preventing and resolving instability and conflict by addressing the root causes of conflict through the implementation of sound policies for advancing social inclusion and economic growth.

Conclusion

Women's participation in mediation is essential for achieving lasting, positive peace, which goes well beyond just the silencing of guns. Women are crucial partners in economic recovery, social cohesion, and political legitimacy, and women's participation in a mediation process can help ensure that more and diverse members of the community become engaged in peacemaking. This, in turn, can build the credibility of the process and increase local ownership of the process and its



results. An inclusive mediation process brings a fuller understanding of the deep-rooted causes of conflict and the different experiences during conflict, as well as facilitates creative and holistic solutions to conflict.

Yet women are still largely absent from peace processes, which results in peace agreements and ceasefires that rarely address the perspectives, needs, and concerns of women and other vulnerable groups, and a subsequent lack of planning for those needs in post-conflict recovery. This can endanger the long-term sustainability of any peace agreement.¹⁵

Recovery is neither automatic nor linear after conflict. Vulnerability to shocks and stresses – including those not related to conflict – persists long after wars end, sometimes causing the rapid depletion of hard-won livelihood improvements.

For the review theme, the committee shall report provide a review and assessment of the extent to which Member States have implemented the agreed conclusions of the forty eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women on the agenda women’s equal participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution in post – conflict peace building(2004/12).

For further research:

http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/48/csw48b_e_final.pdf?la=en&vs=3723

¹⁵<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/peace-and-security/conflict-prevention-and-resolution>