

# CSW69

10-21 March 2025



Report of participation and overview of learning



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# Introduction

## What is CSW?

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the UN intergovernmental body responsible for promoting the empowerment of women. Its key role is to assist the United Nations and member states in setting policy direction on gender equality; the Agreed Conclusions negotiated by UN member states as the key outcome of CSW are presented to the General Assembly and designed to set wider UN policy on gender equality

CSW leads monitoring progress on the implementation of gender equality throughout the global Sustainable Development Goals, and to monitor progress on the Beijing Platform for Action set at the last World Conference on Women in 1995. Women's Platform, as an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN, is eligible to participate in CSW and submit evidence in the form of written statements.

CSW also plays a key role in monitoring progress on the implementation of gender equality through the global Sustainable Development Goals and integration of gender throughout the Goals. Women's Platform, as an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN, is eligible to participate in CSW.

In practical terms, CSW operates as an annual conference held every March, currently at the UN HQ in New York. CSW in its current form also includes an extensive side event programme, including a stream of official side events organized by UN member state governments and UN agencies, and a separate NGO Parallel Forum with over 700 events organized by civil society organisations. This year, CSW69 took place 10-21 March 2025, as a primarily in person event.

## Political declaration

Each CSW conference has a priority theme and a review theme, agreed in advance, and every five years, CSW focuses on reviewing progress on the Beijing Platform for Action. This year's theme was [Beijing+30](#), and there was an extensive side event programme reviewing progress and highlighting the need to speed up action.

CSW69 achieved a [Political Declaration](#) that strengthens language from the previous one in 2020, and includes references to girls, as well as gender equality and intersecting forms of discrimination. The Declaration also confirms the international human rights framework as the enabling legal environment for work on gender equality, and commits to specific action to end discrimination of marginalised groups of women and girls, including women and girls with disabilities, women living in conflict, women who are displaced, women from ethnic, racial and linguistic minorities and women and girls living with HIV and AIDS.

The Declaration also commits to action on poverty, health, conflict, economic empowerment, violence against women and girls, and strengthening women's participation in decision making. The Declaration was adopted by consensus; however, the US later published [a statement](#) expressing its rejection of elements of the Declaration.

## Delegation

Jonna and Sonya participated in CSW69 in person during the first week, which is the high level element of the event and typically involves Ministers and high level government representatives attending and contributing to events. The focus of participation was to highlight the voices of women in Northern Ireland at the international level, and to gather evidence, examples of good practice and contacts relevant to the key issues for women in Northern Ireland, and the priority areas for the women's sector in Northern Ireland.

The delegation engaged with the Missions of both the UK and Ireland to the UN during CSW68, and highlighted voices and priorities of women in Northern Ireland.

During the second week, the delegation followed events online. Siobhán Harding also formed part of the overall delegation, covering online events throughout CSW.

### **Sonya McMullan, Regional Services Manager, Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland**

Sonya McMullan is the Regional Services Manager for Women's Aid Federation NI and has worked for Women's Aid in different roles since 1999. Sonya has a background in law and a keen interest in legal issues in relation to domestic and sexual abuse and has completed several pieces of research in this area. More recently she has worked closely on the new Domestic Abuse Offence and subsequent new legislation in the areas of domestic and sexual abuse on a policy level. Sonya sits on the European Women's Lobby Observatory as UK Representative and is the NI Delegate for WAVE, *Women Against Violence Europe*. She is also on the Board of Rosario Football Club and is their Safeguarding Lead.



She has contributed to Killean, R., Dowds, E. and McAlinden, A.M. eds., 2021. *Sexual violence on trial: Local and comparative perspectives* and Bettinson and McQuigg, 2023 *Criminalising Coercive Control, Challenges for the Implementation of Northern Ireland's Domestic Abuse Offence*.

Sonya studied at Queen's University Belfast and has a BSSc in Social Policy, MSSc in Criminal Justice and Human Rights Law and a BLEgSci in Legal Science.

### **Jonna Monaghan, Director, Women's Platform**

Jonna is the Director of Women's Platform since 2018 and leads delivery of the organisation's strategic plan. Women's Platform acts as secretariat for the All Party Group on UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace and Security, and Jonna's role includes building relationships between grassroots women, women's sector organisations and elected representatives. She also coordinates the Northern Ireland civil society response to UN processes and mechanisms for women's rights, including CEDAW and the Commission on the Status of Women.





**Siobhán Harding, Research & Policy Officer, Women's Support Network**

Siobhán joined the **Women's Support Network (WSN)** in August 2018 as a Policy & Research Officer. She is responsible for drafting research papers and consultation responses on issues that impact on women on behalf of the Women's Regional Consortium in Northern Ireland. She does this through holding focus groups with local women discussing the issues that are important to them and reflecting their views in policy documents and research papers.

Siobhán has produced research papers on the Impact of Austerity and Welfare Reform on Women, Debt and Women, the Impact of Universal Credit on Women, an update paper on Women Living with Debt and most recently a research paper with Ulster University on the Impact of the Cost of Living Crisis on Women in Northern Ireland and a paper with Carers NI on Women, Unpaid Care & Employment.

Siobhán is a member of the Women's Policy Group which is a platform for women working in policy and advocacy roles in different organisations to share their work and speak with a collective voice on key issues. She is a member of the Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group and the working group on the Cliff Edge Coalition which is a campaign to extend and strengthen the mitigations package for Northern Ireland. Siobhán is also on the Committee for Women's Platform which works to achieve gender equality for women and girls through advocacy for the implementation of international human rights standards in Northern Ireland.

Prior to this, Siobhán worked for over 10 years with Citizens Advice as an Information & Policy Officer and has a wealth of experience working in the field of policy around issues such as poverty, welfare benefits, debt and employment.

WSN is a feminist organisation that provides support and services to the network of 14 Women's Centres/groups across Northern Ireland. WSN is part of the Women's Regional Consortium which consists of 7 established women's sector organisations. These organisations are committed to working in partnership with each other, government, statutory organisations and women's organisations, centres and groups in disadvantaged and rural areas, to ensure that organisations working for women are given the best possible support in the work they do in tackling disadvantage and social exclusion.

# Reflections from CSW

## Reflections by Sonya

### **My key takeaways are:**

Attending my first United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York was an impactful experience. I have never had the opportunity to attend before so knew it was a real privilege to do so. Coming from Northern Ireland, a place with its own complex history of conflict, resilience, and with the recent shifts in women's rights across the globe. I arrived at CSW not only as a participant, but with a keen interest to see what the other women would be bringing through their discussions and conversations.

The CSW brought together women from across the world, all with different struggles, voices, and challenges. Walking into those spaces, I was really struck by the sheer diversity of experiences from grassroots activists fighting for basic safety, to policymakers striving to shape international frameworks for gender equality. The conversations were passionate, the stories especially with survivors where I felt really privileged to always be in that space and the solidarity was powerful. The most powerful panel was a group of women from age 20 to 75 years old who had been trafficked or sexually exploited. Their stories reflected on the 30 years since the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted and the status of its implementation. The panellists, sex trade survivor leaders and their allies from around the world, explored Beijing's promises, its impact, and what urgent steps must be taken to protect the human rights of women and girls. The panellists shared their vision and advocacy strategies to realise equality and a world in which no woman or girl is purchased for sexual acts.

Importance of survivor voice was evident within this panel, a panel consisting of survivors – the only one that will happen during CSW. It was a privilege to be there and to listen to the women. All the women were clear in their message to everyone present that :

*Sex Work is Not Work – there is no such thing it is neither sex or work – it is Violence.*

*“There is no work that you sell a piece of yourself everytime and you have to numb yourself out to keep yourself whole”*

At a time when women's rights are facing backlash globally, the sense of urgency in the air was undeniable. From the rollback of reproductive rights in some parts of the world, to rising rates of gender-based violence, it was clear we are living in a pivotal moment. Yet, amidst the challenges, I saw resilience and fierce determination which is a reminder that women's movements have always been strongest in times of pressure.

For me, representing Northern Ireland in these conversations held special meaning. Our region has seen significant change in recent years, particularly regarding legislative change, reproductive rights and gender equality, yet we still face deep-rooted social and political divides. Hearing from others at CSW helped relate our local journey in a global context the parallels, the contrasts and the shared determination. I found this especially with some engagement I had with groups from South Africa, as a country coming out of conflict I resonated with them on many levels.

More than anything, CSW reminded me that change is possible when voices come together. It showed me the importance of listening, truly listening across borders, cultures, and generations. It left me with

a sense of renewed purpose to continue advocating, not just at home, but as part of a global community that refuses to be silent. It has motivated me within my work to keep on going even at times of hardship through lack of funding and resourcing and challenges to the whole voluntary and community sector.

So, as I returned to Northern Ireland, I carry with me not just stories and the learning, but a responsibility to amplify what I've learned, to hold space for others, and to keep pushing for a world where all women and girls can live with dignity, equality, and freedom.

## Reflections by Siobhán:

This year I attended CSW virtually and while I missed being in New York and making 'real life' connections with women I had the opportunity to attend a diverse range of CSW events involving women from across the world. This year I tried to attend more events which looked at the digital world and how women and their communities could benefit from new technologies including AI. Aside from this I also wanted to attend some events around the Beijing Platform for Action on its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, peacebuilding and conflict given the volume of unrest globally, women's poverty and the recognition of women's unpaid work in the economy.

### **My key takeaways are:**

- There are real challenges and safety concerns in online spaces but it is the future and women need to be involved and at the forefront to help shape it.
- There is a need for openness and accountability in digital governance. Human Rights should not be seen as barriers to innovation but as important safeguards. The UN can bring a lot of value around AI in terms of global governance.
- AI presents a lot of opportunities but we need to recognise it is embedding existing biases from the real world including gender bias.
- Most AI apps are relatively easy to use and do not require a lot of technical skills so that creates a lot of potential to close the gender gap in tech. AI is creating new job opportunities that align with women's skill sets – including skills such as communication, empathy and adaptability where women can be stronger.
- Importance of critical thinking when using AI. It is a technology and we must not accept everything it says – we need to retain critical thinking.
- 30 years after the Beijing Platform for Action many communities still face inequalities, gender-based violence and exclusion.
- While Beijing is a great foundation for promoting Human Rights and providing a roadmap for change it needs revisited in terms of modern challenges including the online world, migration, LGBTQI+ experiences and intersectionality.
- There are ongoing human rights violations in conflicts across the world and women and children suffer the most. These conflicts leave women and girls vulnerable to sexual violence, poverty, displacement and lack of access to education and healthcare.

- Peacebuilding often lacks women’s perspectives. Powerful states have hijacked the peace and security agenda and dominate conflict negotiations and have no respect for women’s participation in these processes. There is a need to recognise that where women are not involved in peace processes they are not sustainable.
- Often the face of poverty is the face of a woman. Gendered barriers such as unequal access to employment, education, healthcare and housing perpetuate this poverty. When women are excluded from developing the policies to address these issues then the policies will fail to address these systemic barriers. Women must be empowered to address the issues which affect their wellbeing. There is a need for the knowledge and experiences of women to be at decision making tables in the development of policies and solutions to address the barriers they face.
- Current measures of the economy, such as GDP, ignore time spent on unpaid care work. This leads to a devaluation of women and feminine values that hold families and communities together.
- It is clear from attending the online sessions the importance of providing spaces, both in person and online, for women to come together to share their experiences, listen to other women, hear from the experiences of other countries and build solidarity. However, this must be facilitated in terms of resourcing and providing opportunities and spaces for this to meaningfully take place.

## Reflections from Jonna

Attending CSW for a second time was a real privilege, and I was committed to using the time as effectively as possible to gather evidence, learning and good practice to share with the sector. The programme was very extensive, and previous experience was very helpful in navigating it.

The period in the run up to CSW was characterised by significant change and uncertainty globally, and the increase in conflicts across the world was clearly visible in both the official side events organised by the NGO Parallel Forum; Afghanistan and Ukraine were discussed in particular in the official side event programme. Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan were highlighted throughout the NGO CSW Parallel Forum, and peacebuilding was explored in many Global South led events. There was a sense of frustration and disappointment at the lack of progress over the last 30 years, and anger at the ongoing Western centric global systems, including patriarchal and growth driven policies which exclude women worldwide and disadvantage women, communities and countries in the Global South. However, the atmosphere was constructive, and stressed that change is possible.

I focused on women’s leadership, women, peace and security and international relationships during CSW68. I was struck by the shared themes and connections across issues explored, in particular the joint impact of deepening misogynistic policies, a growth driven economic ideology that disregards the planet and climate, enduring colonial, Western centric global systems, and the role of digital platforms and tech companies in simultaneously facilitating violence against womrn and girls, hate speech and misinformation, and funding for fascism and fundamentalism.

**My key takeaways are:**



- Women's organisations need to take a holistic view of issues and highlight root causes of misogyny and gender inequalities - there are core cross cutting themes across issues, and recognising this is essential to uncover an increasing focus by those hostile to equality on driving divisions, narrow funding and competition
- Sharing information, networking, enabling more women and girls to get involved and building collective action is vital to build solidarity and stand against backlash - not so much 'think global, act local' as 'think global, act collectively, share inclusively'
- Countries in the Global South are developing exciting and inclusive, decolonial work and there is significant learning from Global South led movements - good practice is increasingly rarely led by Western countries; equality and rights are most at risk in Europe and North America
- Grassroots movements need more support, in particular in building capacity and opportunities to engage in decision making - lived experience from a diverse range of backgrounds must be better heard and better, more intersectional data must be collected to achieve change
- Sustainable resourcing is vital. Only a fraction of overseas aid goes to women's rights organisations or work on gender, and the US and wider aid cuts are harming work deeply, in particular work supporting women and girls who are experiencing violence, sexual violence and harassment in conflict and initiatives strengthening women's engagement in decision making.

## A flavour of CSW



*Pictured left-right: Meeting with Ambassador Fergal Mythen and Caoimhe Landy at the Irish Mission to the UN; reception hosted by UK Deputy Ambassador to the UN James Kariuki; events on Gaza and Afghanistan; views of the UN and New York.*

## NI CSW69 side event

# Women building peace: Solidarity and sharing learning



Women's Platform organised a virtual NGO CSW side event on Thursday 20 March with Gender Action in Peace and Security, focusing on sharing learning on women's engagement in peacebuilding. The event involved speakers from Northern Ireland and Colombia, and GAPS provided a global overview, focusing on the importance of collective action and strengthening peacebuilding movements in the current securitisation context.

Dr Avila Kilmurray outlined the history of the Women's Coalition, and the role of grassroots organising for building a space for women in peacebuilding in Northern Ireland. Dr Kilmurray highlighted the challenges women have faced, but emphasised that

Dr Daniela Suarez Vargas, whose research work at Queen's University Belfast focuses on women and transitional justice in Colombia, shared the perspective of Colombian women on peacebuilding, which emphasises a decolonial and intersectional approach. Women have slowly gained influence in the peace process in Colombia, and the first National Action Plan was completed in 2024, broadly supported by the women's sector. Dr Suarez stressed that women's engagement remains in constant negotiation, but noted that a broad and inclusive women's movement has enabled meaningful engagement with the current government.



Detmer Kremer from GAPS highlighted concerns in relation to narrowing civil society space, and underlined the vital importance to protect funding for peacebuilding, particularly in the context of increasing securitisation. There was an extensive discussion on the meaning of security from a feminist perspective, and the key conclusion was that security is a key concept, which must be understood more broadly than in military terms, and include an analysis of other forms of warfare and discrimination, including online and technology facilitated mechanisms, and in particular misinformation as a control mechanism.

The [full recording](#) of the event is available on the Women's Platform website [here](#).

# Overview of events attended

## Day 1: Monday 10 March 2025

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### Women and armed conflict in Middle East and North Africa

This NGO CSW Forum event highlighted the role of women in the Middle East in peacebuilding and resistance to oppression, with a focus on Iran, Syria, Palestine and Ukraine. Speakers were primarily US based women activists, who emphasised the importance of international dialogue and support to create platforms for women in these conflict regions. The core message of the event was that women are not passive, but need to be heard and supported to create sustainable change.



The event stressed that women are peacebuilders and resist oppression, regardless of circumstances. Women constitute 60% of university graduates in Iran, and graduate women are leading the resistance including the uprising since 2022. In Syria, many women and families are surviving on a dollar a day or less, but women are organising and leading very grassroots level mediation. In Gaza, women have held families together through multiple displacement, and are building connections, looking forward to the end of war and repeated displacement and destruction. The situation is the same in Ukraine, where women shoulder key roles across society, and also constitute 20% of the military.

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### 30 Years After Beijing: Combating Anti-Rights Backlash in MENA

This NGO CSW Forum event highlighted the links between the rise in anti rights movements and backlash on gender equality and rights, with a specific focus on Lebanon and the MENA region.

Speakers stressed that a context of uncertainty and economic hardship is fertile ground for anti rights thinking, as people feel insecure and can be easily threatened. In some contexts, including Lebanon, the state is contributing to attacks; this can include physically stopping events or forcing services to close. State violence can also be systemic, for example banning the word 'gender', as has been done in Iraq.

The event discussed mechanisms to support activists in the field, and concretely push back. Speakers stressed collaboration and organising as the heart of all movements, and emphasised

that only collective action and determination can achieve change, in part as it shows movements cannot be shut down.

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### **Building back better: Gender Responsive and Inclusive Recovery in Ukraine**



The event was organised by the Government of Ukraine and focused on how recovery in Ukraine can ultimately be gender responsive. The event heard from UN Women and the EU, which confirmed their commitment to supporting Ukraine and women in Ukraine. The EU highlighted its financial support for humanitarian aid for women, as well as a long term plan for gender equality in Ukraine, women's rights organisations and women's entrepreneurship. Germany emphasised

the women, peace and security agenda as the context for its support for women in Ukraine, while UN Development Agency stressed women's central role in redevelopment. Similar themes were emphasised by Canada, Norway, France and Japan, as well as the UK. Minister for Equalities Seema Malhotra MP underlined the financial commitment to Ukraine, and specifically to support women and gender equality.

These themes were echoed by Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration Olha Stefanishyna, who outlined work to integrate women's needs and gender equality in all crisis response and recovery plans. The Minister also highlighted a support programme for women affected by war and violence against women and girls, and stressed that financial support is needed for this to ensure implementation.

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### **Beijing+30: Reflections on the situation of Palestinian women and Girls**

One of the final events of the day reflected on the situation of women in Palestine, led by the Palestinian Authority.

Minister for Women's Affairs Mona Al Khalili highlighted situation worsening in West Bank, and stressed women play key role for holding families together, often through multiple



displacements. Speakers emphasised the resilience of women in the face of ongoing attacks, famine and lack of virtually all services, and stressed that gender equality and economic opportunities for women need to be both short and long term priorities, building on women's needs and the new roles women have taken on to support families and communities.

There was support for the Palestinian Authority's calls from the government of Chile, and also strong support in the room as the Minister set out urgent

needs for women across Palestine, including humanitarian aid, access to services, and basic resources.

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### **CSW69 agrees Declaration to mark Beijing+30**

As CSW69 opened, the conference also [adopted by consensus a powerful Political Declaration](#) to respect, protect, and champion the rights, equality, and empowerment of women and girls. The Declaration replaces the negotiation of Agreed Conclusions during a regular CSW, introducing a greater focus on sharing learning and exploring ways forward.

The Political Declaration reaffirms the commitments of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, originally adopted in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women, stressing the need to uphold all human rights and fundamental freedoms for every woman and girl, without exception. It reinforces commitments to women, peace, and security, emphasizing the need to integrate women's voices and leadership into all stages of conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution. It underscores the importance of eradicating poverty in all its forms, including through ensuring women's and girls' right to education, particularly in STEM fields, and by increasing public investments in care systems. It also highlights the necessity of closing the gender digital divide and calls for renewed investment in gender statistics and data to drive informed policymaking, while urging for strong action on digital violence and cyberbullying.

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### **Empowering Homes – Inclusion of Unpaid Work in GDP Calculation** **By Siobhán Harding**

The event explored the making of a home and its many dimensions—parenting, couple relationships, chores, and family dynamics. Homemaking is often dismissed as “unpaid work” because it lacks monetary value, yet it is critical to our survival. Policies recognize only paid labor as work, and GDP calculations exclude homemakers' contributions, rendering their efforts invisible. However, a well-functioning home nurtures leadership, emotional intelligence, and

communication, shaping future generations. Recognizing and valuing this work is crucial, as empowering homes strengthens families and enriches lives. It's time to shift perspectives and acknowledge homemaking as the foundation of a thriving society.

Home is a place where we can be without any judgement, home is the place where we are cared for and everything we know of today starts from home.

When we talk about home it is mostly a positive thing but when we talk about the term homemaker there is often a change from positive to negative.

Often mothers and homemakers are asked what do you do all day? Why do people not accept the work done in the home as work. In among the chores, parenting, couple relationships and relationships with other family members in between this we learn the skills we need including communication skills, empathy, time management, developing relationships, etc. It's a place where leaders are made. A home is made with unpaid work.

In the GDP calculation the benchmark is paid work – because of that everything has to have a monetary value. We need to value unpaid work as homes cannot be made otherwise.

The 2008 version of GDP is being revised by the UN System of National Accounting. It will be slightly improved in 2025 but unpaid work is unlikely to be there.

In small, micro units in India family members are often brought in to help in these but that is not valued. There is less priority for female education in many families and an uneven distribution of family wealth. There are still safety concerns for women in Indian society in many locations and gender bias is clearly visible.

The GDP calculation includes household consumption, investment and Government spending and other things like defence expenditure, insurance premiums, household services carried out though commercial work, education services, etc.

What's not included in the GDP calculation is informal economic activities, subsidised transactions in small/tiny units where family members help with no payment, environmental costs, capital depreciation and unpaid household work.

If the time spent on unpaid care work was valued based on an hourly minimum wage, it would amount to 9% of global GDP.

Calculating the GDP this way has an impact on many policies including social security and pension policies, infrastructure, aid and subsidies to name but a few.

Some of the arguments around not including unpaid work in the home in GDP is that it is about love and care and this is emotion not economics. However the need for its inclusion is warranted due to the high gender disparity.

If it was included would homes be empowered? Yes – it would mean that policy interventions can be better, workforce participation and economic activity would increase, it would improve the economic conditions of families, societies and countries, women would receive more dignity and respect and women's vulnerability would decrease.

Including it in the GDP would help Government and policy makers to understand the sectors which need to be supported. If you ignore unpaid work in the home how can policies be correct?

There are a range of methods to value unpaid work:

- Input approach (the costs of inputs)
- Output approach (the prices of similar services)
- Time accounts (measures of the time taken)

- Triple R (recognition, reduction and redistribution of burden)
- Opportunity Cost (person renders same service outside)
- Replacement Cost (same service from the outside)

There are some challenges around the inclusion of unpaid work including data collection, deciding suitable valuation methodologies (can depend on the economic condition of the country – can be differences between different countries), undertaking a valuation exercise and issues of harmony within members of families. Questions to be asked about informal and illegal activities also.

There is a need to build surveys and to identify data that can be plugged into the GDP calculation.

There is a devaluation of women and the feminine values that hold families and communities together – values of care, nurturing, emotion and love.

We all came from a home – if we want something to be valued we have to value it ourselves – we have to value the unpaid work done in the home.

We need to teach children that every form of labour has value and that will shape our economic policies. It's not just about the numbers but what world we want our children to inherit.

In poorer countries the household work is completely relying on women's shoulders. In Western cultures it is more shared. In India it lies on the mother – on women. This conditioning has to be broken that the work of the home is only the responsibility of women.

In under privileged backgrounds when more hands have to be brought in it's firstly the girl child who has to come out of education to help.

Policies have to change. We need to look at who is making them. Mostly white men who wrote the policies and this needs reform and change. Policies are made by people with this conditioning.

Work at home is subsistence work. Children are watching their mother working every day without reward or appreciation and the child grows up with that conditioning.

Socio-economic background matters – these children see this and it affects their thinking of the value of this work and this will continue unless inter-generational poverty and disadvantage is broken.

Education and awareness will allow this to change and break the cycle but there needs to be policy change also. There is a slow pace of change and a normalisation of unpaid work and abuse. In a 2015 survey of 10,000 students in metro cities of India – 55% of students agreed that women should do the housework and endure abuse – normalisation of abuse and unpaid work.

Women's work in the home is not included in the GDP – it's invisible in economic calculations yet home is the birthplace of the self and determines how the emerging global community operates. At home we learn how to express emotions constructively, celebrate achievements and gain strength when dealing with setbacks. It is at home where these things are learned and where those individuals who laid the foundations for the United Nations and human rights learned these skills. The converse is also true where homes lack emotional security then it can lead to negative consequences and without guidance conflict in communities and leaders who subject the whole world to their personal whims.



It is imperative that unpaid work is honoured and supported by society as a whole and incorporated into GDP as we are building future leaders in our homes, we are making the leaders for our future.

Giving value to work at home – kindness, education and learning, care they get leads to a vibrant society. If it's not good then it can lead to problems in society.

There is a need to transform patriarchal violent masculinities that uphold misogynistic norms and challenging norms/systems for valuing and redistributing care work and household labour. Difficulties recognising and redistributing care work that stems from the idea that women are better at performing care work and domestic tasks and therefore men and husbands tend to unload those responsibilities on women and girls rather than recognising and sharing these responsibilities more equitably. When valuing care work it is essential to transform intergenerational patterns of harm and work on promoting patterns of care, empathy, accountability and home/life skills. Globally there is a lot of work to do to value care work and distribute it more evenly among family members.

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### **Voices from Māori and Pacific women and girls of Aotearoa New Zealand**

This NGO CSW Forum session shared learning on tackling domestic violence among Indigenous people in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Pacific, and focused on prevention through culturally literate practices.

Speakers underlined the importance of specific values, such as respect and family, in Indigenous cultures, and highlighted how working with these principles has helped open up discussion and create better services for Indigenous women. Western preconceived ideas, meanwhile, contribute to isolating Pacific women, and speakers emphasised that engaging lived experience is vital to create sensitive practice.



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### **Beijing+30: Addressing persistent gender inequalities in a changing world of work and addressing Agenda 2030.**

This session focused largely on the UK and explored changes needed in the world of work to improve gender equality. Speakers highlighted issues around pay and social infrastructure; violence against women and girls was also highlighted as a barrier.

Speakers stressed the importance of sustainable resourcing, and it was noted that the new UK

government is indicating some progress on this, in relation to violence against women and girls in England. It was also noted that in the UK, support for maternity and parenthood must be strengthened to effectively give women true choice in relation to work. This was confirmed in wider discussion, which emphasised childcare and valuing women's work as central elements for change.

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### **Nordic Ministers explore pushback against threat to gender equality**

Ministers from all Nordic countries, including the Faroe Islands, joined this event to highlight solutions to promote gender equality. The event featured a wide ranging discussion, reflecting a range of political backgrounds, on issues from the distribution of unpaid work within families to action on violence against women and girls.

Ministers emphasised the Nordic welfare state and a history of egalitarian principles as the basis for society, and gender equality. However, there was no agreement for example on the use of quotas.

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### **Women Leadership: How traumas develop power and decision making**

This NGO CSW Forum session explored healing from trauma and the role of trauma in building women's determination and resilience. It shared lived experience, and emphasised sharing stories and solidarity as central to the healing process, which in turn is central to strengthening women's capacity and agency.

The context for the session was the contrast between the traditional feminist research, where the topic of women with past traumatic experiences has been portrayed as leading to women taking activist actions, engaging with feminist activities, etc, and newer research that has begun to acknowledge a deeper connection between traumatic experiences and leadership formation among women leaders.

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## Day 2: Tuesday 11 March 2025

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### **Testimonies from Gaza**

This event shared voices of women in Gaza and experiences of women journalists working in Palestine.

Speakers stressed that women in Gaza are being erased; all women have lost children or family members, and many have been forced to give birth without any care. Some women have performed caesareans without anaesthetic, and others have died from infections caused by lack of clean water and basic sanitation.



Women journalists have in most cases lost their jobs, and many have had to evacuate; some have been displaced more than 10 times. Journalists are also frequently targeted, and women have been forced to stay away from their families to protect them. The mental toll of reporting the war is adding to the impacts and risks, which are a reality of life for all women in Palestine.

Women in Gaza are living in fear, and speakers emphasised that it cannot be taken for granted that women will stay standing. This is not because they are not able to, but because they should not have to ; the priority is to stop the genocide and provide aid and support.

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### **Beijing Platform addressing the different structures of Violence against women**

This session explored the complex and intersecting forms of violence women in the Arab region experience. It stressed that women in Palestine in particular have expressed multiple forms of violence and oppression since 1948, and real change needs new forms of international regulation and pressure.

Speakers highlighted examples of how change is needed, including action to challenge Israel excluding the occupied Palestinian territories from visits, and failing to challenge eg. visa issues. The event also reflected the ongoing impact of colonialism, and stressed

that action is vital, as the situation in Palestine has impacts for women human rights defenders globally, and indeed on gender equality across the world.

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## Female leadership, Gender Based Violence, Participation and the Dynamics of Power and Choice

by *Sonya McMullan*



Focus on power of female leadership within communities focus on Nigeria where numbers are low within political participation and there are high levels of VAWG. The focus was clearly on inequality being intersectional. Especially in relation to ethnicity, culture, disability etc.

Many women have shown leadership to break the silence and demand zero tolerance but are clear that men and boys play a critical role.

They have seen the importance of unleashing women leaders to break the cycle of economic oppression and political power. They have seen the importance of building alliances within education to promote women's development as leaders. Though have had to be mindful of internal disunity within women's groups and are encouraging women to motivate other women and this needs to be constantly challenged.

Within communities in Nigeria and Africa as a whole, women are marginalized are poor and this impacts on their ability to access equality. They are promoting motherhood not as a weakness but as a position. The mother is the nation and this humanizes the state. There was also a reference to the colonial past and the colonial legacy impact. Any power that woman had previous to this got consumed under male power and patriarchy came from the west. Women were kept on a lower level. This included legacy of slavery and then came sexism, education underachievement or simply not allowed to be educated if you were female and economic disadvantage.



## Beijing+30: Advancing women's legal rights

by **Sonya McMullan**

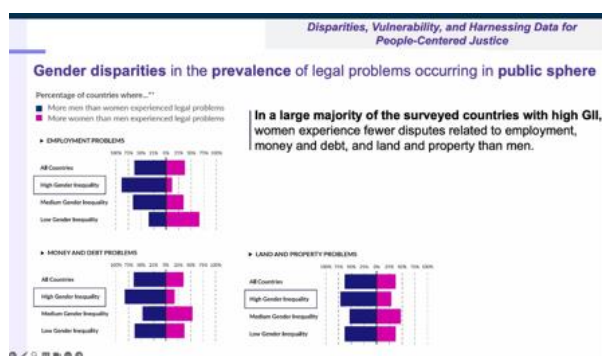
Organized by the American Bar Association (ABA), an official sponsor of the NGO CSW69 Forum, with the cooperation of the Bar Issues Commission of the International Bar Association (IBA), Law Association for Asia and the Pacific (LAWASIA), Union Internationale des Avocats (UIA), and World Justice Project.

Panel discussion on accelerating women's legal rights during the 69th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), marking the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Panellists examined key areas, including expanding access to justice for women and girls, eliminating discriminatory laws and policies, ending gender-based violence, and empowering women's leadership in decision-making.

Concept Note: ABA Virtual Panel Concept Note - March 11 @ 10\_30 am\_.pdf

There was discussion around access to justice for women as a whole across the world and it was seen as something essential for women to be able to access in relation to family courts and domestic abuse, which would be two of the main issues. Though it is evident that across the world women's access to justice is being reduced including through free legal representation including Legal Aid - there is a worldwide decrease in lawyers providing free, pro bono or Legal Aid work and this is proving a huge barrier to justice.

Discussion then came to the need for prevention and a preventative approach to empower people to get issues solved in earlier stages before there is a need for legal representation. It is devastating to hear that Legal Aid work is decreasing not just in NI as we have recently seen through our consultation work on civil legal aid but that this is a worldwide issue.



### Access to Justice Around the World – Unmet Legal Needs

<p><b>Justice problems are ubiquitous and frequent.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>About <b>half</b> of respondents experienced at least one legal problem in the last two years.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Most people do not turn to lawyers or courts.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Around <b>1 in 3</b> with justice problems do not know where to get advice or information.</li> </ul>	<p><b>People face several barriers to meet their justice needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Few people (<b>29%</b>) understood their problem to be legal in nature.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Justice problems negatively impact people's lives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>43%</b> reported that their legal problem negatively impacted their lives.</li> </ul>
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World Justice Project  
**Disparities, Vulnerability, and Harnessing Data for People-Centered Justice**



**"Women's Strike – 50 Years On: The Icelandic Quest for Equality", hosted by the Government of Iceland and *Women's Year 2025* as part of the 69th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69).**



**by Sonya McMullan**

For decades, Iceland has been at the forefront of the fight for gender equality, with the 1975 Women's Strike marking a turning point in the country's history. This event builds on that legacy and the global momentum generated by the 2023 Women's Strike in Iceland, where women and non-binary individuals united in a historic stand against gender inequality. The strike resonated worldwide, reinforcing the collective power of the women's movement in

demanding structural change.

There was reflection on the milestones of Icelandic activism and the collaboration between the Government and the women's movement that has made Iceland one of the global leaders on equality. There was discussion on the power of solidarity, the ongoing challenges faced by women, girls, and LGBTI+ individuals, and the next steps needed to accelerate progress toward equal rights for all.

There was a clear message it was understood and there was a solidarity for women in 1975 and this solidarity can change the world!

Though even with equality and Iceland are world champions of gender equality there are still high levels of domestic abuse and serious sexual offences. So even with such high levels of gender equality including pay, inclusion in society, political participation etc there is still high levels of violence from men to women.

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## **Leveraging AI to bridge the gender gap in technology**

**by Siobhán Harding**

This panel discussion explored how AI is leveraged to bridge the gender gap in technology. The event showcased groundbreaking research in AI adoption by startups and implications for closing the gender gap in technology. Experts delved into the current trends in AI and discussed how AI may be leveraged to bridge the skills gap and support career growth for women in technology by increasing access to information, assisting in content generation, replacing tasks with AI, and boosting operational efficiency. It offered valuable insights from experts in industry and entrepreneurs on how innovative AI solutions drive meaningful change and shape a more equitable future in the technology sector. From the Pan Pacific & South East Asia & America.

The number of women taking engineering classes is consistently low and there is a fear

that their skills will be unfairly judged.

Women make up less than 20% of the AI workforce – imbalance has implications for AI systems.

Can AI be part of the solution in closing the gender gap in tech?

Yes it can help bridge the gap but it will take a while and there will be some challenges. But AI presents opportunities.

From a data perspective – we need to recognise that it is embedding today's world biases – and there is gender bias in that. We need to recognise that the internet contains sexism and worse and that affects everything – we need to account for inherent gender bias as a starting point. Looking at the data is therefore very important.

AI innovation doesn't only happen on the development side – we have to understand/take account of the user perspective. If more women use it then this will feed through to AI development. There is a lot of repetitive, non-valued work where AI can foster efficiency.

AI has the potential to narrow the gap – but it is just a tool in the toolbox. Most AI apps are relatively easy to use and don't require tech skills/know-how so that provides a lot of potential. There is a need to raise awareness and accessibility.

How are businesses adopting AI especially start-ups?

There is a lot of hype around AI. Around 6-8% of existing businesses use AI which is relatively low given the hype. Some of the challenges they face include high initial investment, lack of skilled workforce and that AI is not applicable to their business. Looking at start-ups there has been a significant increase in AI related apps in the US.

Smaller firms of 1-4 employees the adoption rate is 4.6% and for 250+ employees it is 5.8% but less in mid-size firms. AI helps to close the tech gap in smaller firms.

Firms embracing AI mostly by training current staff because learning to use AI is feasible. Reason for not adopting AI – not applicable to the business (81%). AI is not fully commercialised yet.

Will AI replace workers?

We are looking at the early phase of AI so not at the minute but who knows in the future?

In the early phase businesses were asked if their employment increased or decreased and most expected not to see any major changes.

We are in the early phase of AI adoption and AI is mostly replacing the tasks but not the workers – if workers are knowledgeable they often can keep their jobs but not the repetitive tasks.

AI adoption by small firms is on the rise – some are using AI to establish their own businesses.

AI is relatively easy to use and workforces can be trained to use it.

AI is not fully commercialised yet but there will be more opportunities as it is.

AI may help close the tech gap particularly between small and mid-size firms.

Need to start thinking of AI as your co-founder!

Bridging the Gender Gap in Hiring



It is hard for women in tech to move up into leadership, there are a lot of challenges but AI can help to bridge the gap.

#### Business Case for Women in AI & Tech:

- AI can reduce bias in hiring through blind recruitment and skills assessments (removing names and identifications)
- AI tools can create inclusive job descriptions and expand outreach (the use of words like 'ninja' are very masculine and turn women off – words matter and AI can help to attract more women to apply)
- Fair interview processes and data-driven decisions to promote equity (ensuring candidates are assessed in a fair manner)
- AI supports career development and retention for women (can help with creating career development plans, etc)
- Democratise leadership and expertise (help levelling the playing field – strategic thinking – through relying on data)

It only works if there is no bias but bias has been built in to the historical data that is out there.

Only 20% of those developing and training models are women.

Less than 15% of women hold executive level positions in tech/AI

10-20% less women are downloading AI tools depending on age: girls in their teens are downloading at a higher rate than men.

#### Causes of the Gender Gap:

- Education & Early Exposure – girls need to see these jobs are for them
- Workplace Challenges
- Work-Life Balance – often long hours and see women dropping out when they have a family
- Retention & Advancement – women often don't go into leadership roles as trying to juggle work with family life
- Representation & Role Models – lack of!
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#### The Good News:

- AI is creating new job opportunities that align with women's skill sets
- AI jobs will require 'power skills' like communication, empathy, adaptability where women can be stronger
- AI enables more rapid learning and upskilling that can open the pathways to entering the tech field.

Firms are starting to want AI skills in recruitment now.

#### Call to Action:

- Women need to get involved in shaping AI policy – women need a seat at the table
- Upskill in AI now because the jobs at higher risk of automation are often held by women

- Mentor and support women in AI and tech
- Form women's cohorts or industry specific ones to educate and discuss AI literacy and best practices

AI is unlocking opportunities for women to climb. AI changes everyday life but the advancement is dominated by men – what's missing in AI development is women's perspective. The developers, investors and decision makers are mostly men. Women understand the needs and issues in female dominated occupations like care where AI has barely touched the surface. Imagine what AI could do if guided by women's experience.

AI Opportunity Framework in 4 steps:

- Pain Point Discovery – where you say this situation is ridiculous!
- Market Validation – am I the only one or is this problem universal?
- Solution Vision – in my ideal world I would.....
- Brainstorm with AI – what do you think about this?

Your role in AI:

- Be obsessed with people's problems
- Be the visionary who sees the problem
- Know how to apply the tech to solve the problem
- Lead the solution development

The future of AI is about finding better problems to solve.

The impact of AI (2023-2030) is three times bigger than the impact of the internet (1995-2010).

Voice AI is creating opportunities – people who have not had formal education can speak to a device in their native language and this can lead to the creation of entrepreneurs. They will have the tools to access the power from computers to be smart entrepreneurs. But it needs to be ethically based.

The surfaces for speaking to machines are increasing - ear buds, connected glasses, cars, etc.

Be aware of Recursive Pollution – these machines can sometimes be spectacularly wrong and confidently so – when the machine output is pumped back into the training data ocean a future machine may end up being trained on this very same polluted data – this is a concerning feedback loop. Data is gold! These machines ingest everything on the internet – both the right and wrong, good and bad. When it spits out the answer it spits it out from the data that is there. So there are potential dangers where bad information gets reintroduced into the system.

Risks:

- Their Data – who are 'they', where did their data come from, what are their processes for evaluation?
- Your Work – what models are you choosing, it's your data, your stakeholders, private data – your decisions, your control. Be careful with your data.
- Unassigned – the whole societal input of data, social, political, thoughts – all out there. Very Western/US heavy. The giants are in certain geo-locations and that brings its own bias.

AI can help in the field of healthcare by helping doctors to look at lab results and write reports, help with diagnosis, etc. It can help with admin jobs in healthcare by removing

repetitive jobs such as setting and reminding about appointments. Removing the inefficiencies that exist in these jobs.

In communities that are disenfranchised from medical access it could help to allow real-time access to a doctor for example – to be real-time connected for connected to an AI doctor bot (as long as this has been thoroughly tested).

When you use AI expect the reactions not to be traditional – it may show something totally different and you need to use it with an open mind.

Women like inter-personal connections. AI can be on the back end so that we can be at the front end. It can help to make things better through getting back end things done by AI.

Women need to have voices in this, it is driven by computer scientists but there needs to be more cognitive scientists.

In terms of ethnics UNESCO has an AI Ethics group.

Looking at workplace discrimination AI can analyse patterns in hiring and can identify issues.

How can we control AI?

AI is just technology it is not a superpower. It's just like a car – you use it to get from A to B. You drive the car, you are in control, you're driving it. If you are a safe and reasonable driver it won't control you or damage you. If you're not responsible then you may have issues. Think of AI as a tool.

We need to keep our own filters, character and ideas – don't just accept what AI imposes on us – filter it according to our own values and we need to teach the younger generation this.

Important to remember critical thinking – ensure we don't succumb to AI coming at you and accepting everything it says – we must retain critical thinking.

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## The silver shift



This event was focused on changing the narrative on older women, from a global image still focused on victimhood to older women as leaders across society. The central message was that policies must change, and older age reassessed as valuable - older women shouldn't accept being invisible or seen as 'economically unviable'.

Older women lead work in communities across the world. Unpaid care is worth \$22bn per year worldwide, and the majority of carers are older women.

It stressed that women live longer, and outlive men, across the world- in Russia,

women's life expectancy is 75, while for men it is 63. That also means that it is time to seriously discuss the health needs of older women, including menopause and hysterectomy as part of sexual and reproductive rights.

Taiwan was highlighted as a case study, as Taiwan is expected to become 'super aged' with more than 25% of people aged over 65 by 2935. Taiwan has introduced a dedicated Department to address this, which focuses on support, social networks and services for older people, aiming to allow people to continue living as actively as possible.

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### **Storytelling Circles: Breaking Barriers Through Shared Narrative**

This session explored stories as a tool for creating change. Examples included women organising in Brazil to achieve gender strategy in local cities, and stand up to violence against women and girls, and highlighting the important role of women police officers for violence victims/survivors in Pakistan to encourage a better response to reports of domestic violence. Speakers stressed that stories bring out shared humanity, assisting in creating a new conversation.

The session highlighted similar themes shared by women and women's organisations across the world, not least a tendency for men to intervene in women only structures. It also stressed that sharing stories is part of building solidarity, and helps strengthen women's confidence to share stories.

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### **Feminist organising: An antidote to crises**

This NGO CSW Parallel Forum event highlighted systematic organising and movement building as a cornerstone of dealing with crises, uncertainty and backlash. Speakers from across all continents highlighted models for organising, including networks for addressing violence against women and girls in Colombia and women organising in Palestine to stand against discrimination and violence.

Speakers stressed that an intersectional approach is essential to effective organising, to build broad and inclusive movements that can represent and support as many women and girls as possible. There was also strong agreement that movements need a clear agenda, and international agreements and standards assist with this. Similarly, sharing information within and across groups and movements was highlighted as a crucial element to achieve change; this was stressed in particular in relation to connecting Palestinians worldwide.

## Women breaking barriers

This event was organised by Business and Professional Women, and focused on how women can break barriers and engage in decision making.



Violence and especially online harms were identified as key threats, and regulation of AI was identified as a specific priority. New Zealand is introducing online safety tools, which also provide guidance for women, including those in elected office. In the state of Paraná in Brazil, integrating a gender lens into decision making processes has strengthened policies on care, and encouraged training and support for reporting violence against

women, which has helped tackle levels of violence.

It also stressed that representation matters. Speakers underlined that government policies must create the conditions where women can engage in decision making, and civil society must more effectively reach out to women and girls. This includes reviewing funding for civil society, to prioritise those creating effective change. The Malaysian government underlined Malaysia's long term commitment to gender equality while the Nepal Permanent Representative to the UN, current vice president of ECOSOC, noted that Nepal prioritises women's participation and representation at all levels, and has achieved over 30% representation across local, regional and national parliaments.



## Her Leadership, Our Future: Cultivating Change for Food and Nutrition Security

This event explored the link between women's rights, gender equality and food security.

The event highlighted Cameroon as a case study, and highlighted both investment in women and remaining gaps. In Cameroon, 70% of rural women are involved in subsistence agriculture, but many women don't have safe access to sufficient food, due to unequal social norms. The current government has sought to support women, including women led business, but recognises that further outreach is required. Meanwhile, in Afghanistan women are facing starvation and extreme poverty, but any action is virtually impossible as women have been all but erased as human beings. There are fears for an entire generation of girls, who lack food as well as access to school and the most basic services and rights.

Speakers stressed that food security is a fundamentally gendered issue, due to the role of women in global food production, and also the disproportionate number of women who are malnourished or going hungry. Strengthening food security therefore requires investment in gender equality, at all levels from access to education for girls and comprehensive sexual and reproductive rights, to addressing gender norms and increasing women's representation at all levels of decision making.

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### **Financing Fascism and Fundamentalism - Corporate Funding Flows Sowing Hate**

This session shone a light on how extreme, populist and fundamentalist movements are funded, and the mechanisms that support this. It focused on how international trade, regulation and accountability, and mechanisms such as tariffs work to support fundamental movements, and ideas such as colonialism through drawing resources from the global South to the global North.

The session stressed that regulation is vital, and multilateral, global action is required to strengthen this. At present, the existing structures are at risk, with potentially very long term consequences. Digital platforms are creating global agreements that are not subject to either national or international law, and this is setting a concerning precedent. In practice, this means platforms can profit from even the most extreme content, as it's seen by users, but are not responsible for algorithms making this content visible.

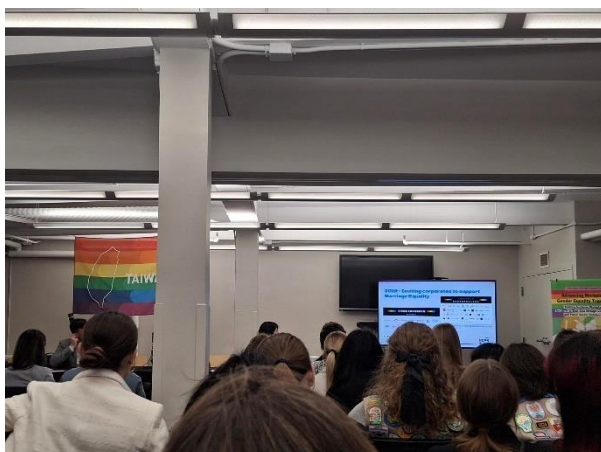
Speakers noted that lack of regulation also allows obscure financial flows, including through cryptocurrency. Meanwhile, major global technology companies are contributing to phasing out human labour, often in the name of safety, but in practice entrenching inequalities.

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## Day 3: Wednesday 12 March 2025

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### Building inclusive workplaces



This event focused on LGBTQI+ inclusive workplaces. The focus was on Taiwan, where action by the LGBTQI+ sector has achieved a significant change with employers increasingly embracing inclusive workplaces and Taipei City recently adopting a LGBTQI+ workplace index and including LGBTQI+ in employment and gender equality standards. LGBTQI+ folks are also increasingly comfortable to be open at work, and high profile public figures have publicly transitioned, changing public attitudes.

This has built on dialogue and capacity building, and there is now engagement with the Taiwanese government for legal reform. However, this work has underlined the challenges women face in build careers because of social norms and family expectations, and in Taipei, family friendly workplace awards have been introduced to address this. There is also investment in career counselling to support individual women both re-enter work and seek promotion.

In Japan, education in schools and workplaces has driven workplace change, and new laws, including sexual harassment legislation, banned LGBTQI+ discrimination in 2023. Legal reforms including equal marriage are still needed; however, a Pride workplace index has grown from 79 corporates in 2016 to over 860 last year, including global companies such as Sony. The Index includes commitment to inclusive HR policies and formal engagement with LGBTQI+ employees, as well as training.

The event noted that change had been initiated in the US, building on civil rights law, and stressed that civil rights and inclusion are currently being weaponised, which while not ending workplace change, requires effective responses.

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## Women and the media

This event explored solutions to deepfakes and other image based sexual abuse. Speakers discussed their experience as well as the impact of abuse on victims, underlined that this type of abuse is political, designed used to control and silence women, and can be defined as organised crime, as it depends on digital platforms and technologies. Speakers also explored in particular the good/bad victim dichotomy and the added links to stereotyped misogynistic abuse. It was stressed that the UN human rights framework is essential for challenging IBSV and achieving rights based remedies. This is particularly important in relation to digital platforms, considering their core role enabling abuse and focus on avoiding accountability under both national and international law. It is also vital to ensure a meaningful and appropriate response from the judicial system, including dismissal and victim blaming.



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Speakers shared areas for action, focusing on an international Bill of Rights for victims of image based sexual abuse. It was noted that as perpetrators often are anonymous, new forms of justice are needed, including international mechanisms that force digital platforms to take images down. Laws have their place and existing laws can be updated to encompass image based abuse as an initial step, but the global and rapidly shifting nature of the problem highlights limits of legislation, and the need for wider action on violence and gender stereotypes.

The speakers highlighted that terms are complex, and also stressed that understanding concepts is important for legal remedies. A summary of definitions is available at <https://endcyberabuse.org/law-intro/>.



## Women in media, shaping narratives for gender equality

This session highlighted the issues facing women journalists and explored the impact of constraining their work on gender equality more generally.

Speakers stressed that 2024 was the most dangerous year for women journalists to date, with physical attacks increasing sharply. This session also underlined the harm of AI and deepfakes on

women, and stressed that online violence is designed to intimidate women journalists and have a chilling impact on their work. This, in turn, has an impact on democracy and scrutiny of political decisions, in a context where gender equality and women remain rare subjects for media reporting.



Speakers also highlighted the aim of online violence against women in public life is to weaponise misogyny as a tool against democracy. The situation for women in Latin America is particularly difficult, and media outlets are resisting regulation, which further affects public narratives. Women journalists typically have limited recourse to remedies, even in cases of direct threats and hate speech, and action therefore must build on human rights standards and ending misogyny, including through better media literacy. The Global Digital Compact agreed at the UN in 2024 was identified as one key framework, and the Beijing Platform for Action also remains relevant.

Some speakers argued that despite its complexities, social media is a useful tool to mobilise, and therefore remains relevant as part of action to stand up to the backlash. New data shows that women remain sidelined as journalists, reporting only 35% of stories and more on issues given lower priority. Women are also more likely to be affected by cuts where profits fall.



## Social media's role in amplifying conflict related sexual violence

This session also explored the role of digital platforms in enabling violence, in this event with a focus on social media in conflict settings. Speakers explored events in Ukraine and the Middle East, including through an Israeli lens, and the impacts for women whose abuse is posted online.

The session emphasised clear, global protocols as a core solution to address hate on social media. This can assist in collecting evidence to document abuses, and potentially also assist in international war crime investigations, including securing prosecutions.

Speakers also reflected on how social media, and effectively digital platforms, serve to normalise hate and assist recruitment to extremist movements, and facilitate hybrid forms of warfare. There was an emphasis on media literacy to improve public debate on the issues, as well as collective action on misogyny, highlighting a clear thread to other sessions on online violence and media.

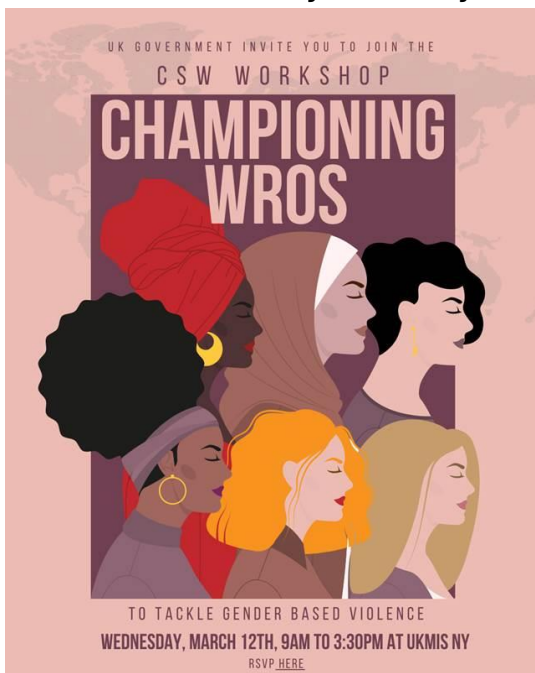
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## Female leadership, Gender Based Violence, Participation and the Dynamics of Power and Choice

by Sonya McMullan

*Experience to share good practices and challenges between the UK, Brazil, and South Africa. Women's Rights Organizations at the Centre of GBV Solutions. Identification of shared priorities for the trilateral framework to address at the grassroots level.*

### Panel Discussion: Policy & Advocacy – Strengthening the Role of WROs



The first part of the session focussed on:

- Overview of GBV policies and challenges in the three countries.
- Best practices for integrating WROs in policy design and implementation.
- Strengthening government-WRO collaboration for systemic change.

### Enhancing WROs' Policy Influence

Questions that we focused on were:

#### 1. That are the biggest policy challenges in GBV prevention and response?

Main challenges were implementation and guidance in relation to new legislation, monitoring and scrutinization after

implementation. Everyone agreed around issues of Family Court, Criminal Justice and we all need to do more to give everyone equal access to justice.

## 2. What are some of the advances?

Policy and legislation had developed in all three nations and this was for the better.

## 3. What support do WROs need from governments and donors?

There was a complete agreement from all three countries that there needed to be commitment for secure, sustainable funding for all organisations working to end VAWG. Funding needed to focus on education, prevention, health and specialised services.

*It is difficult to participate as part of the four nations of the UK, as we are so different in relation to legislation, policy developments, funding etc. when there were discussions around development in England and Wales such as Domestic Abuse first responders for all 999 calls, RSE provision, reproductive rights etc. it is challenging. We also come from a post conflict society and could relate more to South Africa in this context of the normalisation of violence on the streets and threat of male violence. More money being put into paramilitary funding: The Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime (EPPOC) The Programme is funded jointly by the NI Executive and the United Kingdom Government. In September 2024, the NI Executive approved the extension of the Programme to 31 March 2027, with a continued investment of £8m per year for the final 2 years of the Programme. The UK Government also confirmed funding of £8m for the Programme for the financial year 2025-26.*

## Strengthening WROs' Capacity & Collaboration

### Building Resilient & Sustainable WROs

- Funding & financial sustainability for WROs.
- Digital tools for advocacy and service delivery.
- Cross-country collaboration and peer learning.

**Brazil** has the 5<sup>th</sup> highest rate of femicide in the world. In 2023 there was one case of femicide every 6 hours. It is such a large country it is difficult and challenging to implement national strategies.

A rape is recorded every six minutes and 88% of the victims are women and girls.

60% of the victims are aged between 0 – 13 years, being assaulted mainly by family members or acquaintances.

There are new laws and legislation.

1. **Maria da Penha Law (2006):** This law is a major milestone in Brazil's efforts to combat domestic violence. It established stronger legal protections for women, including stricter penalties for abusers, preventive measures, and the creation of specialized courts for domestic violence cases. It also mandates the creation of support centres for victims.



2. **Protective Measures:** The law allows for immediate protective measures for women who are at risk of domestic violence, such as removing the abuser from the home and restricting contact between the victim and the perpetrator. These measures can be quickly enacted by police or the judiciary in practice but reality on the ground is very different and women who are black and live in some of the more socially deprived areas of Brazil do not get this support as police simply would not go those areas and women would never expect support from the police.
3. **Women's Police Stations (Delegacia da Mulher):** Brazil has expanded the number of specialized police stations focused on serving female victims of domestic violence, where trained officers provide a more supportive environment for victims to report crimes and seek help.
4. **Women's Assistance Centres:** The government has supported the establishment of shelters and psychological support centres for women who are victims of domestic violence. These centres provide emergency assistance, legal aid, and counselling but there are challenges with funding of these services.
5. **Improved Access to Justice:** The legal framework has been strengthened to ensure that women who suffer from domestic violence have better access to justice. This includes faster processing of cases and the provision of legal aid for victims.

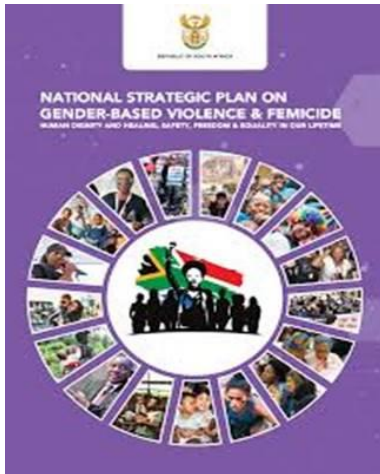
**In South Africa** they had a **#TotalShutDown** in March 2018 – the Government had failed and the women gave the government 24 demands. They met with the President and developed the GBVF Strategy – Gender Based Violence & Femicide Strategy.

In South Africa they have the highest femicide rates in the world. 5 times the global average with 3 women being murdered each day.

In 2018 a university student was raped and killed by a postal worker and this sparked widespread protests across the country and gave rise to the #TotalShutdown Movement.

South Africa's **National Strategic Plan (NSP) on Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF)** is a comprehensive framework aimed at addressing and combating gender-based violence and femicide in the country. Launched in **2020**, the plan is a response to the rising rates of violence against women, children, and LGBTQI+ individuals, with a particular focus on the devastating impacts of femicide.

Here are the key pillars and components of the **National Strategic Plan on GBVF**:



**The UK Government will bring back discussions about moving forward including making sure that civil society and survivor voice are part of any discussions.**

### Resisting anti choice movements

This session explored effective RSE and responding to anti choice movements, with a specific focus on France. Speakers highlighted the growing resistance to reproductive rights and choice in France, linked to a rise in right wing movements

Speakers emphasised organising and collective, coordinated action. Maintaining effective RSE was also stressed as central to challenge misinformation and anti choice rhetoric. Focusing on reproductive rights and care as a health issue was similarly stressed as a way to focus on facts and underline choice is not controversial. However, speakers stressed that ultimately choice is an issue of rights and anti rights movements must be challenged, using data and organised action, including challenging misinformation in the media.

### The LBTQ+ Movement in Asia: Reflections on the Past and Future Directions

This session explored experiences of LGBTQI groups in South Asia for equal rights, protection and end to discrimination. Taiwan was highlighted as a positive example, as it legalised equal marriage in, and it was noted some LGBTQI communities in other countries see Taiwan as a safe place, which has driven migration.

It was noted that resistance to LGBTQI + rights in Taiwan comes from conservative Christian groups and the Catholic church, but as Taiwan is multi religious, this can be used to address this. It was noted that feminists exist across religions, but religious divides create challenges in many countries. Religious involvement has also reduced the capacity of groups to occupy public space, which is narrowing opportunities for change.

## **Peacebuilding from the Perspective of Women Affected by Armed Conflict**

**by Siobhán Harding**

Human rights violations in armed conflicts and military occupations take a heavy toll on civilians. Not only are their right to life threatened, but girls and women are also at risk of being targeted for sexual violence, and effects and damages continue after the conflict. Commemorating the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325, as well as the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII, this event will shed light on the situation of women who still suffer from the aftereffects of the atomic bombing 80 years after the war, who are threatened by sexual violence by U.S. soldiers in Okinawa, where there are U.S. military bases, and who are in the ongoing armed conflict such as Myanmar and Gaza. Also, by sharing lessons from the past, it will discuss the way toward the achievement of one of the core goals of the Beijing Declaration, which is “the advancement of peace for all women.”

### **Ukraine**

From 2014 to 2022 there were many human rights violations by Russia in Ukraine and 1.7million civilians were forced to leave their homes.

Since February 2022 Russia’s full scale invasion of Ukraine there has been:

- Forced displacement and loss of homes
- Destruction of critical infrastructure
- Systemic use of sexual violence in occupied territories
- Vast human rights violations in occupied territories

Figures from February 2025 show:

- 3.7million internally displaced people in Ukraine
- 6.9million refugees from Ukraine globally
- 12.7million in need of humanitarian assistance

The vast majority of these are women and children – this puts them at risk of poverty, human trafficking and lack of education.

Attacks on critical civilian infrastructure leaves women and children vulnerable – prioritising survival over schooling:

- 3,798 educational facilities damaged/destroyed
- 149,300 residential buildings damaged/destroyed
- 2,209 attacks on medical facilities
- 195 medical facilities destroyed

12,300 civilians including over 600 children have been killed and 29,100 injured since the war started in February 2022. These are just the official numbers and it is impossible to establish exact numbers because of the numbers of areas still occupied where evidence is being destroyed and they are hiding war crimes.

Life under Russian occupation includes:

- Use of torture and killings of civilians
- Systemic use of rape/sexual violence against women and children – to threaten and control.

Peace Plan for Ukraine?

The areas of land that Russia plans to take are not just land but people – if they take them it means a life of torture for these people. Agreeing to the Russian peace plan means war crimes go unanswered many of which are to women.

There is a need to focus on the long-term effects – rebuilding critical infrastructure to ensure

access to education and safety – fixing schools, libraries and homes. Some children because of both Covid and the war have been learning online for 5 years.

20,000 children have been deported to Russia some despite having living relations in Ukraine. Human Rights violations have been committed by individuals and they need to be prosecuted – armed conflict does not excuse them.

There needs to be continued pressure on Russia's institutions – those who are responsible must be held to account.

If they want peace they can't make decisions for Ukraine – they need to include Ukraine in the plans and to include women in the process.

### **Myanmar**

Armed groups affiliated by the military have been carrying out conflict related sexual violence (CRSV).

The civil war has lasted more than 70 years leaving women and girls under constant threat of their security with CRSV widespread.

US funding cuts have severely impacted on preventative work in these areas.

Survivors need support and services to rebuild their lives but resources are needed to do this work.

Gendered Nature of Conflict in Burma/Myanmar:

- Decades of civil war
- Women have different experiences in conflict
- Gender inequality leads to conflict, violence and insecurity in society
- Peace agreements don't take account of the distinct needs/priorities of women
- Political/ethnic leaders don't understand women's participation in peace building/political reform is important

Myanmar has a patriarchal system in social structures. Men create war and political violation – historically society only recognised men as decision makers/fighters – with women and girls the victims of civil war/conflict.

Women suffer direct violence in conflict and the impact of disease, infectious diseases due to lack of infrastructure such as access to clean water.

After the military coup in 2021 – women's participation in political platforms rose to 25.5% (in 2012 it was 0%).

Over 65% of women participated in the resistance movement. Need to recognise that where women are not involved in peace processes they are not sustainable.

### **Okinawa**

Sexual violations by US military personnel in Okinawa. Okinawa accounts for less than 1% of Japan's total land area but contains about 70% of Japan's US military bases.

There are very many US military bases in Okinawa and there have been many sexual crimes on local women many of which have not been prosecuted.

Examples of various rapes, kidnappings and killings of girls and young women and rallies to protest against this.

Part of the problem is an agreement between Japan and the US – US Japan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) which states that the custody of an accused member of US armed forces over whom Japan is to exercise jurisdiction shall if he is in the hands of the US remain with the US until he is charged by Japan.

Some suspects have escaped to the US during trials – there is a need to change this agreement.

There is a need for more people in Japan and across the world to understand that there are so many bases in Okinawa and the problems it is causing for women.

Even in post-conflict zones women are not living in complete peace if they are living in constant

threat of gender-based violence.

### **Hiroshima**

Summary of the experience of an atomic bomb victim in Hiroshima in August 1945 who is appealing for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

She was unable to talk about her own experience even with her family until she was in her 70s. She lived close to ground zero and was walking to school the day of the bomb. She was badly burned and exposed to radiation at 6 years old. Her house was barely standing after the bomb and she was burned and her clothes destroyed, she almost died. 140,000 lives were lost – all her classmates were killed and many of their bodies were never found. Many were exposed to massive radiation and died soon after.

Her scars faded but the radiation damage and emotional scars remained. The radiation made her weak and led to her living a lonely youth. She got married and had children but her husband and her feared that the children would be OK.

Wars continue around the world and women and children suffer the most. They rebuild families and hold communities together and play a vital role in recovery. Women and girls suffer the most in wars and must be at the table for peace negotiations and nuclear disarmament. A nuclear free world is possible.

### **Summary by Human Rights Now**

Peacebuilding often lacks women's perspective.

Powerful states have hijacked the peace and security agenda and dominate conflict negotiations – they have no respect for the rule of law or women's participation.

Ukraine – we call for Ukraine voices to be at the centre of peace negotiations.

Myanmar – the international community must listen to the voices of women and act in solidarity to isolate the military and enhance humanitarian assistance to alleviate the suffering of women and girls.

Okinawa – after 30 years this issue has not been solved and we call on the government to address this matter.

Hiroshima – Hidankyo was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts to abolish all nuclear weapons. Conference of Parties to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons – declaration that abolition is not an aspiration but necessary for world security.

Gaza – we stand in solidarity with Palestinian women – where over 40,000 people have been killed and included in war crimes. There must be an end to military actions, threats and the occupation of the West Bank. Perpretrators must be brought to justice before the International Criminal Court (the US President has imposed sanctions against the ICC!).

The security environment is very challenging – world leaders unwillingness to respect international law, human rights and their obsession with nuclear weapons is creating a crisis of peace.

We urge the UN to take leadership in resolving conflicts and promoting women's participation in peace.

It's time for women to stand in solidarity and say no to the politics of force – to take leadership in resolving conflicts and participating in peace processes.



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## Shaping peace in Sudan



In this session women from networks in Sudan highlighted the situation of women in Sudan in the current conflict, and explored routes to peace.

Speakers emphasised that women are at enormous risk in this conflict, which in their words is literally fought on women's bodies. Sexual violence, including rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage, has been systematically used as a weapon in the conflict and survivors have limited access to support. This is a serious

setback as women in Sudan were gaining a voice before this conflict, and networks are focusing on trying to retain structures to stop progress on gender equality being fully erased.

Lack of humanitarian aid, including cuts to funding, is a major barrier to supporting women, and is contributing to severe hunger and famine in some regions. The UN is not expecting this to improve, and there are also serious questions about how soon any meaningful negotiations can be brought about.

Speakers stressed that international pressure is the only way to end the conflict, and also emphasised that women need to be meaningfully involved in planning political structures that can maintain peace, as the essential prerequisite for any peace negotiations. Lack of sustainable structures caused the current conflict, and women in Sudan will not be safe until a long term settlement is achieved.

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## From asking to action

This external side event, held at the Rockefeller Foundation by Women for Women International, highlighted the priorities of women in 14 conflict areas, identified in an engagement exercise led by Women for Women International. Across areas, women expressed hope for their future, and identified violence against women and girls and domestic abuse as the main concern, despite living in active conflict. While women overwhelmingly said gender equality is the solution to the conflict in their region.



Women are also demanding to be seen, and to be part of shaping a just and lasting peace. Ultimately, women in conflict regions also want justice.

The Syrian Women Now for Development director described working incognito throughout the war in Syria, and keeping her family in the dark about her work in order to keep them safe. This was common for women human rights defenders, who were not only targeted, but also were socially stigmatised and at risk of being excluded from their communities if found out.

Findings from the From Asking to Action survey show that in Palestine, as well as Afghanistan, only about 10% are receiving aid, while in Sudan, women are systematically targeted by sexual violence used as a weapon of war, as well as sexually harassed in their communities.

Speakers stressed that engaging women in communities in shaping their futures is vital to change women's lives. Their current lives are characterised by powerlessness, and building capacity, creating safe spaces and listening to women's stories are crucial stepping stones to beginning healing and confidence building.

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### **Women's financial and digital inclusion**

This UN Women led event highlighted action in mostly Asian countries to improve access to digital and financial services for women. A common theme was investment in services, and training for women in digital and financial literacy. Action on online violence was also mentioned.

Key issues highlighted in discussion included strengthening women's role in decision making and shaping services, investment in women led online business and strong gender equality standards, supported by sufficient resources to assist in particular countries in the Global South to invest in digital technologies.

## Day 4: Thursday 13 March 2025

### From Afghanistan to New York: Afghan Women Calling for Action

This official CSW side event shared voices and testimonies from women in Afghanistan, and launched a report by the Afghan women led NGO FARAGEER highlighting the priorities of women in Afghanistan.



Women in Afghanistan are almost completely erased from public life, with the most recent decrees requiring windows facing areas used by women to be blocked. Many women face severe mental health issues and severe hunger, but very limited aid is available; in addition to education, women are excluded from healthcare and media. The FARAGEER report also underlines that women live in fear of the morality police, which harasses women and arrests women on minor breaches of the virtue laws, and also exerts control by punishing any men associated with women deemed to have broken laws. This is increasing pressure on men, which is increasing domestic violence and reducing women's influence within homes.

Speakers stressed that the issue of women in Afghanistan is global, in particular as gender apartheid is now written into Afghanistan's governance system, providing a dangerous precedent against international human rights.

The event called for the global community to move from words to action, holding governments to account and amplifying the voices of women in Afghanistan. It also urged governments to stop placating the Taliban and exerting pressure on the Taliban to restore women's rights.



### Upholding legacy of the Fourth World Conference on Women

This session reviewed the Beijing Platform for Action from a Zimbabwean and south African perspective. It highlighted the importance of the Platform, but emphasised that the work is not done, and requires intergenerational work to build a new generation of leaders, including investment in young women.

The session noted that the political Declaration marking the 30th anniversary reaffirms global commitment to gender equality. It stressed that this means reviewing legislation and championing women as leaders. In Zimbabwe, men also have a role to play as allies; this was emphasised as a key part of the solution.

## **Global and local feminists resistances: Challenges and learning**

*by Sonya McMullan*

*As we approach the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Vital Voices' parallel event at CSW took stock of the advancements made since the 1995 Beijing Conference. While we celebrate progress in gender equality, we must also acknowledge the persistent and evolving challenges that demand urgent attention.*



Climate change, technology-facilitated abuse, and human trafficking are among the most pressing threats facing women and girls today.

While climate change exacerbates existing gender inequalities young leaders play a critical role in addressing these gendered impacts by advocating for climate justice, implementing grassroots solutions, and pushing for inclusive decision-making spaces. Technology-facilitated abuse has escalated with the widespread use of digital platforms,

exposing women and girls to online harassment, cyberstalking, or the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. Conflict, economic instability, and displacement create conditions where trafficking networks thrive, making it imperative to address both prevention and survivor support through stronger policies, legal frameworks, and international cooperation. They highlighted achievements while addressing the emerging issues and their critical impact on gender equality.

- Take stock of the progress made since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- Highlight emerging challenges, including climate-related displacement, digital gender-based violence, and human trafficking.

- Explore innovative and collaborative strategies for advancing gender equality in these areas.

## Stories from the Frontlines: Strategies and Struggles across movement based organisations

by *Sonya McMullan*



This was an inspiring panel of members from Africa and Asia discussing the issues of gender equality. Leymah Gbowee had been in Beijing 30 years ago, as had many of the women in the room which was truly inspiration but they all were reflecting on this and how far women's rights had come and yet how far they need to still go.

There are still many cracks and they spoke about the need to challenge the power and the next 30 years belong to us, they belong to the woman. Peace is possible but that women need to organise and bring the voices together, including young women, all women.

Guerline Jozef spoke about her work on the Mexican border with women from her country of Haiti who had made it from there to the border and the first time she arrived there she was overcome with the thought of the journey and the stories of how they got there. She said "once you hear and see you cannot forget".

Cathy Albsia is a Human Rights lawyer from USA and she spoken about the push back, which has been a common denominator of the whole of CSW. She spoke about America and the illegal actions that are happening that there is an attack on people of colour and a quest to cease all funding for equality issues including, LGBTQI+, people of colour, rural, old people etc. they have stopped funding for equity, gender and race issues which is of great concern. There is also an attack on civil service there is a goal to traumatise the workforce but cutting the capacity of the government officials through funding, weaponizing justice, they have let out the White House rioters from prison and are now arresting student protestors. It is extremely worrying moving forward in relation to executive orders and the current administration are ruling by propaganda.

There was an interesting conversation about research and academia and the

importance of survivor voice. The voice of women needs to be heard and it is important that women are part of the research but in academia we become a subject of the research and are not seen as an expert in the area. Voice of woman need to be part of the research and we need to be named co-authors. The role of the researchers should be to co-produce the knowledge with the experts who are the survivors.

### **Ending Violence Against Women and Girls: Examining Challenges and Uniting Champions**



by Sonya McMullan

Violence against girls remains a pervasive issue globally, affecting millions worldwide. Violence includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, and is underlined by harmful “norms” and practices like child marriage and female genital mutilation. Violence of all forms against girls has long-lasting impacts on girls’ health, well-being, and opportunities.

To end violence against girls, it’s essential international organizations and civil society partners work alongside one another to protect and empower girls worldwide. By implementing and reinforcing social services and community-based support systems, safe environments for girls are created that help them heal, thrive, and reach their full potential. This event looked at complex and persistent challenges in addressing violence against girls worldwide, and discussed how partnerships such as that of Zonta International and UNICEF are crucial to advancing the needle forward and implementing innovative solutions. They discussed the multiple drivers and barriers of violence against girls and how partnerships directly impact progress for women and girls and what is being done on a global level by various NGOs and UN agencies. Speakers included representatives from Zonta International and also UNICEF USA.

## **Coercive Control and Litigation Abuse – The Criminalization Abuse = The Criminalization of Women and Gender Diverse People**

**by Sonya McMullan**

*This panel discussion on coercive control, litigation abuse, and the criminalization of women and gender-diverse people will explore how these issues contribute to gender-based violence and the unjust treatment of women and gender-diverse people in the legal system. This discussion aligns with the goals of Beijing+30 by advocating for legal reforms and policies that promote gender equality and protect women's rights. The panel will be interactive, encouraging audience participation and engagement throughout the session.*

This was a panel based with speakers from Canada, human rights lawyers and NGO's with specialism in sexual and reproductive rights. Within Canada the majority of women who are criminalised have been victims of abuse. Many woman are criminalised and are denied humanity. They have also experienced poverty, homelessness, substance abuse, and there are extra vulnerabilities if the victims are indigenous. They also discussed the colonial oppression of communities in Canada which has had an impact. The majority of women in prison are there for fraud, theft or trafficking of stolen goods and the common denominator is that they are victims and survivors of coercive control.

Most of these women in prison have also experienced intimate partner violence and there is a link between this criminalization and coercive control. 50% of the prison population in Canada are from the indigenous population but only 4% of the population in Canada is indigenous. There was a lot of discussion of the state as an actor in coercive control of women and how it creates a normative framework.

Within Canada they do not want coercive control legislation, well the majority of the human rights based lawyers and some women's groups – it is different for survivors. This was challenging to hear as someone from an organization who fought for coercive control to be embedded in legislation and we know there are always unintended consequences in relation to all legislation and I personally feel it outweighs the challenges because we have started to have a greater understanding of coercive control through public campaigns etc. this is important to raise awareness for the generations of the future.

## Home - Barbra Schlifer Commemorative Clinic

### C&S FORUM REPORT

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Criminalization & Survivorship project aims to identify and expand effective interventions and practices in addressing the criminalization of gender-based violence survivors. This report is from our first forum, held on June 12, 2024.

#### KEY DEFINITIONS

**Criminalization of Survivors:** Refers to when a GBV survivor undergoes punitive state action in response to them experiencing, defending, addressing or seeking protection from GBV. Criminalization includes not only experiences with the criminal legal system, like arrests, prosecution and conviction, but also systemic targeting and surveillance of persons from equity-seeking communities by the state's criminal and quasi-criminal institutions.

**Coercive Control:** Coercive control is a form of GBV and refers to patterns of controlling behavior including threats and attempts to humiliate and isolate a partner, and is a strong predictor of physical violence.

**Litigation Abuse:** When the abuser uses legal tactics to assert power and control, such as filing repeated applications in different forums and making lots of motions to try to delay the process.

#### KEY FINDINGS

Survivors can be criminalized through...

##### Mandatory Charging Policies

- Survivors can be charged in their interactions with the Criminal Justice System instead of being helped.
- Folks involved in sex work and those being coerced by their partners into criminal activity are criminalized.
- Immigration status, substance use, and experience of homelessness can also contribute to criminalization.

##### Strict & Gendered Bail/Parole Conditions

- Gendered conditions are pervasive: For example, requirements to report all relationships is a gendered aspect reflecting the infantilization of criminalized women.
- Failure to comply with these conditions exacerbates the risk of continued criminalization.

##### Contempt Orders

Survivors can end up incarcerated as a result of contempt charges which arise in their attempt to protect their children.

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#### KEY FINDINGS CONT...

**How do our current laws and policies effect the criminalization of survivors?**

- Service systems can be designed around a legal framework which forces survivor action, for example, to leave an abusive environment.
- Failure to comply with these measures could expose survivors to legal consequences, for example, a report to CAS for child neglect or endangerment. This could lead not only to criminalization, but to survivor children being taken out of their custody.
- Lack of health and social supports exacerbate challenging situations for survivors to make difficult choices while.

**We believe that the government should not criminalize coercive control. Why?**

- Criminalizing coercive control will increase the criminalization of survivors, especially those who are racialized or Indigenous and already over-incarcerated.
- It will not be properly understood or resourced, leading to further criminalization of survivors rather than protection.
- Coercive control is very difficult to prove because it often requires survivors to relive trauma - a serious challenge and significant request.

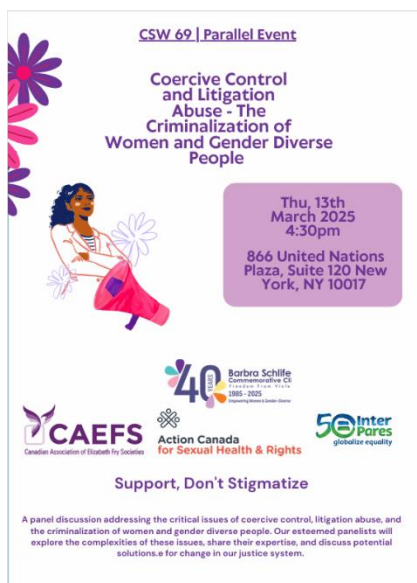
**Litigation abuse contributes to the criminalization of survivors by...**

- The perpetrator making false claims, including parental alienation and defamation, with the goal of instigating challenging rigorous experiences.
- NDA's being used as a way to silence survivors of sexual harassment from speaking out due to fear of being criminalized.
- Creating an excessive financial and emotional burden on the survivor, impairing their judgement and expectation of the legal system.
- The systems being complex, the behaviour is rarely called out as abusive.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Knowledge dissemination through communities of people committed to this work.
- Collaborative national approach across all GBV sectors to promote public education campaigns to combat coercive control.
- Alternative emergency response avenues.
- Enhanced police training on productive strategies to handle cases of GBV. Officers should be trained in understanding the root causes of violence and recognizing that victims may not always present their cases perfectly because of their experiences of trauma and various other factors.
- Increasing access and resources for restorative justice and court navigation support programs.





### So, what has changed?

This session focused on the US Equal Rights Amendment, which has been outstanding since the 1970s, and on identifying ways to resist backlash.

Speakers stressed that change is possible, and underlined that discrimination pays, highlighting higher health insurance premiums for women as one example. It was also noted that attacks on education contribute to maintaining the status quo, as education opens doors for women and encourages women to engage in public life. There was strong calls for women to resist this and start engaging in public life at all levels, as a key mechanism to initiate change, and show that women are interested in politics and public life, contrary to current and long standing rhetoric.

It was noted that about 70% of women support passing the ERA, and speakers called for women of all ages to mobilise, and strengthen women's vote as a key tool to demand change.

## **Digital Inclusion as a Catalyst for Gender Equality**

This NGO CSW Parallel Forum session focused on the digital divide,. It was led by Nigeria and took an African perspective, stressing that women have been left out of most revolutions, and cannot be left out of the digital one.

Speakers noted that this is vital to allow women to build businesses and opportunities, instead of products being replicated by global companies. It was noted Toms shoes took an African product, with no profits returned to those communities, and digital inclusion and education are essential to stop this, as well as enabling African communities to take control of African resources.

The event shared perspectives from young women and male allies, who highlighted that engaging and listening to daughters is particularly important, in order to break cultural norms. It was stressed that both investing in girls and supporting male allies is vital, particularly in Africa, as this can build a stronger based for long term gender equality.

## **Inclusive Social Policies to Achieve Greater Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and End Homelessness**

*by Siobhán Harding*

A recording of the event is available [here](#).

Women and girls constitute a significant and growing, though often less visible, percentage of homeless populations, and due to universal gender inequality, their circumstances demand additional attention and actions. This parallel event will explore how inclusive social policies can address the intersection of homelessness and the feminization of poverty, emphasizing that doing so is crucial to achieve the Beijing Platform for Action's goals. A variety of multistakeholder experts will discuss how the provision of gender-sensitive social protections can disrupt cycles of poverty, housing insecurity, and exclusion, particularly for women and girls experiencing homelessness and displacement.

Among the sponsors of this event is the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the UN.

Vision – future for every person to have the dignity of a safe, habitable, affordable

home and where human rights for all are safeguarded.

There was a commitment to address poverty in the Beijing Platform for Action but 30 years later women and girls are still disproportionately vulnerable to poverty and homelessness. They find themselves in undignified, insecure/unsafe conditions due to discrimination and entrenched gender inequalities and are denied the right to land and adequate housing and supports.

Women and girls can experience multiple types of homelessness including street, temporary accommodation and hidden homelessness including overcrowding, tenuous insecure situations – doing the best they can to keep kids off the street and out of shelters. Often they are not connected to the types of services they need to secure the type of housing they need because they are hidden homeless. Women and girls have particular needs including how to stay hygienic when they are having their periods and issues around increased exposure to sexual violence and abuse. More support is needed to move women and girls out of these situations.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and five years left to achieve the SDGs the progress on gender equality is too slow.

CSW agreed a political declaration recognising women and girls were at greater risk of poverty and that is an important statement. The declaration commits us all to eradicating extreme, multi-dimensional and inter-generational poverty. Explicitly references the feminisation of poverty and the need to understand the power and gender imbalances that need corrected.

Women and girls face many barriers including in education, owning fewer assets and the many compounding challenges which are the result of structural and systemic barriers – all member states have a role to play in addressing these challenges. Ireland has work to do here too. There is work to be done in recognising the many intersections between homelessness, gender inequality, poverty, gender based violence, housing availability – these aggravating factors which often arise out of gender inequality lead to further gender inequality.

Ireland is working across the world to try and help address these issues including providing funding for women fleeing abusive relationships through the Overseas Development Programme. An example is in Kenya where Ireland are supporting shelters for women who need to leave their homes due to gender based violence. The provision of temporary housing can be a lifesaver to these women but it needs investment and Governments must work to help provide this.

There is no magic solution to homelessness or ending gender inequality but there are fundamental things that need to be done better and Governments need to work with partners to try and address these issues.

In terms of the feminisation of poverty – the cuts to overseas development programmes are impacting on women and girls living in poverty – this work has become more challenging.

Housing and services work to end homelessness must be tailored to the specific

needs of those who are homeless.

We are hearing more about intersectionality now and an acknowledgement that all the forms of oppression are interwoven. If we don't acknowledge intersectionality then efforts to tackle inequality and injustice will be in vain.

Issues like gender based violence cannot be tackled without a gender lens.

Violent conflict, climate disasters, food, fuel and financial crises are now part of our landscape and they have more impact on those already suffering from multiple levels of discrimination – those who have contributed least to these harms.

Many of those women and girls who are homeless are out of sight and overlooked – living with abusers, trafficked, living in forced marriages – with a lack of resources to access affordable housing for themselves and their children.

Latest SDG Snapshot Agenda has shown the persistent challenges that hinder progress – child marriages – 1 in 5 girls worldwide is married before they are 18, 1 in 3 women experience physical or sexual violence and worldwide femicide – 140 women are killed every day by a family member.

When women are poor and become homeless they face many areas of discrimination – gender, economic situation, health, mental health, freedom from abuse and violence – then their children and economies suffer too.

Part of the solution is facilitating women's empowerment – more public investment in women's services and resources including universal education and health services. Better co-ordination of services including the provision of health services and partnerships and collaborations to help countries where large gender gaps and inequalities exist.

There are messages of hope despite the challenges and developments in technology can give hope for change. Everyone needs to be an advocate for these issues including Government the private sector and civil society.

Homelessness happens to people living at the intersections of poverty, gender, disability, race, etc. It makes it a challenging topic to solve and there is a need to tackle all the different issues that are happening to them – it's a complex issue to solve at scale.

It is not just the right thing to do to address the issues of poverty and homelessness but by providing housing for women and girls it makes economies stronger - the return on investment is measurable and strong.

### **Uganda**

Land is a critical resource across the world. In Uganda they are reliant on the land – 80% of the economy is agriculture based – land is the most important thing.

Challenges – strong cultural norms and traditional practices - don't allow women to inherit land, own their own home, use/control land as a generator of income.

Existing gender biases result in evictions, loss of resources, continued gender based violence. This was aggravated during Covid when they were locked at home with the perpetrators with no support.

While all this is going on all is not lost. Ever since Beijing there have been moves to take these issues seriously and there has been some impact in terms of mainstreaming gender in Uganda with women being allowed to participate and have some control over productive assets including land and housing.

The Ugandan constitution of 1995 (same year as Beijing) brought forward the Land Act and Succession Act which helped to recognise the rights of widows to maintain matrimonial homes for the rest of their lives or until they decided to leave the home.

However, there are still issues with policies which are written but when it comes to implementation a lot of leaders are not implementing as it should be.

Organisations are working to empower women and build capacity unlocking the potential of technology and partnerships – working with communities to reach out to key stakeholders to influence change. Advocacy campaigns to unlock awareness of rights so that communities are able to understand and defend their rights. Hand in hand with policy advocacy which ensures that communities have the information, capacity, linkages to speak for themselves and demand their rights.

Women don't have the control of the products/resources that come out of the land. When a man dies women are often evicted from their home. Work is ongoing through projects which introduce documentation of land claims so that women are able to defend their rights to land and enjoy rights to housing.

Need for more sensitisation around the issues for women and girls and those with disabilities in communities – nothing about us without us. Solutions must start from the community and be amplified. Need for encouragement of referral pathways and linkages, broadening digital access – women are great communicators so we can use technology to reach far and ensure our cry is heard worldwide.

While resources are reducing there is a need to encourage partnerships and collaborations both internationally and nationally – need for collective voices and social cohesion so that women can be support and fight for their rights.

Also important to work with men and local leaders – making sure everyone comes to the table together and speaking with a stronger voice on women's rights.

Domestic violence is a huge driver of women's homelessness – many countries domestic violence response is separate from their homelessness response which causes confusion in addressing this issue.

Women's rights to land are absent from the global conversations on homelessness.

There needs to be a human rights based approach to end homelessness addressing the issues of inequality, poverty, lack of access to social protection, decent work,

lack of access to decent housing, etc.

Widespread exclusion of women from institutions of power is the driving force behind policies and decisions that foster gender inequalities.

Women and girls face barriers to participation in society because of entrenched gender inequalities and reduced opportunities to be involved in power and decision making processes – with the exclusion of women from decision making tables.

Gendered barriers – unequal access to employment, education, healthcare and housing – when excluded from policies then it fails to address the issues they face – the systemic barriers they face are overlooked and that allows it to continue.

Women's over-representation in underpaid informal employment especially single mothers and marginalised women means they can struggle to afford suitable housing. Gender neutral policy making can also lead to less access to property through patriarchal systems.

Women must be empowered to address the issues central to their wellbeing. There is a need for the knowledge and experience of women and girls to address these issues. Need to include women at the decision making tables and it must not be tokenistic – they must be at the table for the policies and solutions.

There are vulnerable groups in Ireland too including the travelling community, migrants and refugees. We must have a policy of leave no one behind – reaching those who are the furthest behind first. As the UN we need to listen and keep up the fight.

For many women who are homeless – financial and digital access is limited or non-existent. Those who have access often don't have the tools at their disposal for reaping the benefits of tech advances.

The face of poverty is the face of a woman. If you look at poverty in any situation the face you see is women and children.

Stigma around poverty/homelessness – view that it's their fault that they've done something wrong rather than looking at the systems and the deep rooted systemic discrimination. A lot of the language used dehumanises people – they can be seen as less than, like they are stealing from Governments and this all contributes to the stigma and keeps people from accessing the help they need. Governments need to recognise that women and girls have not only unmet needs but untapped resources.

There is a need to be conscious of the language around policies and response mechanisms – getting away from the shame poverty nexus which has been an issue. The last thing we need for those who need services is for them not to access them. The key message is empowering people at grassroots level – all systems need to work together – working in silos will result in stigma. Needs to be an emphasis on community structures and partnerships with grassroots to all levels.

<https://www.wgehomelessness.org/membership>

### **Launching the Feminist Peace Roadmap: A Guide for Movement-Driven Policymaking**

This session launched a road map towards peace, building on grassroots feminist campaigns and from conversations held at the May 2024 Feminist Peace Summit.

Speakers stressed the importance of investing in peacebuilding and community development, as mechanisms that build sustainable safety. It was underlined that financial interests underlie militaristic as well as the focus on economic growth, and there was broad agreement that this needs to be called out. Collective action and organising were identified as the key focus for the future, building on a wide range of skills. It was noted that individuals may face different levels of risk within this, and solidarity is essential to take account of this and build inclusive movements.

### **Global Women's Alliances: A Case for Empowerment, Peace Building, and Advocacy for Rights**

This session explored the role of women in building alliances and connections across diverse communities to strengthen gender equality. There was a focus on bridging religious divides and engaging religious leaders, and strengthening support for gender responsive values.



Examples highlighted how women in North Africa have been able to improve women's access to education, through engagement with religious leaders. It was stressed that this work is long term, and must include a focus on building shared understanding and language. In some cases, success has involved using passages of sharia law to advocate for gender equality, which has acted as a basis for new conversations.

### **Unheard Voices: Amplifying Women's Experiences with Autism/IPDD in Developing Countries**

This session explored the needs of children on the autistic spectrum and their mothers, especially in Africa. The session stressed mothers' resilience, but underlined the need for better services for children, in particular girls.

Speakers focused on supporting mothers as teachers as well as advocates for their children, noting that mothers still often are held responsible for neurodivergent children, and are even ostracised in some places. It was noted that support for children is vital for both them and their families, and improved understanding and knowledge across society is vital to enable both better services and strengthened inclusion for neurodivergent children worldwide.



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## Day 5: Friday 14 March 2025

### **Feminist economic solidarity**

This session was organised by the Women's Budget Group and set out to identify ways to create a future economy that works for women.

The event built on the premise that current economics are based in capitalism, colonialism and patriarchy, which work together to oppress women. A scarcity agenda drives the idea of competition and separation, which prevents fair distribution of resources and creates disorder, including for example monetisation of natural resources, exploitative labour systems and displacement.



It emphasised the need to recentre economy on care, respect for the planet and people. This can effectively support not only women but communities as well; in rural Uttar Pradesh in India, the Gardens of Hope built by widows in the 1990s have created a supportive space for a group of very marginalised women, but also helped produce food for the villages where they are located.

The session also explored ways to implement feminist values in business, and embed gender budgeting in decision making processes. These were emphasised as tools to achieve the goal, and also support inclusive systems that enable women to start businesses and engage meaningfully with decision making at all levels, including in workplaces.

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## Innovative approaches in conflict related sexual violence: Ukrainian and other modern experience



This event highlighted women's experiences of sexual violence in conflict, and explored ways to effectively prevent further violence and secure justice for women. It was led by Ukraine, which emphasised that sexual violence is a weapon of war that scars women for life, and further affects their social inclusion, which is part of the intended impact of control.

The session stressed that funding for work on sexual violence in conflict is limited and addressing this is an urgent priority. The US funding cuts have been immensely harmful, with long term impacts on support for women as well as collating effective evidence.

One of the focus countries was Myanmar/Burma, where women's groups are working to document sexual violence, as a key step to enable accountability and justice, in a context where evidencing and documenting abuses is very difficult. It was stressed that ethnic tensions started with the end of British colonial rule in 1948, and conflict has been a feature since then, with sexual violence used in particular by military juntas to humiliate women and control communities.

Speakers stressed that speaking up for victims is vital at all levels, to enable pressure on perpetrators and create the potential for accountability as a central element of peacebuilding aligned with the women, peace and security agenda. It was stressed that recognising sexual violence as a war crime only happened in the 1990s, which shows that women can create progress, but a collective voice and continued advocacy is essential.

## Advancing the rights of Haitian women and girls: Haiti's transformation and beyond



This session highlighted the challenges facing women in Haiti, in the context of continued violence and a fragile political context. In Haiti, women have experienced systematic sexual violence designed to induce fear and exert control, while access to services and support is very limited for many. Survivors need urgent funding and support, especially as US funding cuts have had a severe impact on existing victim focused provision.

Speakers stressed that a greater role and influence for women in the transitional government and long term planning is vital for sustainable change. This includes changing the language around women and public life, and addressing stigma of violence. It was also noted that women in Haiti are a diverse population, and it is vital to involve and provide a platform for women of all backgrounds. This included a challenge to the women's sector, where in the past there has been a tendency towards exclusion of one group speaking on behalf of another.

Speakers also stressed that international intervention in Haiti has frequently been ineffective at best, and the current situation requires a new approach built on lived experience and needs identified with grassroots women, as well as new funding approaches. For example, funding has been used to build bridges in places where they are not used, while lack of access to clean water leaves women walking for miles every day. Local organisations have also been held to different standards when applying for funding, and this needs to be replaced with a robust, transparent and accountable, application based system.

## **Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence and Gender Equality: Current Issues and Solutions**

*by Sonya McMullan*

### **Hosted by the YWCA in Korea, Japan, Caanda and Worldwide YMCA**

The parallel event at CSW69 explored the escalating issue of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TfGBV), an increasingly urgent global problem that encompasses digital harassment, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, and deepfake sexual crimes. The session looked at the understanding of the current situation, an overview of international perspectives, and a detailed analysis of digital gender violence and its impacts on individuals and society.

It looked at how the current legal and social system is failing women and girls and exploitation is rife online. Social media platforms such as Telegram Chat rooms have a secret chat function and allow sexual crimes to continue and they are simply not being held to account.

There needs to be action to monitor the content and create greater gender equity and we need TFGBV programmes. Laws to combat grooming should be part of the Human Rights Curriculum within schools. Civil Society also needs to play its part.

#### **RiseUp! Guide for Young Women's Transformative Leadership**

A comprehensive guide for establishing and engaging in a #leadership training programme. Aimed to learn and build transformative leadership skills among young women, Rise Up! empowers young women to be decision-makers with ownership of their own rights and future. The guide was co-created by and for #youngwomen, and the model was designed to intentionally be adaptable and scaleable to local realities.

The guide includes powerful examples, critical information about leadership, global context, helpful notes for facilitators, information about relevant social issues, and more.

[RiseUp! Guide for Young Women's Transformative Leadership - World YWCA](#)

#### **YWCA Canada**

Did a survey on online hate in Canada

National Survey from 16 years old to 30 years old. Found high levels of hate speech online with certain people being targeted – 44% of young people said they had experienced it.

Extra vulnerabilities included Disability, Indigenous women and girls, LGBTQI+

Need a focus on digital wellbeing: bringing balance and boundaries to online engagement.

[Block Hate Report \(October 2022\)](#)

**They do workshops on:**

**Bystander**

**Resilience**

**Self guided materials available as well**



**World YWCA Storytelling Guide**  
[World YWCA's Storytelling Guide - World YWCA](#)

## 30 years after Beijing, survivors reflect and speak up

by Sonya McMullan

(Survivors of Abuse and the Beijing Platform for sex trade survivor promises, its impact, women and girls. The and a world in which no

Officer, Coalition Survivors), Cherie & Director, Survivor conversation will be Trafficking in Women). consisting of survivors – and to listen to the that

*is Violence.*

*have to numb yourself*

It is paid rape where you have to disassociate to keep yourself whole and have a different identity while you c



Coalition Ag  
Prostitution  
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moderated  
Importance  
the only one  
women. All  
*Sex Work is*  
*“There is no*  
*out to keep.*

They talked about the lack of programmes for women exiting prostitution and how trafficking and prostitution laws in place.

The discussion talked about the importance of the focus on those that buy – we need to look and focus on the common denominator. If we look at individual choice – what does that look like in prostitution, there is a false there?

Sex sells and someone is always going to pay.

Prostitution targets the most vulnerable people. There is a responsibility on movies, ie Hollywood latest mov

*Anora" (2024): This film, directed by Sean Baker, follows Ani, a sex worker, who elopes with the feckless son powerful family and their henchmen.*

This movie of which there are many including Pretty Woman, Hustlers, Showgirls etc do not help this narrative. For women exiting prostitution more support is needed to live outside of the exploitation, they feel no value b

## **Transforming Care: Progress, Challenges, and Future Directions in Men's Involvement in Care Work**

This official side event explored harmful gender norms and focused on ways to make care work more equal and involve men more effectively.

The session highlighted research by Equimundo, which shows that support for gender equality among young men is falling worldwide; however, research in the US also shows that men want to care for their children in particular, but don't know how to develop such a role.

The event linked current trends to a confusion of identity among young men, who often take refuge in traditional manhood ideals as a sense of purpose. It was stressed that support for men and normalising men as carers is essential for the future.

Rwandan programmes preparing men for fatherhood were highlighted as a promising model more globally. These programmes have increased men's involvement with their children, and have also reduced domestic violence, including violence against children. Introducing meaningful paternity leave has also been shown to make a difference.

Examples from Brazil and Mexico were also highlighted to show different approaches to increasing men's involvement in care. Investment in support programmes and programmes connecting fathers and children have been found to increase men's caregiving overall, and also support healthy relationships. However, it was stressed that care inequalities are systemic, and therefore continued legal, policy and practical interventions are needed as a holistic approach to sustain attention and change social norms.



## **Redefining inclusivity: trans rights in workplaces and public spaces**

This session explored how gender segregated environments have evolved over time, the dynamics that underpin laws purportedly protecting women, and highlighted mechanisms to develop alternative, inclusive practices.

The event focused on bathrooms as a key mechanism of othering and exclusion, and an expression of traditional power and hierarchies. It highlighted Taipei City in Taiwan as an example of good practice, where inclusive spaces are being normalised following focused advocacy by LGBTQI + organisations, and there is a focus on inclusive design.

There was broad agreement that including trans folks in designing public spaces is essential to create change. The ideal solution was single stall bathrooms, but it was noted that where funds or space don't allow for this, negotiation with diverse users is essential to figure out what is possible.



## **Women's labour rights, social justice and democracy**

This session explored solutions to address the impact of the current multiple crises on gender equality is dramatic, leading to a global backlash against human and labour rights, as well as an increase in racism, xenophobia, violence, discrimination and exploitation.. Speakers emphasised the need for resilience and ongoing support, as well as maintaining a focus on the future, for example rebuilding rights for women in Afghanistan despite the extreme present need. This is important to build women's opportunities to shape their future, and build gender responsive systems as the foundation for more inclusive societies and workplaces.

This event also highlighted collaboration, information sharing and collective action as central for achieving change worldwide.





## **Achieving Accountability through Cross-Regional Feminist Solidarity and Movement Leadership**

This session focused on roundtable discussions on how to increase accountability for peacebuilding initiatives, for international mechanisms and national governments. The key takeaway from the session, similar to many others, was that women need to have a stronger role in decision making, and civil society plays a crucial role in holding governments to account.

Speakers stressed that a stronger institutional role for civil society in implementing international law is key for accountability, particularly in conflict situations. This is important to enable civil society to develop relationships more systematically, and engage on more equal terms with international organisations, including UN bodies.

Speakers also stressed that women's rights organisations need to strengthen relationships and build collective practice. It was recognised that the sector is not homogeneous and some organisations have very different priorities or even differences, but speakers emphasised that working towards networking or collaboration is important to solidify the voice of the sector, and work more effectively to hold government to account.

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## **Empowering women through education and community action**

This event, organised by Business and Professional Women, explored ways to support girls and young women become financially independent and enter or start businesses, in line with the BPW ethos.

Internships were identified as a key mechanism to support young women, alongside mentoring and access to education. It was stressed that young women need role models, and internships a way to do this, while business also benefits from young women's skills and creativity.

## Day 6: Monday 17 March 2025

There were no events over the weekend. The delegation attended the second week remotely, and focused on events available online.

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### Education for Economic Empowerment – Afghan Women's Pathway to Resilience

This [official CSW side event](#) highlighted the virtually complete exclusion of women and girls in Afghanistan, and highlighted that this means more than half of people in Afghanistan are cut off from rights and dignity. More than 1.5 million girls have been completely excluded from education, while young women now constitute 3% of university students, down from 39% in 2021.



Speakers emphasised that access to education is closely linked to women's ability to participate in society, and stressed that lack of access to education increases risk of domestic violence, forced marriage and early marriage; these risks are compounded by the fact that more boys also are going without an education, as families see no future opportunities for their children. The situation was described as gender apartheid, with speakers urging for international pressure on the regime. Speakers emphasised this is vital to safeguard women everywhere, as Afghanistan is setting a dangerous precedent for removing rights of women, in a global context of rising anti rights movements.

It was stressed that the Taliban regime decrees are based on archaic traditions in Afghanistan and a very specific reading of sharia law, and not a universal understanding of Islam.

## Intersectionality and Systemic Barriers: Advancing Gender Equality with GBA Plus



This official virtual NGO Parallel Forum explored the gender based analysis policy introduced in Canada from a young people's perspective.

It was noted that Canada is committed to inclusive

policy making, and this includes an intersectional element in gender based analysis, known as Gender Based Analysis Plus. GBA Plus is a framework for assessing the impact of policies on different population groups, and is part of governance structures in Canada and has been in place since 1995. Over time, intersectionality has become part of the tool, and it has been compulsory for budget bids since 2018.

Speakers stressed that access to data and improved data collection are vital to meaningfully implement the policy, and that it has influenced decision making. This has particularly been the case in recent years, and built on strengthening government capacity to undertake GBA Assessments are now published. It is also linked to environmental impact analysis; however, focus is on people, and eg. on exploring how migrant women can engage in roadbuilding.

It was stressed that intersectional analysis is vital, as 25% of Canada's population is racialised, and is expected to grow to 40% by 2040. Lived experience is included alongside statistical data, and this was stressed as vital for effective results. Data availability is key, as is commitment of Ministers and decision makers, and this is a key area for development.

### Pathways to ensure women's equal access to health

This virtual session emphasised access to healthcare as a core element of social inclusion and gender equality. It took a specific perspective on marginalised women and stressed that across the world, women and children typically pay more for healthcare than men, and as a result, women are dying due to a lack of healthcare.

Speakers also underlined that current systems contribute to entrenching inequalities, between men and women and social groups. It was emphasised that women must be at the heart of designing inclusive healthcare systems, which also must be able to take an individualised approach to patients.

It was stressed that setting the right indicators to monitor a healthcare system, or any system, is vital, as this sets the focus for performance. Collecting data is also vital, and speakers noted that in many countries, involving the private sector is vital to access the investment needed to improve access to services for women.

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## Turning pledges into action: Operationalizing the Pasay Declaration on Women, Peace, and Security

This [official CSW69 side event](#) highlighted the importance of turning WPS declarations into action. It stressed that there is a major gap between words and action, which must be addressed, particularly in the current global context where peacebuilding is increasingly marginalised.

Speakers emphasised the need to build structures and systems that centre women from the start, and noted that meaningful WPS action can't be retrofitted in. There needs to be a focus on engaging civil society, and building from grassroots women's experiences to ensure work on WPS is inclusive. The Ambassador of El Salvador to the UN stressed that transgenerational trauma is a real issue in many post conflict societies, and must be addressed specifically, to prevent and/or a cycle of conflict. The Ambassador also stressed that centralising, earmarking and mainstreaming funding for WPS in budgets is the only way to secure progress, as 'action plans without funding are just empty words'.

The Slovenian representative stressed that the WPS agenda includes power as a key element, and underlined that the focus should be on normalising leading national roles for women, rather than striving for accolades for achieving the first woman in a specific post, as was the case when Slovenia appointed a woman as the head of its military.

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## The Big Family Breakfast: For All Families, in All Their Diversity

by Sonya McMullan

Hosted by the [Global Campaign for Equality in Family Law](#) sidelines of #CSW69!

*The Big Family Breakfast is an uplifting, positive, breakfast networking event to introduce the GCEFL and our intention to work on popularising 'diversity of families' in conversations and campaigns about family law and reforms. We want to find out what 'family' means to you, and in your communities, countries and causes. Let's have a chat!*

*The Global Campaign for Equality in Family Law is led by a committee of 8 women's rights, human rights and faith-based organisations: Equality Now, Musawah, Act Church of Sweden, UN Women, FEMNET, CLADEM, Muslims for Progressive Values (MPV), Women's Learning Partnership (WLP).*

The main issues of the campaign are:

### **Advance gender equality**

Achieving equality in the family is a vital step towards realising equality in society. The reform of family law will pave the way for gender equality nationally and globally.

### **Defend human rights**

To attain equality in the family for all women and girls, family law must be recognised as a priority human rights concern, at an international, regional and national level.

### **Transform power relations**

Improvements in legislation and policy are necessary, but not sufficient. Transforming gender

and power relations is critical to challenging inequality within families.

Family is considered the foundational unit of society and is often associated with closely held beliefs about culture, religion, and tradition. This has made family law among the most intractable areas of legal reform.

Opponents frame attempts to reform family law as a threat to a group or culture's identity, using religion and tradition as a way of upholding discriminatory laws and practices. However, while the right to culture and religion are human rights, they cannot supersede a person's fundamental right to equality.

Without equality in the family, we cannot have equality in society. Discriminatory family laws put women and girls at a marked disadvantage to achieving their full potential, inhibiting their educational attainment, economic participation and opportunity, health and survival, and political empowerment.

Unequal family laws don't just impact the individual, they also impede economic prosperity and sustainable development at a national and global level. Research findings are clear – gender equality is good for the family, for society, for the economy, and for a country's prosperity and wellbeing.

What is needed now is the political will and courage to push for reform in an area of law that is entrenched in male power and privilege. It is also crucial that laws recognise the diversity of families and promote inclusion and non-discrimination.





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## Healing Together: Advancing Trauma-Informed Care for Gender Equality and Survivor Empowerment

by Sonya McMullan

Trauma-Informed Care for Gender Equality and Survivor Empowerment, focuses on the transformative power of trauma informed care in addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG). As part of the Beijing +30 agenda, this session underscores the critical need for trauma-informed approaches to advance gender equality and eradicate systemic violence. Ilitha Labantu's pioneering clinical programs and Building Bridges Initiative serve as exemplary models of localized solutions with global applicability. The event brings together funders, activists, ministers, and international stakeholders to exchange insights, propose strategies, and strengthen commitments to trauma-informed care as a pillar of the global gender equality movement.

### Background:

Trauma-informed care remains essential to fostering healing, resilience, and empowerment for survivors of VAWG. Despite the global recognition of the Beijing Declaration's survivor-centered approach, significant gaps persist in the implementation of comprehensive support systems. Ilitha Labantu bridges these gaps by providing culturally relevant psycho-social interventions and addressing systemic barriers such as poverty, cultural stigma, and lack of education. Rooted in

the African context, the organization's programs integrate physical, emotional, psychological, and social dimensions of healing. The CSW69 theme provides an opportune moment to spotlight the role of trauma-informed care in addressing VAWG and achieving gender equality. Ilitha Labantu's contributions offer actionable insights for advancing the Beijing Declaration's principles and inspiring global replication.

**Objective:**

- Highlight the critical role of trauma-informed care in addressing VAWG and achieving gender equality.
- Showcase Ilitha Labantu's clinical programs and Building Bridges Initiative as models for trauma informed interventions.
- Facilitate knowledge sharing on implementing trauma-informed approaches across diverse cultural and systemic contexts.
- Foster global partnerships to scale trauma-informed care.
- Engage funders, activists, and ministers in driving systemic change through collaborative action.

**Event Focus:**

1. Trauma-Informed Care as a Pillar of Gender Equality:

- Exploring its role in fostering healing and resilience for survivors of VAWG.
- Addressing systemic barriers to implementing trauma-informed interventions.

2. Ilitha Labantu's Contributions:

- Showcasing culturally relevant psycho-social interventions and the Building Bridges Initiative.
- Sharing lessons from grassroots efforts to advance the Beijing Declaration.

3. Engaging Stakeholders:

- Encouraging collaboration among governments, international organizations, grassroots entities,
- and funders.
- Proposing strategies to bridge local practices with global policy frameworks.

**Panel Structure:**

**Keynote Statements: Hon Minister South Africa**

**Panel Presentations:**

1. Ella Mangisa – Executive Director Ilitha Labantu  
[Gender Based Violence South Africa | Ilitha Labantu | Cape Town](#)
2. Caryn Dasah – Executive Director Hope Africa Cameroon
3. Dr Tirhani Mangayi – Program Manager GBVF Response Fund South Africa
4. Helene Forsberg – Executive Director Women's Council Denmark
5. Sherna Alexander Benjamin – Executive Director Trinidad and Tobago

This event was extremely inspiring and again I felt the connection between South Africa and Northern Ireland having spent many sessions now with women who are working in VAWG services across South Africa, the challenges they face in such adversity in a country coming out of conflict but with such high levels of violence still in existence and such high levels of femicide, the highest in the world.

The discussion was around trauma informed practice and approaches to GBV. There were discussions again about access to justice, the armed conflict and how domestic and sexual

abuse happened during that time but continues.

Through progress in programmes there is crisis intervention and specialized care but it is not reaching everyone. There are issues around strengthening community based responses and holding perpetrators to account.

Mental health trauma informed practice has led to better community led interventions but the trauma care needs to reach those most in need especially within rural and harder to reach areas.

It has been helped by GBV laws increasing but there is a call for mandatory Trauma Informed Practice for legal, medical and all workplaces.

One Stop Centres are critical and there is a need to expand shelters, 60% of women are killed in their homes and there is no safe space. Legislation needs to change so men are removed from the home and women can stay. The Gender Based Violence & Femicide Fund in South Africa is delivering concrete results but it will take time and continues commitment and resources to reduce the high levels of femicide, domestic and sexual abuse that continues in such high levels in South Africa.

Ilitha Lababtu: People Who Care About People







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## **Justina Mutale Fundation Parallel Event Raising Female Leaders: Empowering Women and Girls to Lead Beyond Beijing +30**

**by Sonya McMullan**

This CSW69 Parallel Event focused on advancing female leadership through structured education, training, mentorship and measurable activities, ensuring that women and girls are not only part of the conversation, but actively positioned as architects of change by equipping them with the necessary leadership skills.

The context note states that 'As we mark 30 years of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with five years remaining until the 2030 deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), there is an urgent need for a strategic, data-driven approach that tracks progress and ensures tangible outcomes'. Organised by the Justina Mutale Fundation in partnership with the National Alliance of Women's Organizations (NAWO); the United Kingdom Civil Society Women's Alliance (UKCSWA); and Hands Across Philadelphia, this session aimed to go beyond theory and explored practical pathways, mentorship structures, and skill-building initiatives that equip women and girls to lead in today's rapidly evolving world.

Through this intergenerational dialogue, speakers and participants examined what it takes to

build a leadership pipeline; identifying key interventions such as mentoring, coaching, skills development, and policy advocacy to create long-term change that can shape a sustainable and equitable future.

The event incorporated the launch of the Foundation's Powerlist of 100 Iconic Female Leaders.



### Protecting Her Future: VITAL Insights on HPV Vaccination for 9-Year-Old Girls in Nigeria

This session explored uptake of vaccines, and specifically the HPV vaccination for young girls, in Nigeria. There was a specific focus on communications and achieving community level trust, and it was stressed that information shared by trusted sources helps increase vaccine uptake.

The session described social media and other communication campaigns implemented by Western led organisations. It highlighted that using social media influencers proved useful in Nigeria, as did engagement with pharmacies. It was concluded that investing in communication is cost effective in terms of protecting health, and noted that while access to online platforms is limited for many women in Nigeria, a cascading effect has been noted, as those with access can share information and open up discussion.

## Day 7: Tuesday 18 March 2025

### Feminist Approaches to Justice: Beijing+30 and Justice for Women and Girls

This event explored the concept of femicide and approaches to addressing gender within the justice system. It highlighted that there are significant gaps in this worldwide, and while the Beijing Platform for Action contributed to action on definitions by the UN, a more systematic approach is still needed.

The event highlighted Latin America as the global leader in addressing femicide; Costa Rica introduced femicide as a specific crime in 2007. There are no low income countries with such legislation, and among high income OECD countries, only a minority has introduced laws that specifically cover femicide.

Speakers emphasised that urgent action is needed, including a universal definition, systematic data collection and wider global action to address gender based violence.

The slide is titled "Progress by the United Nations" and features the UN logo. It contains the following text:

- 2018 – The UNODC published its first unprecedented report to compare the extent of femicide and feminicide globally (released updates in subsequent years, including 2023).
- 2022 – After extensive global consultations, UNODC and UN Women presented a statistical framework to include femi(n)icide in the International Classification of Crime for Statistical Purposes (ICCS).

Below this, there are two numbered points:

- (1) Aimed at providing a standardized definition of femicide that can be used to collect data across communities, regions, and countries.
- (2) Identifies 10 characteristics or contexts that can be used to identify gender-related killings of women and girls.

The slide also includes a small image of a handprint and logos for CSULV, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, and CROIA. At the bottom, it says "END VIOLENCE" and "2019 Femicide Study".

The slide shows a diagram with 10 yellow circles arranged in a grid, each containing a number from 1 to 10. The circles are connected by lines, forming a network. The text below the diagram reads:

10 characteristics or contexts that can be used to identify gender-related killings of women and girls.

The slide also includes the UN logo and logos for CSULV, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, and CROIA. At the bottom, it says "END VIOLENCE" and "2019 Femicide Study".

## **Feminine Narratives: The Role of Women in Peacebuilding in Colombia**

This virtual NGO CSW session explored first hand experiences of women in Colombia, where a peace process has been evolving for a number of years, following peace agreements between the Colombian government and armed groups.

It was stressed that while women have been playing an important role in the peace process at national level, the situation is more mixed at ground level. Women's lives have been significantly impacted by violence, and many have had direct experience of violence against themselves or their families. Speakers stressed that sharing stories has been vital for women to process their experiences, and a number of methods, including practical and concrete activities such as cooking, have been used to assist with this. Music has also played a big part, particularly in work with young people.

Speakers emphasised the importance of reconciliation and addressing trauma, as a mechanism to build both gender equality and sustainable peace.



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## **Learning by Leading - Pathways for Young Feminist Voices in Policy & Advocacy**

This session highlighted promising mechanisms for young people to engage in policy making and advocacy, primarily from an Indian perspective. Speakers stressed that young people need opportunities to engage, and this includes capacity building and mentoring to understand often complex decision making structures.

There was a strong emphasis on creating safe spaces for young people to engage, in the context of increasingly limited civil society space in many countries. Speakers stressed that safe space includes understanding when and how to focus on women only spaces, and when to include and develop networks with organisations involving men. There was a discussion on the concept of negotiating space and participation, and it was stressed that young people in the Global South

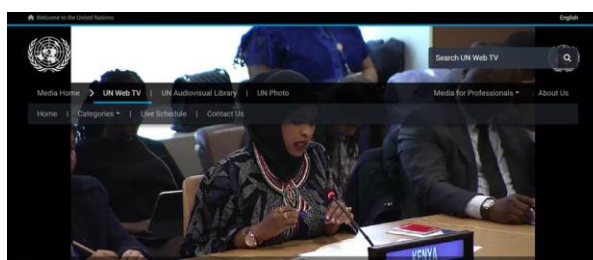
often have to negotiate their role in society on an ongoing basis, in light of the complex social norms and demands on their time. This is particularly true for LGBTQIA+ and disabled people, who need specific protections to enable them to participate safely and without discrimination. This starts with inclusive language and equitable access to support services, including healthcare and inclusive facilities.



## Actions in Support of Rural Women and Sustainable Development

This official CSW69 side event explored the critical role of women's empowerment (SDG 5) in building sustainable food systems and advancing climate action, a key to realise the ambition of SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and to propel climate action (SDG 13) forward. The event focused on Africa, and emphasised that supporting rural women in Africa is one of the key solutions to sustainably harness the significant resources available in Africa.

The event stressed that despite undertaking significant food production work, rural women are overrepresented among people in food insecurity, which in turn traps women and families in persistent poverty. Speakers underlined that collective action is required to support rural women, including through education, improving access to infrastructure, and addressing norms such as traditional practices that exclude women from land ownership.



Speakers highlighted a range of solutions, from improving access to education to improved access to care and public private partnerships, in particular in the technological sector to strengthen skills and access to jobs. Addressing climate breakdown was also identified as a priority, as impacts hit women first and hardest, from increasing their risk of violence to losing livelihoods. There was broad agreement that

strengthening women's voices in decision making also will contribute to improving conditions for rural communities, through building opportunities for women to develop a way out of poverty.

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## **Turning pledges into action: Operationalizing the Pasay Declaration on Women, Peace, and Security**

**by Siobhán Harding**

This parallel event, hosted by the Centre for Social Research (CSR) and the Alliance for Cyber Trust and Safety (ACTS), focused on advancing global trust and safety in digital spaces. It highlighted innovative solutions to address online harms faced by women and children, amplify voices from the Global Majority, and foster collaborative strategies for safer digital communities. The session involved global experts, practitioners, and policymakers to discuss actionable insights, best practices, and partnerships aimed at building inclusive and secure online ecosystems for all.

### **Key Themes of Discussion**

- Global Majority Perspectives on Digital Safety – Examining region-specific online threats and solutions.
- Enabling Collaborative Solutions – Fostering cross-sector partnerships to address online harms.
- Policy and Regulation – Understanding the role of governments in ensuring safer digital spaces.
- Technology and Safety by Design – Exploring how platforms can integrate trust and safety measures proactively.
- Empowering Communities – Strengthening digital literacy and online resilience through education and advocacy.

The Alliance for Cyber Trust & Security (ACTS) is bringing together civil society, academia and policy makers who are dedicated to a safe and trusted digital world.

It is an important time to talk about resilience. Digital Rights organisations in the world are facing funding cuts and restrictions in the civil space. Those working in internet freedom, digital rights and online safety are often the first to be targeted. Many started with nothing and are seeing shrinking resources and increased threats – they need to think about how to sustain their work and protect their communities.

One of the biggest risks is over-reliance on single funding sources often from international donors. There is a need to explore alternative models including local philanthropies and finding ways to sell expertise to stakeholders. The more independent they are financially the stronger they will be towards external pressures.

Need to build more resilient networks/communities – solidarity is the key. Need to strengthen local/regional alliances and across movements including feminist, climate, etc. Digital rights are a cross-cutting issue.

The work we do comes with risks – online attacks, burnout. We need to invest in it and in our people.

Need to think about advocacy in restrictive spaces – the rise of the right wing is everywhere. Many Governments are hostile to the work we do. We need to be smarter, to work quietly where necessary, leveraging the international mechanisms, using local networks, informal networks and alliances.

These are difficult times but there is resilience in the movement – we survive because we adapt – continue to fight for this work.

Digital technology provides the potential to transform societies/economies but with this promise comes great responsibility. It must serve humanity by being governed by the principles of respect and human rights.

Concerns raised about human rights slowing global developments. International frameworks are being developed with regions respecting their needs and upholding the principles that protect human dignity.

Diplomats can have convening power of bringing countries/perspectives together to ensure there are no gaps.

Globally the rise of mis-information and harms on the internet and online. Trying grapple with the problem of regulation at the same time preserving freedom of speech/expression. We have been grappling with how to make people safer for a long time. The responsibility versus liability debate. Platforms have a responsibility to take action. Europe is different from India in terms of freedom of speech and it works differently in both jurisdictions.

Work is needed with platforms to ensure they have the right processes to deal with problematic content.

ACTS is the first and only coalition led by grassroots organisations in India. Look at a whole of society approach – bringing in law makers, policy makers, parents, teachers, children.

We do not see much in terms of comprehensive discussions on this – involving Governments, platforms and people. All the stakeholders need to come together to talk about these issues. Tech is the future – women need to be at the forefront to shape it – they need to be sitting at the table but at the minute a lot of this work is in silos. Very little discussion about gender. People are unprepared using digital platforms – they just jump into it but are often not aware of the risk factors with tech. Education is very important – these platforms need to be help accountable.

Looking at the guardrails – laws – do need to sit down regionally and look at what's possible – share with each other – lot of regional/global meetings to share what kind of legal framework is needed to protect users.

Lot of tech companies are shirking their responsibility for safety – no more fact checkers or safety forums. There is a global dip in community meeting forums – need to emphasise that companies need to take that responsibility.

Not all the regulations from different jurisdictions have the same intention to regulate platforms. Laws are being used to suppress free speech and the voices of journalists and

activists.

AI - platforms must be transparent on policies and implementation. AI moderation function – not many have insight into this – the criteria for content removal and data sets that are being used. Need to allow external stakeholders to audit these platforms and allow them to be audited.

Need to see the cycle of AI design – who is doing this – are marginalised communities being included? Is it mostly people in the global North doing this work leaving more marginalised communities out?

Robust appeal mechanisms are needed – users should be able to access clear, efficient appeals processes where content is removed, etc so they can seek redress.

AI is not the solution for everything. Governments are in an AI race – developing and positioning in the best market for investment – you can't do it all without humans in the loop. AI can handle large volume content – but human moderators are still important. A hybrid approach is better where humans can make the final decisions – to work against any unjust censorship. In India and Pakistan the cultural context is so nuanced – there is a need for human intervention here.

There is a need for openness and accountability in digital governance. Human rights should not be seen as barriers to innovation but as safeguards. There are challenges upholding human rights values in the digital age. Big human cost/impacts around AI where it is not properly regulated.

Improving AI governance example – impact assessments for AI systems – to ensure that bias/discrimination is carefully considered before deployment.

UN High Level Advisory Body on AI – human rights based principles – published recommendations on AI governance. UN has a key role in shaping AI governance globally. Need to have responsible AI development. OECD are doing work on responsible AI principles and the Government of India are looking at responsible AI adoption.

Governments have a job to do to make sure regulations are introduced. There is a need to do research on the impact on labour – need stakeholders and civil society on the intersection of AI and labour as it will replace some jobs. AI will create jobs too – can't underestimate the importance of humans.

The UN brings a lot of value around AI in terms of global governance – it's the only place where all states have a seat at the table. Now only some Governments are shaping these conversations – the UN is the only space where globally countries can negotiate with other countries who are calling the shots.

The UN has problems but it is the only place where all member states can be at the table – including all the narratives – there is no alternative where everybody is represented. There is need to build more global coalitions – including in the global South – so that everyone can participate. ACTS is bringing all the players together in civil society space so that their voices and experiences can be used.



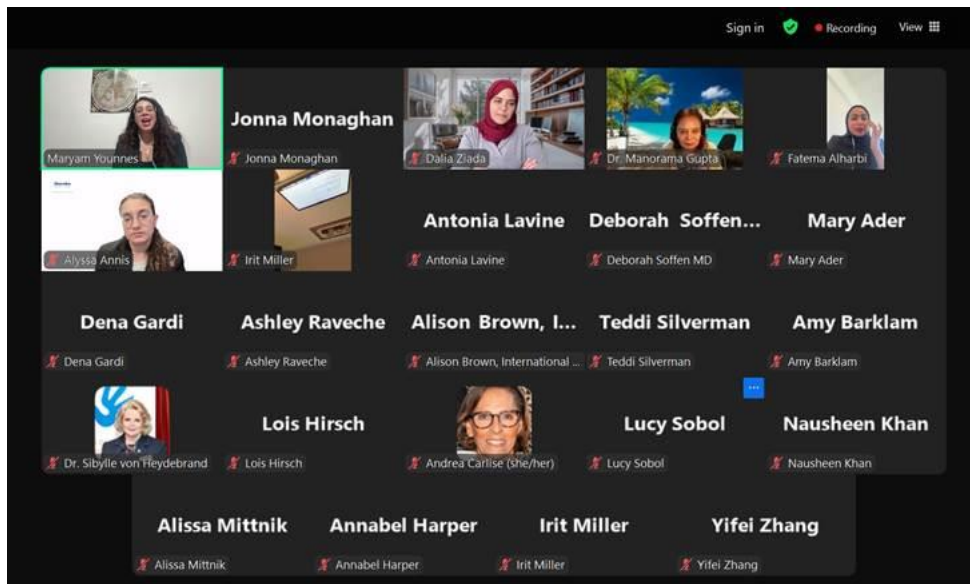
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## Young Women’s Leadership in Shaping a Peaceful Middle East Together

This virtual NGO CSW side event highlighted work with young women across country and religious boundaries in the Middle East. Speakers included Israeli, Lebanese, Egyptian and Bahraini women, many of whom are leading figures in the women’s movement in their home countries and are building dialogue between Arab and Israeli people through a joint movement known as Sharaka.

Speakers stressed that building understanding of everyday life, beyond conflict, is vital to build peace in the Middle East, and changing the narrative on the Middle East internationally. The movement is building on shared similarities, such as a cultural focus on food, stories and family, to show there are factors that unite; this is new to many people in a region where public messaging often is very one sided. There was also an emphasis on building opportunities to share personal stories in safe spaces, as a mechanism to address trauma and build foundations for a multi cultural future. Women have also used social media to share messages of peace, and emphasised that this is a potentially powerful tool to counteract extremist views and positions.

Speakers expressed optimism that the wider region can achieve peace on the basis of ongoing developments, including the newly elected government in Lebanon. However, there was very limited discussion of the situation in Gaza, and it was difficult to assess the wider context that speakers represent; the organisation was organised by an American organisation supporting Jewish women.



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## Global Insights on Advancing Women's Leadership

This session explored the role of education in supporting, building, strengthening and encouraging women’s leadership. It focused on experiences in universities in the UK, and noted that there is much more to do in the UK, as well as globally. However, existing programmes have

contributed to building women's capacity, and through universities' international links, supported networking across a number of countries.

The event focused on the Aurora leadership programme, which has to take positive action to address the under-representation of women in leadership positions in the sector. There was concern for the long term of this programme, in light of overseas aid cuts, and there is currently no certainty. However, it was noted that the Aurora programme is still recruiting strongly, and it was felt that work in this area will continue; the Aurora programme is currently launching in Ireland and has had a positive start. It was stressed that the focus must be on universities themselves, and securing ongoing support for women's leadership programmes.

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## Day 8: Wednesday 19 March 2025

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### **Women with Disabilities Re-imagining the Future**

This session explored the experiences of disabled women worldwide, and underlined that many disabled women face severe exclusion and discrimination within their communities. This includes doubting women's capacity to work as well as raise children, and has a significant impact on the lives of many disabled women. In addition, lack of adjustments in the workplace means that many disabled are unable to work, and therefore are classified as dependent in many countries, excluding them from access to social protection and other types of support.

Speakers emphasised that both AI and climate change is affecting disabled women in specific ways, which must be taken into account in advocacy for change. In particular, research into climate change must be intersectional and engage disabled women, to ensure the impacts are fully understood. It was also stressed that data is important to improve policy making, and that significant work is required to improve data collection to ensure it is equitable and inclusive.

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### **Technology-facilitated Gender-based Violence: What Can Law Do?**

This virtual CSW NGO Parallel Forum explored updates and changes needed to legislation to more effectively address technology facilitate gender based violence. It emphasised that most forms of domestic abuse involve elements of technology facilitated violence, including control of use of phones, email, banking apps and so on, while stalking can happen entirely online or be facilitated by technology such as tracking apps. It was noted that remotely controlled appliances

and systems in the home can be used as a form of domestic abuse, from controlling door cameras to setting heating either unbearably high or low.

Speakers highlighted new forms of online abuse, which need new responses from the judicial system. This includes catfishing, and also new forms of AI and virtual reality based violence, such as simulated sexual acts or abuse of an online persona or avatar. It also includes addressing new forms of hate speech on social media, which increasingly takes the form of making abuse seem humorous, such as turning off air conditioning in hot weather.

Speakers noted that legislation is needed to reassure victims and survivors, as well as parents and institutions such as schools, which may have to deal with instances of online violence. However, it was noted that legislation alone is not enough, and for example technology companies and digital platforms need to do more, in particular to provide immediate support for victims, and especially victims trying to leave abusive relationships. Similarly, the judicial system must adapt to new forms of abuse and respond effectively and sensitively to victims.

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### **Women's Role as Peacemakers in Armed Conflict: Lessons From Africa**

This virtual NGO CSW Parallel Forum shared experiences of women living in conflict and war in Africa and their priorities for the future. Speakers shared personal stories of displacement, fear and trauma, and it was noted that across DRC, Sudan and Nigeria sexual and gender based violence are systematically used against women, who lose livelihoods and can be socially excluded as a result of stigma.

Women also stressed that currently, women are often excluded from peace processes, but speakers focused on hope for the future. A common thread was that women feel a strong connection to their home countries and regions, and their preference is always to stay and protect their communities; while this is not always safe, women continue to work for peace even in displacement, at a range of levels from family to international networks.

Speakers emphasised that women are able to build peace, and stressed that bringing women together is vital for sustainable peace in Africa. In Goma, women hold many offices as men have left, and this has built women's capacity to lead and take decisions, which is central for creating change. It was also stressed that education and economic rights must be part of peace agreements, as this is a foundation for equality.

UNSCR 1325 was highlighted as a basis for building inclusive peace across Africa. Speakers stressed that women are not passive victims but active leaders who have continued to support families and communities through extremely difficult situations, and need support to focus on the future. This is where the international community must come in, advocating for women in Africa and amplifying their voices, and also investing in gender responsive aid, education and reconstruction.

## **What works to advance Women's Land and resource rights - A lens through The Gender Transformative Approaches**

*by Siobhán Harding*

Stand for Her Land (S4HL) is a gender transformative approach, which seeks to actively examine, challenge and transform the underlying causes of gender inequalities rooted in discriminatory social institutions. S4HL is catalyzing a sustained, locally-led movement for women's land rights (WLR). This session will reflect on the experience and approaches of S4HL leaders across the globe, exploring learning of how S4HL Coalitions are transforming gendered power dynamics in decision-making within households, communities, and institutions; reforming discriminatory laws and implementation practices; and dismantling social norms, attitudes and behaviors that inhibit WLR while promoting those that strengthen WLR.

### **Background**

The Fourth UN Women Conference held in Beijing, China in 1995 established a well thought out Platform for Action as a launching pad for closing gender inequality and empowering women and girls for a just and sustainable world. Since then, any meaningful change to bridge gender inequality in the participation and leadership of women in all sectors has required shifting and erasing tightly held social norms and practices, that otherwise would make it difficult to allow progressive change. As example, even among very under-resourced households in rural communities, one is able to identify where both girls and boys are encouraged to pursue basic education. However, this is a unattainable goal without addressing deeply held beliefs about who has the right to education, and the environment that allows for that change in beliefs to occur.

Unfortunately, 30 years since leaders convened in Beijing, the ownership and control of land, properties, housing and natural resources across the world is far from achieving any meaningful progress. This body of work remains much under resourced and has not attracted significant global effort to address the problem. We cannot achieve gender equality and a more just and equitable world without confronting the land and gender issue. It is for this reason that the Stand for Her Land (S4HL) Campaign was established in 2017 as a vehicle to rally actors from local to the international level with an aim to close the gap between progressive laws, policies, and standards that ensure women's equal rights, and the reality of women on the ground to benefit from those rights. S4HL does this by addressing the role negative social norms, practices and behaviors play as major barriers for the achievement of gender equality in land and natural resources ownership and control. In essence, the work of S4HL contributes to the implementation of the Gender Transformative Approaches Framework.

### **Session Objectives**

This session, "What works to advance women's land and resource rights?" at the 2025 Commission on Status of Women (CSW69) will be led by the S4HL Campaign and will facilitate an interactive discussion to:

1. Understand the key concept of the Gender Transformative Approaches (GTA) Framework and how it can be used to advance women's land, property, housing and natural resource rights;
2. Learn key indicators that make S4HL a GTA which systematically advances gender equality and empower women towards gender equality through land, properly housing and natural resource rights; and
3. Provide a platform to share and build synergies between the campaign and other efforts to advance women's land, property, housing and natural resource rights.

Efforts are underway to dismantle the social norms that affect women's access to land rights. Initiatives on Securing Women's Land and Resource Rights (WLRR) through Gender Transformative Approaches (GTA)

Worked in 7 countries – Colombia, The Gambia, Niger, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Bangladesh.

The initiative is a useful approach but not a blueprint.

Using the Reach, Benefit, Empower, Transform Framework

Reach – include women in program activities

Benefit – improve women's wellbeing – requires more than reach

Empower – Strengthen the ability of women to make strategic life choices and act on them – beyond reach and benefit

Transform – change gender norms and attitudes on a larger scale – changing systems not women. Beyond empowering individual women or the household level – involves men, changes gender norms at the community and societal levels, addresses structural/institutional barriers, mobilising the power of the collective.

Being transformative – going under the surface to those societal values and behaviours that are sustaining the behaviours we see in practice.

What are GTAs?

Contested definitions but consensus that GTAs differ from other gender integration approaches in their design, implementation and intended outcomes.

- Address root causes of gender inequalities: policies, norms, underlying power relations
- Emerge from, and should be led by, local collective action and leadership
- Build trust, foster critical reflection; engage men and boys and influential norm holders
- Are context-specific, flexible and adaptive; use participatory and experiential learning methods; recognise complexity including intersecting forms of discrimination
- Explicitly support the safety of 'disruptors'
- Bring attention to our own politics and practice of power – ourselves and our organisations, networks, etc.

We can't always work to be transformative – just reaching women sometimes is all we can do. We use the Reach, Benefit, Empower, Transform Framework to identify the Goals, Activities and Indicators for the issues around women's rights to land. For example, in terms of Security of Women's Land Rights:

Goal – interventions to promote the importance of women having secure tenure rights

Activities – increase awareness/understanding of women's tenure (in)security

Indicator – No of women involved in awareness programmes

GTAs are not just about the reach/benefit but going beyond to build the agency of women and build transformative change.

<https://www.cifor-icraf.org/wlr/>

The Stand 4 Her Land Campaign came to life after the SDGs were signed.

Advocacy work has been done to get countries to put in place laws and policies to address the gender gap in land governance but not enough work had been done directly with grassroots women. They have first hand knowledge of the issues and now what needs to be done and the

solutions.

The Stand 4 Her Land Campaign is about the voice and agency of grassroots women who are at the centre of this work.

Ugandan Government now realise that they can't discuss anything about land governance without grassroots women. Working to ensure that men and boys (traditional leaders) are part of driving the change and it is part of their responsibility – that it is not just the burden of women and girls to close this gap.

Land is important to women's identity/heritage but also a productive asset – an important vehicle for their own capacity.

Campaign collects data and uses it for advocacy – the community led driven data is part of work to transform projects. Women are not just the beneficiaries of the work being done but considered as equal partners.

<https://stand4herland.org/>

Oxfam published its first guide to transformative leadership for women's rights in 2014 and work on land rights has benefited from this guide. Since 2019 they have incorporated this guide on land rights work.

Land has played a fundamental part in the story of colonial occupation and power struggles in many countries. Land is the key to a fair society based on equal sharing of land rights.

The patriarchy and social norms exclude women from land and discriminate against women.

Oxfam are working to ensure that women have influence of over land rights and have a say in the future to influence their land rights.

Example from Uganda – Outcomes from using the GALS in Land Rights Model:

Women small-scale farmers have become self-aware of their rights and duties about achieving their land rights while working with all members of their households. This has contributed to many women who have interfaced with this tool to start enjoying land ownership rights contrary to what was being practised in their communities.

Small-scale farmers, especially women, have developed negotiating capacity which they have applied in different areas of their life. Small-scale farmers have realised that they have the most solutions to their current problems; this has enabled them to implement sustainable strategies to increase their security on land and other resources for economic development.

Unlike other approaches, the GALS in Land Rights Model has created collaboration, respect and communication for win-win between members in both at households and community hence addressing gender inequality as an integral part of breaking cultural disparities and norms. This process has also created some multi-stakeholder consensus on the moral and business imperatives of promoting gender justice on land prioritising the needs and interests of the weakest and most vulnerable people in the community on land rights.

Throughout the implementation of the GALS in Land Rights Model in communities there has been an increase in meaningful women participation in engagement in public spaces with different duty bearers hence leading women to raise their unique voices on their need in their communities.

Land Rights are a source of power to women. We are confronting power and sometimes that is not easy – to demand land, to challenge land rights. Added to that the shrinking civil space where women are not invited to be part of decision making. Role of Oxfam to use its power to mobilise, shape the narrative and amplify the voices of grassroots women.

<https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/transformative-leadership-womens-rights-oxfam-guide>

Examples show clearly the practical nature of gender transformative processes – practical tools that can be applied to work in this area. The global to local nature of Stand 4 Her Land – transformation at local level and also system change at national and global level. Global level to

ensure a clear understanding and visibility of women's land rights movements.

Work highlights the priority of grassroots women's leadership which is critical to Stand 4 Her Land – women are involved in gathering the data, coming up with solutions and reaching the decision making tables.

Women and girls are more susceptible to drought and land degradation – they are the most vulnerable in communities and more susceptible to poverty. Women have first hand experience of managing land – they produce 60-80% of food in developing countries yet only 1 in 5 landowners are female – that's a huge injustice.

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### **The Refugee Women's Education Crisis: International Perspectives on Barriers for Displaced Women and Girls**

This virtual NGO CSW Parallel Forum event explored how host countries can effectively support refugee girls to access and engage in education. The key message was that girls need role models, and seeing women and girls from refugee backgrounds is vital for building confidence and motivation.

Speakers shared personal stories of displacement and education, and a common thread was that girls need encouragement and support to engage with education in host countries. While many refugee girls have been in school in their home countries, for others school is either new or something difficult to access, and girls may need support to build the confidence to engage, or support to secure family permission. In this context, engaging with other girls and people from the same country or region is very important, and should begin as early as possible when girls arrive in a host country.

It was noted that access to education in displacement camps is very difficult, but also important, for psychosocial support as well as learning. Investment in education and protecting education is vital as part of humanitarian aid efforts; however, it is important that education is tailored to the needs of refugee girls. This is vital to support girls rebuild their lives, and fundamental to enabling girls to integrate in host communities, as well as build a role as leaders, in adoptive countries or in their home communities, where they are able to safely return.

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### **The Role of National Gender/Women's Mechanisms in Implementing The Beijing Declaration & Platform for Action and Advancing Sustainable Development Goals**

This official CSW69 event explored how UN member states can institute and implement effective gender mechanisms, or statutory mechanisms designed to ensure women can formally engage in policy and decision making. The concept is central to the Beijing Platform for Action, and has been championed by the CEDAW Committee, which for example has repeatedly recommended that the UK should re-institute a mechanism, since the UK wide Women's National Commission was abolished in 2010.

The event provided an overview of why formal mechanisms are important, to ensure equitable engagement for women of all backgrounds. It was noted that implementation remains patchy

across the world, and that significantly more work is required to ensure equal contribution to decision making for women. However, examples of good practice such as South Africa were noted; in South Africa, a mechanism has helped ensure gender equality is on the agenda, and is helping build a focus, albeit slowly. A similar picture is emerging in other African countries; however, there was a discussion regarding whether clarification of the mandate set in the Beijing Platform for Action is required.

There was also a discussion on how to speed up progress to achieve gender parity in decision making. A number of ideas were outlined, from gender parity champions to structural quotas and other systems. It was noted that while structures may exist, implementation is lagging behind, and the focus must be on mainstreaming gender equality more widely, as a basis for building gender parity in decision making.

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### **Reaffirming UDHR and Beijing+30: Sex Workers Deserve Quality of Life**

This session explored the issues of sex workers and how extending full human rights to all workers could improve the situation for sex workers in the US. Speakers stressed that there currently are significant gaps, and that sex workers experience significant discrimination. Speakers also urged for a new debate on what a 'good human' is, and how this relates to workplace rights. Removing stigma was identified as the key priority, which would significantly strengthen access to services including healthcare, and help address discrimination and social exclusion.

There was a shared call for implementation of fundamental rights and protections for sex workers, specifically ending criminalisation where this is still in statute. Speakers noted that many sex workers also are involved in community organising, and this offers a basis for building awareness and implementing strengthened protections within the community.

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## Day 9: Thursday 20 March 2025

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### **No Child Left a Bride: Successes & Setbacks in the Global Effort to End Child Marriage**

This official side event explored effective solutions to child marriage, which after a period of reduction is again growing worldwide, above all as a result of deepening poverty, in particular in conflict zones where families may choose selling girls into marriage to afford necessities. Over 12 million girls are married before 18, and this is facilitated by either lack of laws, or exceptions to laws in countries across continents. A tendency towards more traditional rules also affects this; Iraq recently amended legislation to allow children aged 9 to be married in some circumstances. However, countries including Kuwait and Colombia have recently tightened legislation to only allow marriage at 18, without exceptions.

Speakers stressed that early marriage often ends girls' independent life, access to education and autonomy, including autonomous control over their bodies. Conversely, for each year a girl stays in education, the risk of early marriage reduces, and girls grow up to be more independent adults. There was broad consensus that action must focus on ending poverty and changing hearts and minds at community level; legislation plays a part, but cannot in itself end child marriage, particularly where implementation is lacking.

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### **Reclaim Families: A Feminist and Human Rights-Based Approach to Family Policy**

This official CSW69 side event explored families from a feminist and human rights based policy, and focused on how a more diverse understanding of families could be developed and implemented in policy to create a more inclusive and supportive family policy approach.

The event highlighted the wide range of family types recognised in law worldwide, including same sex and gender diverse couples and families, single parent families and intergenerational families, where for example orphaned children are raised by grandparents or other kin. It stressed that many families, and in particular LGBTQIA+ families, experience significant discrimination due to strict laws and social norms, and this has a severe impact on individuals, as well as children. It was noted that despite laws even banning same sex relationships, queer people do have children and families, and the stress can be enormous where couples can't live together or are forced to hide their relationship.

The event highlighted experience of a queer activist from Afghanistan who was forced to leave following the Taliban takeover, and is now living in Ireland with her sister and nieces. The speaker emphasised the importance of inclusive laws, and underlined that life in Afghanistan is dangerous for queer people, who are often directly targeted by the Taliban, but also face the risk of forced marriage from families. This is particularly the case for queer women, who are at the mercy of families and have virtually no decision making power.

The event stressed that equal marriage and a diversity of family types is compatible with human rights standards, and focus must be on implementing these standards to secure better conditions for all types of families.

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### **Promising Practices to Reduce the Harmful Impact of Imprisonment on Women**

This official CSW side event explored solutions to increasing imprisonment of women, often for minor crimes or even infringements such as non payment of crimes. Currently over 750,000 women are in prisons worldwide, and without action, this is predicted to increase to a million within the next few years.

The overarching context for the event was that women often are jailed for issues linked to poverty, homelessness and social exclusion, which are more effectively dealt with as social justice issues; this includes criminalisation of sex workers. A new report highlights that women receive jail sentences for non payment of fines significantly more often than men; in Ireland, 5.2% of women are in prison for this reason, which is more than double the rate for men.

Speakers emphasised that when women are in prison, families are in prison; there are 19,000 children living in prison worldwide. There was a call to urgently review incarceration practices worldwide, and to address the root causes of women in prison, with a focus on addressing poverty, social exclusion and stigma.

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### **The Refugee Women's Education Crisis: International Perspectives on Barriers for Displaced Women and Girls**

This event highlighted the role of rural women in food production and building a sustainable future. It stressed that rural women are a fundamental part of the rural economy, in particular in many communities in the Global South, but far too often go hungry themselves due to traditional hierarchies, and also due to lack of access to the most relevant knowledge and technologies. There was an emphasis on identifying ways to improve women's access to education, skills and information, including through networking and connecting with private sector organisations.

The event was organised in partnership with the private sector, which identified access to support with fertilisers and key equipment as central to improving rural women's role in agriculture, and also underlined the connection between education and increasing yields as well as family incomes.

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### **Women in Power and Leadership Accelerating Advancement Towards Gender Equity**

This virtual NGO CSW Parallel Forum explored mechanisms for women to advance leadership roles. It took a high level view, and highlighted the importance of building pathways for women to engage in public life, as a basis for gender equality. Speakers stressed that networks for women at all levels also are needed to enable women to speak up, gain and progress in leadership roles.

It was stressed that women need to stay confident and continue to work for equity and gender parity, despite the backlash. In particular, women must act, including voting and standing for election, and focus must be on building the movements and support mechanisms for feminists to win seats, at all levels.

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## Day 10: Friday 21 March 2025

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### **The destruction of the health system in Palestine: A lifeline in peril for women and girls**

This official CSW side event explored the situation of women and girls in Palestine in the humanitarian disaster that is affecting all of Palestine. It highlighted that more than 10,000 women have been killed in the Israeli attacks, including almost 100 in the attacks this week that ended the ceasefire.

Keynote speaker, the Palestinian Authority ambassador to the UN Feda Abdelhady underlined that women are dying also due to lack of healthcare and basic sanitation. Women are forced to give birth in unsanitary conditions, which is increasing infections, and access to treatment is extremely limited. Many women and children are malnourished as a result of virtual famine conditions due to aid blockages, effectively weaponising food and water. Eyewitness accounts from medical professionals confirmed the harrowing conditions for healthcare staff and patients, and the event emphasised the approach forms part of the ongoing genocide.

It was stressed that the situation is breaching women's basic rights, and will have impacts lasting generations. Speakers urged for action from the international community, and for civil society to maintain a focus on sharing women's stories and build international support.

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### **Shaping the Agenda – Women with Disabilities Leading in Global Health**

This was a powerful NGO CSW Parallel Forum event focused on strengthening services for disabled women, and building a leadership role for disabled women in particular in the health

field.

Speakers highlighted how disabled women are at the lowest rung in society, due to stigma leading to powerlessness and exclusion. Although a billion women are estimated to be living with disabilities, disabled women are still seen as a burden in many societies, which leads to almost complete disregard for their needs and priorities. This, in turn, increases risk of violence; for example, speakers emphasised that seeing disabled women as asexual increases the risk of sexual abuse, while also excluding women from reproductive healthcare and making their own decisions about pregnancy, relationships and bodies.

Speakers called for significantly improved access to information for disabled women, as well as including disabled women in designing services and environments, to improve participation in society and decision making. Above all, there is an urgent need to end stigma around disability, to implement human rights for disabled women and make them visible in all areas of society.

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### **Addressing Gaps in the Beijing Platform for Action: The Urgent Need to Integrate Migrants and LGBTQI+ Communities Amid Government Backlash**

*by Siobhán Harding*

Nearly 30 years after the Beijing Platform for Action, LGBTQI+ individuals and migrant women continue to face systemic exclusion and targeted attacks. This panel examined the far-reaching effects of Uganda's anti-LGBTQ bill, the rise of tech-facilitated gender-based violence in Egypt, the impact of no-recourse public funds on migrant survivors of intimate partner violence in the UK, and the challenges faced by LGBTQI+ refugees in Greece. Panellists discussed strategies for advocacy, policy reform, and international solidarity to advance gender and social justice.

#### **Panel of Students from Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University**

##### **Uganda**

2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act. First introduced in October 2009 and became known as the Kill the Gays Bill – it had a harsh death penalty clause. It was overturned following a legal challenge but resurfaced again and passed with increasing numbers of the population of the view that LGBTQI+ activities are un-African and Western – there was a strategic and concerted effort to revamp the Act.

It made the offence of homosexuality punishable by life imprisonment with no prospect of release and with an aggravated offence punishable by the death penalty. The promotion of homosexuality could be punishable by 20 years imprisonment and taking part in same sex marriage up to 10 years in prison. The Government also has the right to rehabilitate those convicted of homosexuality.

This Act has had devastating consequences for the LGBTQI+ community in Uganda and put many in a great deal of danger. Much of the 2023 Act still stands in contravention of international law. Some aspects have been struck down but have appeals pending.

The introduction of the Act has resulted in increased levels of violence towards LGBTQI+ people with over 1000 cases of violence reported since its introduction which is a marked increase from previous levels and the numbers are likely to be conservative.

A lot of the Act is being enforced by policing of ones neighbours – a lot of people are levying the consequences on LGBTQI+ people themselves.

It is important to show solidarity with LGBTQI+ Ugandans and looking to overturn the Act is crucial. There is a need to revisit the Beijing Platform for Action in the face of legislation like this. Beijing does not specifically cater to the needs of LGBTQI+ communities who are often overlooked especially if there is no specific mandate to consider them. Governments have to be held accountable to uphold the human rights of LGBTQI+ people.

The shadow reports from Beijing don't mention LGBTQI+ people so their issues remain invisible. Uganda's own reports downplay the extent of the violence so harms are lost. Much of the knowledge that exists about the violence since the Act came into force comes through stories of evictions, police violence and discrimination. A shadow report from Amnesty International did mention LGBTQIA+ experiences and was much more comprehensive. The data is very hard to collect and is very sensitive as many survivors do not want to come forward. There is a need to resource organisations to monitor these issues.

As the International Community there needs to be continued pressure to change the law. Change is slow so it is important to do everything they can to meet the needs of LGBTQIA+ Ugandans and NGOs in the wake of the Act including through direct cash transfers and other supports. There is also a need to promote more inclusive coalition building and resourcing to meet the needs of these communities. It needs to be provided in a way that bolsters long term development.

Beijing is a great foundation for promoting human rights and giving countries a roadmap for change but it does need revisited in terms of intersectionality – to provide specific lived experience of LGBTQIA+ communities. All identities overlap and create different experiences – this needs to be provided for more rather than segregated into categories. More priority than every is needed based on global trends and regression on the rights of LGBTQIA+ communities. It is important to specifically and explicitly include LGBTQIA+ communities or they will fall through the cracks.

### **Egypt**

Tech-facilitated Gender Based Violence (TFGBV) is a subset of GBV that is any act, committed, assisted, aggravated or amplified by digital tech communication tools that likely result in harm and that limits freedoms. It disproportionately impacts women and girls and LGBTQI+ people. AI has complicated GBV with deep fakes and falsely generated information.

In Egypt 41.6% of 356 women surveyed had experienced cyberviolence in a year. 90% of Egyptian women report being subjected to sexual harassment and this is likely an underestimate in a culture of victim blaming. The numbers are complicated by the fact that LGBTQI+ people are not represented in the data because of criminalisation of homosexual activity in Egypt.

There is a misconception that GBV and sexual harassment is only prevalent in lower income areas which has created a culture of impunity for higher income/privileged perpetrators. A Cyber Crime Law was introduced by the Egyptian Government in 2018 aimed at combatting

violent extremism online. But it has been used as a way to criminalise women and girls and LGBTQI+ people through Article 25 which states that anyone that infringes family principles or values in Egyptian society can be imprisoned and fined. This has created a huge issue as it does not define what constitutes violating family values. It has led to the systematic criminalisation of women and girls and LGBTQI+ people who are using social media to speak out about GBV and perpetrators and those trying to meet other LGBTQI+ people online.

An example was given of a 20 year old who was arrested for exposing the women and men who beat her and the men who raped her. She was arrested for violating public morality through Article 25. It is being used as a way to try and silence women and girls speaking out about violent gender norms.

It is essential to recognise these issues and call out the Egyptian government to not abuse the cyber crime laws. At the time of the Beijing Platform in 1995 there was less information technology available although it did recognise that it was essential for women to be at every stage of the design, development, monitoring and evaluation of every digital technology available. This is not happening with the majority of AI being developed by men and by men in Western countries and that leads to impacts for women and girls and LGBTQI+ people. While information technology is important to spread awareness of harmful gender norms it can also be used to target women and girls. There is a need for Beijing to include LGBTQI+ involvement in tech development otherwise it will be used to target them.

TFGBV is a new concept and it is hard to find anything in the shadow reports which addresses it apart from NGO input on this. Egyptian NGOs have critiqued the Cyber Crime Law and even though they have been trying to protect LGBTQIA+ people there are still ways the government can persecute people through the cyber crime law and the debauchery clause. Women who have used online platforms to address GBV and call out perpetrators have been blocked or targeted for severe hate attacks.

The National Council for Women in Egypt needs to put pressure on the Government of Egypt, as well as other Governments, NGOs, etc to have them amend the Cyber Crime Law to specifically target TFGBV. There is a need to encourage the social media platforms to monitor attacks against women and girls and LGBTQIA+ people as they are hosting the content – they need to do better on this.

Some social media platforms are owned by men who are championing misogynistic/racist values and these are widely used everywhere including in Egypt where Facebook is the most used social media platform. The owner of Meta has recently announced the ending of Fact Checking which will have severe implications for TFGBV.

You can just include LGBTQIA+ as an ‘add and stir’ approach. In terms of Beijing so much has changed in TFGBV since 1995 in terms of tech and the development of AI. Both social media and AI can be used for good and can help to increase gender equality especially in places where people are oppressed. But there is severe regression in rights and an increase in far right extremism where social media and AI is being used to directly target women and girls and LGBTQIA+ people.

## **UK**

Migrant women who are victims of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in the UK are victims of hostile immigration policies that create barriers to access life saving care.

In the UK 2.1million over 16s are exposed to some form of IV each year and two thirds are

women. The most vulnerable groups face significant barriers to accessing services especially women who have No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF). Anyone with NRPF status is essentially excluded from accessing public services, healthcare and homelessness support.

There are some concessions through the Migrant Victims of Domestic Abuse Concession which allows some access to help but within a 3 month timeframe. The concessions are inadequate and NRPF means depriving these women of the care and support they need to leave IPV situations.

Data sharing by the Police and Immigration Enforcement means that reports to the police are shared with Immigration Authorities leading to the percentage of women being deported after reporting IPV almost doubling. This means they are even less likely to report. If they do report they risk deportation., loss of custody of their children, lack of access to healthcare, etc. Beijing calls for protections for migrants but NRPF actively restricts access to essential services and protections.

Shadow reports from NGOs and CEDAW are very vocal on how NRPF is harming migrant women and there are calls to exempt all women experiencing IPV from the NRPF condition and calls to stop information sharing with immigration.

However, Government and policy makers are not listening to the NGOs and civil society such as the Southall Black Sister who have been advocating in this area.

The Government bypassed civil society recommendations in the Domestic Abuse Act when they consulted on what should be included. One of the most cited recommendations was to include protection for migrant and to provide free legal assistance and access to refuge regardless of NRPF status. The Government excluded migrant women so there are no provisions for them in the Act at all.

The Government needs to try and revise and expand the NRPF exemptions for IPV survivors. The current time limit of 3 months is not enough time for women to be able to access the help/legal services they need – it needs to be expanded to at least 6 months. The short time frame is discouraging women from seeking help.

The Government need to expand the pilot programme – Support Migrant Victims Scheme – the current design and funding of the scheme doesn't adequately address the unique needs of IPV victims. Reform needs to be done in conjunction with NGOs/civil society who are working on the ground with survivors.

Beijing does acknowledge the unique vulnerabilities of migrant women and calls on Governments to revise harmful practices but it remains very broad. It needs an explicit emphasis on a human rights-based approach to migration. Needs tailored attentions so migrant women can escape abuse – there is a need to build on the platform/foundation of Beijing.

## **Greece**

Conversations around achieving gender equality should include LGBTQI+ people.

Greece has a diverse community of refugees and migrants all from different backgrounds. It is a critical entry point for asylum seekers in Europe and the opportunities the EU offers. There are significant challenges with the asylum system in terms of overcrowding and refugee camps with

unsafe living conditions, shortages of food and water and medical care. One such camp was made to house 2,040 people but has 4,850 residents more than double what the camp was made to hold.

Refugees and asylum seekers who are LGBTQI+ have no special residence in the camps and lack the physical and mental health help they need. Asylum officials are not trained in gender sensitivity and many of the questions they ask place the blame on LGBTQI+ people – this causes many to lie or have their claims denied. They ask them why they chose this lifestyle when they would never ask this of a heterosexual person.

In the last 5-10 years Greece has made some progress in changing the law to give some protections and in 2021 they had a National Strategy for Equality of LGBTQI+ persons which was a 2-year programme to change the way LGBTQI+ community members are perceived in society. But the norms are very ingrained and it will take more than policies and laws to change things.

There is a need for more education and training for community members and authorities that interact with migrants and LGBTQIA+ communities. There is a need to enhance the mental health and legal services to help improve things. And a need to strengthen the enforcement of the anti-discrimination laws which Greece has but there is no effective enforcement in the camps, etc.

As we see the rise of the right there is more push back on LGBTQIA+ rights and protections. There is a need to address the lack of mention of LGBTQIA+ people in Beijing as a start – there is a need for ongoing expansion of the language in Beijing.

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## **Measuring Women's Empowerment in Large Scale Surveys**

This official CSW side event explored the benefits of including women in large scale surveys, such as global agriculture surveys. It emphasised that including a proportionate number of women is vital to achieve meaningful data that can support gender sensitive and effective decision making, and also to strengthen women's sense of social inclusion.

Speakers highlighted learning from recent pilots focused on including women in household surveys in the Global South, and stressed that appropriate support and adequate time is needed to enable this. Women may need local level support to build confidence in participating, and wording of questions in local languages is essential to help grassroots women engage with surveys; more broadly, work with communities is essential to normalise women's participation in a context where men typically are seen as households and the only relevant participant. It was also noted that financial support, both for training researchers and assisting participants, is essential to achieve robust results and findings.

This session explored how language and the structural set up of dialogue can contribute to peacebuilding and effective engagement. It emphasised that while dialogue should aim to build agreement as much as possible, gender neutral language serves to obscure inequalities and structural discrimination against women and gender minorities, and should therefore be resisted in favour of more accurate terminology. This is also important to challenge unconscious bias, and enable new voices and perspectives to be heard in conversation.



Speakers also highlighted that dialogue structured to be open and listening is more likely to result in change than debate, which more fundamentally is based on competition and identifying the ‘better’ position. It was stressed that keeping this in mind is vital when working in environments seeking to address inequalities and build peace, as genuine dialogue can open new solutions, as participants gain confidence that their position will be considered, if not necessarily accepted.

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### **Women as peacebuilders**

This was one of the final sessions of the NGO CSW Parallel Forum, and reflected the key messages from other sessions on peacebuilding throughout CSW. Speakers emphasised that peacebuilding occurs on many levels, and everyone can be a leader in their own environment.

Speakers also stressed that using correct and specific terminology, including around gender, is important even where it might challenge some stakeholders, such as religious stakeholders. This is part of being confident in the position, and also enables a more intersectional and effective conversation than seeking to avoid disagreement. It was noted that anyone involved in peacebuilding must be confident, and that support and capacity building is important to build this confidence and strengthen peacebuilding movements.

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### **Unmasking bias, challenging the language of neutrality**

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