

OF UN WOMEN'S PARTNERSHIPS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY





# THE PREMISE

#### CIVIL SOCIETY PLAYS A PIVOTAL ROLE IN ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY

and the empowerment of women and has been at the forefront of shaping the global rights architecture on gender. UN Women is the lead entity on gender within the United Nations system. Thus, the partnerships that it forms with civil society organizations and women's groups assume positions of political and strategic importance in the global, intergovernmental, norm-setting arena.

The creation of UN Women is one of the strongest reform initiatives of the United Nations system and demonstrates the organization's commitment to place gender equality and women's empowerment at the forefront of development. In this context, civil society is deeply invested in the success of UN Women and the implementation of its mandate. And, because civil society plays a catalytic role in articulating social concerns, UN Women counts on it to help achieve its strategic goals. Together, UN Women and civil society advocate to advance policy dialogue on women's rights and empowerment, development, peace and security.

Civil society is one of UN Women's most important constituencies and supports us in accomplishing our mandate on gender equality and women's empowerment.



# THE PROMISE

#### UN WOMEN SUPPORTS CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS TO WORK WITH

Member States to develop and implement policies and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women partners with diverse and geographically representative civil society organizations and networks, including grass-roots organizations and organizations representing vulnerable and marginalized groups and minorities, to achieve three goals:

- Create opportunities for civil society to critically engage with Member States and the United Nations system in vital political discourse on gender equality, women's rights and development.
- 2. **Ensure that contributions of diverse organizations,** to strengthen norms and policies on gender equality and women's empowerment, are heard.
- 3. Support strategic alliances among civil society networks to strengthen constituencies and amplify action on emerging human rights, sustainable development, and peace and security issues at the global, regional and national levels.



# THE PROCESS

#### UN WOMEN BUILDS TRANSFORMATIVE PARTNERSHIPS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

organizations and strategically supports their engagement in a number of global intergovernmental processes:

#### Post-2015 and Sustainable Development Goals

UN Women is working with the United Nations system to:

- **Strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations** to more effectively advocate gender equality and women's empowerment to be central to the new development agenda;
- Support civil society to hold Governments to account for their commitments;
- Facilitate alliances with civil society, Governments and other stakeholders to develop common positions of advocacy at regional and national levels.

In line with the above, UN Women worked with the Women's Major Group to support the participation of grass-roots and indigenous women in the **Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development**, successfully advocating the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment in the outcome document, *The Future We Want*.

#### **Commission on the Status of Women**

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the United Nations premier policy-making body on gender equality issues. It also functions as a global forum for exchange of experience on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Of all the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) functional commissions, CSW has the highest number of NGO participants, making it one of the key arenas of UN Women's partnership with civil society and women's groups. The priority theme of CSW57, *Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls*, is a fundamental cornerstone of UN Women's work. For CSW57, UN Women and civil society worked together in the following innovative and strategic ways for an effective and implementable outcome:

- To support dialogue, information sharing and advocacy towards a strong and effective outcome, UN Women and the NGO Committee on the Status of Women convened a series of discussions between civil society and members of government delegations in New York.
- To strengthen networking and communication opportunities for specific marginalized groups of women, UN Women, through its annual Yvonne Hebert Programme, funded eight indigenous women to attend the session.
- To underscore the importance of including survivor views in policy-making on ending violence against women and girls, UN Women organized an event, as part of the Stakeholders' Forum in the lead-up to CSW57, with women panelists who survived violence and used their experience to influence legislation and policy. A recommendation to include survivor voices was included in the Agreed Conclusions.



JN Women/Catianne Tijerina

• To strengthen civil society's contribution and to supplement the established committees in New York, Vienna and Geneva, UN Women provided catalytic funding to set up four regional NGO Committees on the Status of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Middle East, Asia-Pacific and Africa. The committees brought civil society perspectives into the development of the zero draft of the Agreed Conclusions.



Rural women leaders at round table discussions at the Commission on the Status of Women

#### Beijing+20

UN Women will work with civil society to strengthen national and global political commitment to implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the recommendations of the review processes.

### Working with civil society organizations in countries

In countries, UN Women works with civil society organizations as implementing and advocacy partners. UN Women provides grants to civil society groups through two grant-making funds that it manages—the Fund for Gender Equality and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. These funds support innovative, high-impact programmes to end violence against women, increase women's economic opportunities and strengthen women's political participation at local and national levels.

#### UN Women's Civil Society Advisory Groups

UN Women has pioneered the institutionalization of decentralized Civil Society Advisory Groups (CSAGs), establishing them at global, national and regional levels to serve as mechanisms that strengthen partnerships with civil society and engage in regular dialogue on policy, programming, operational activities and normative, intergovernmental work.

The CSAGs are independent advisory bodies. They represent a strategic and substantive network of eminently qualified persons with expertise in UN Women's priority areas. Members include civil society activists, leaders from grass-roots, rural and community-based groups, indigenous people's organizations, scholars, human rights lawyers and male advocates for gender equality and women's rights. Regional and national CSAGs generate analysis of the socio-economic and political environment in the country/region in which they are located and advise UN Women on programming in their regions.

CSAGs play a critical role among UN Women, the wider civil society and other stakeholders in strengthening implementation of norms and policies on gender equality and women's empowerment in all priority areas. The groups build dialogue among national partners to strengthen ownership of the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda.

UN Women is working with the Civil Society Advisory Groups at all levels to ensure that the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals processes include the knowledge and expertise of civil society.



IN Womer

### ABOUT UN WOMEN

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with Governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

### CONTACT

Civil Society Section
UN Women
220 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017, USA

Tel: +1 646-781-4400

Fax: +1 646-781-4444

civil.society@unwomen.org

www.unwomen.org/civilsociety



