



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

Multi-Stakeholder Forum

in preparation of the

sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women

**‘Social protection systems, access to public services and
sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the
empowerment of women and girls’**

New York, 1 February 2019

Report

About CSW

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

The Commission has been instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women, and encouraging the United Nations system to integrate a gender perspective in all areas of work.

During the Commission's annual two-week session, representatives of Member States, civil society organizations and entities of the United Nations system gather at United Nations Headquarters in New York. They discuss progress and gaps in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the key global policy document on gender equality. Member States agree on further action to be taken to accelerate progress and promote women's enjoyment of their rights in political, economic and social fields.

UN-Women supports all aspects of the work of the Commission. The Entity prepares the documentation for the session including forward-looking recommendations to further expand the global normative framework. It supports Member States in their deliberations and helps them reach consensus on further actions to be taken. And it supports Member States, at the national level, to follow-up and implement commitments made and agreements reached on gender equality and women's empowerment. UN-Women also facilitates the participation of civil society representatives in Commission meetings.

At its sixty-third session, from 11 to 22 March 2019 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, the Commission will discuss the following themes:

- Priority theme: "Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls"
- Review theme: "Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development"
- Focus area: "Women and girls of African descent"

For more information, please visit: <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw63-2019>

Summary

On 1 February 2019, UN-Women convened a Multi-Stakeholder Forum on “Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls”. The purpose of the Forum was to engage a range of stakeholders in the preparations for the sixty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63).

More specifically, the Forum aimed to raise awareness of existing commitments, and identify key areas and issues that should be considered by CSW63 in the context of its priority theme, as well as the ways and means to address them; create a platform for sharing approaches and strategies that bring results and highlighting areas that require enhanced commitments; and foster dialogue, build alliances and galvanize partnerships for action in support of gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and the realization of their human rights, and for accelerating implementation of the expected outcomes of CSW63.

The Multi-Stakeholder Forum was opened by Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Women, and Ms. Geraldine Byrne Nason, Chair of CSW63 and Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations. The opening was followed by four interactive panel discussions and a closing session. UN-Women and the International Labor Organization (ILO) introduced the topics of the four panel discussions. Fourteen Permanent Representatives, Deputy Permanent Representatives, as well as representatives from the United Nations system, civil society and academia participated as panelists. They engaged in a lively dialogue with participants, highlighting good practices and key areas of further work with regard to social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The Multi-Stakeholder Forum generated momentum around the priority theme of CSW63. Participants stressed the role and potential of each of the three sectors (social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure) as enablers for advancing gender equality and for the empowerment of women and girls. Speakers emphasized the need for governments to ensure better policy coordination and coherence across sectors to avoid policy trade-offs that can harm women. Speakers also stressed the need for harnessing synergies across sectors for better results for women and girls. Data on women’s and girls’ access to, and on the quality and affordability of, services is imperative to design improved and better coordinated policies that maximize their transformative effects. These policies need to work in tandem with macroeconomic policies that create jobs and generate the resources needed for social investments.

Participants voiced confidence that the open exchanges helped build a solid foundation for the forthcoming session of the Commission and mobilized stakeholders to engage effectively beyond CSW63. The key messages that emerged from the event are summarized below.

Panel 1: Social protection systems for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

Universal, or broad-based national social protection systems are crucial for the empowerment of women and girls. As women are overrepresented in the informal sector and in unpaid care work, they have less access to social protection which is commonly linked to formal employment. Laws and policies that extend social protection to workers in all forms of employment, including informal and part-time employment, and schemes to cover poor and low-income groups, are crucial for women.

Social protection systems should aim to respond to women's diverse life situations, including providing income security for single mothers, elderly or widowed women, and reduce gender gaps in access and benefit levels. The situation of migrant women, for example, needs specific attention, including through portability of earned benefits, and social protection schemes should also adequately respond to the needs of women who are subject to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Pensions are a critical element in protecting women from poverty in old age. Schemes that cover every person regardless of their employment status and recognize unpaid care work can increase coverage for women and help eliminate gender gaps and biases. Contributory and non-contributory pension schemes that provide adequate benefits for all women are crucial.

The availability of paid maternity and parental leave and affordable quality universal health coverage, including sexual and reproductive health services, are critical for securing women's rights. Expanding parental leave and creating incentives for men to use parental leave, and flexible working arrangements to achieve better work-life balance are essential for women's empowerment and for reducing gender inequality in the labour market. Governments, the private sector and unions should advocate for equal sharing of family and care responsibilities between women and men.

Panel 2: Public services for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

Governments and service providers should address the rights, needs and expectations of women and girls in the design and implementation of public services, notably those related to health, education, child, elder and dependent care. Availability of reliable data is important to inform effective public policy-making.

While girls' and women's educational levels have increased, with growing numbers of women graduating from secondary and tertiary education, unequal distribution of child and unpaid care and domestic work responsibilities continue to limit women's career opportunities. Expanded public services to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities, including child and other care services and facilities, are thus urgently needed.

Investments are needed to expand the availability of quality public services and care jobs that are adequately remunerated. Women continue to make up a large proportion of front-line workers in

the health and long-term care sectors, in early childhood education and teaching. These jobs should comply with decent work standards.

High-quality public services for victims and survivors of all forms of violence against women need to be expanded. Such services should be provided together with effective legislation, policies and prevention programmes, free from gender stereotypes. A holistic approach that includes prevention, protection and support services and responses, adapted to meet local needs, should be pursued. Targeted attention needs to be paid to groups of women subject to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination or at increased risk. Better services are needed to ensure prevention of violence against women and girls in public spaces.

Efforts to improve public services should involve all relevant national stakeholders, including national gender equality mechanisms and line ministries, civil society and women's organizations, local communities and national human rights institutions. Collaboration among stakeholders in improving service delivery, including by private actors, is especially urgent.

Panel 3: Sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

Public infrastructure is essential to meet the needs of women and girls and can contribute to setting and shaping social norms and expectations about the roles of women and girls. Due to a lack of attention to gender perspectives in planning and development, infrastructure does not yet consistently respond to the needs of women and girls, exposing them to gender-specific risks. Investments in gender-responsive and quality, reliable and sustainable infrastructure is needed, including to enhance access to public services.

Gender-responsive infrastructure contributes to economic development, enhances women's mobility and creates opportunities for women to seek paid employment. Existing public transport systems should be adapted and improved, by increasing supply during peak hours, expanding routes and enhancing safety.

Access and availability of water and sanitation, and of energy, especially also for household use are critical for the empowerment of women and girls. Women and girls living in rural areas are disproportionately affected by a lack of infrastructure. Improved availability contributes to improved health across the life course, reduces unpaid care and domestic work, and improves retention of girls in school. Infrastructure investments thus need to expand from sectors deemed most economically profitable to sectors that are critical for women's and girls' everyday welfare and livelihoods. Investments are also needed in health infrastructure, including for sexual and reproductive health, and maternal health care.

Women's participation in decision-making at all levels, including at local level, contributes to gender-responsive policies, infrastructure design and implementation. Women and girls who are primary users, providers and managers of water and sanitation at the household level therefore need to be

actively engaged and better represented in the planning, decision-making and implementation related to infrastructure, including in community management committees for water and sanitation, energy and transport.

Panel 4: Ensuring synergies and addressing intersecting inequalities for enhanced results

Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure should be addressed holistically across all sectors and levels of government. It is critical to achieve synergistic and coherent policy approaches to these three areas to improve women's lives and well-being.

Data disaggregated by sex, age, geographical location and other contextually relevant factors on access to and use of public services, public spaces, energy, water and sanitation, and transportation needs to be systematically collected, analyzed and used at all stages of policy-making and policy-implementation processes, including monitoring and evaluation.

Consistent attention needs to be given to the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that women and girls may be subject to so as to leave no one behind and prevent exclusion and marginalization. Women and girls living in poor households, in rural or remote areas, those with disabilities or belonging to minorities or indigenous populations commonly experience added challenges in accessing education, healthcare, housing, clean energy, and water and sanitation. Removing discrimination in the access to social protection, public services and infrastructure and ensuring that women and girls are aware of their rights and can demand gender-responsive and stigma-free services, is fundamental. Young people should be consistently included.

Resources from all sources are needed to enhance social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure. The private sector has a key role to play, especially in the provision of gender-responsive infrastructure, and steps are necessary to ensure that the private sector adheres to all regulations and standards of quality and coverage. Public-private partnerships can play an important role in the provision of services and infrastructure, from a gender perspective. This is particularly important in areas such as telecommunications, transport, and water and sanitation that require high initial investments and are therefore potentially less attractive as investment model.

Annex: Programme of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum

A. OPENING SESSION

Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under- Secretary-General and UN-Women Executive Director H.E.
Ms. Geraldine Byrne Nason, Chair of CSW63 and Permanent Representative of Ireland to the
United Nations

B. PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Panel Discussion 1: Ensuring rural women's land rights and tenure security and strengthening food security and nutrition for rural women and girls

Moderator: H.E. Ms. Koki Muli Grignon, Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya to the United Nations, CSW63 Vice-Chair

Topic Introduction: UN Women

Panelists:

H.E. Ms. Penelope Althea Beckles, Permanent Representative of Trinidad and Tobago to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Jürg Lauber, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations

H.E. Mrs. Maria Helena Lopes De Jesus Pires, Permanent Representative of Timor-Leste to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Sami Bougacha, Charge d'Affaires of the Permanent Mission of Tunisia to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Luis Homero Bermúdez Álvarez, Deputy Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the United Nations

Ms. Nupur Kukrety, Gender and Social Protection Specialist, UNICEF

Panel Discussion 2: Empowering rural women and girls through quality education and access to information and communications technologies (ICT)

Moderator: Ms. Rena Tasuja (Estonia), Vice-Chair of CSW63

Topic Introduction: ILO

Panelists:

H.E. Mr. Neville Melvin Gertze, Permanent Representative of Namibia to the United Nations

H.E. Mr. Juan José Ignacio Gómez Camacho, Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations

H.E. Ms. Mr. Craig John Hawke, Permanent Representative of New Zealand to the United Nations

Ms. Jennifer F. Klot, Head of NY UN Liaison Office, Plan International

Ms. Melissa Upreti, Senior Director, Program and Global Advocacy, Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Panel Discussion 3: Ensuring access to healthcare and sexual and reproductive health and rights, and to infrastructure, water and sanitation

Moderator: Mr. Mohammed S. Marzooq (Iraq), CSW63 Vice-Chair

Topic Introduction: UN Women

Panelists:

H.E. Mr. Agustin Santos Maraver, Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations

H.E. Ms. Ivana Pajevic, Deputy Permanent Representative of Montenegro to the United Nations

Ms. Caroline Kihato, Director of Urban Policies, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

Panel Discussion 4: Strengthening laws, policies and programmes to address violence and harmful practices against rural women and girls

Moderator: Mr. Mauricio Carabali Baquero (Colombia), CSW63 Vice-Chair

Topic Introduction: UN Women

Panelists:

H.E. Mr. Martín García Moritán, Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations

H. E. Mr. Jonathan Guy Allen, Deputy Permanent Representative of United Kingdom to the United Nations

Ms. Wenyan Yang, Chief, Global Dialogue for Social Development Branch, Division for Inclusive Social Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN

Ms. Venus Ilagan, Secretary General, Rehabilitation International, New York

Ms. Saphira Rameshfar, Representative of the Baha'i International Community's UN Office in New York and member of the Working Group on Girls to the UN

C. CLOSING SESSION

Ms. Åsa Regnér, Deputy Executive Director, UN Women

H.E. Ms. Inga Rhonda King, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations, President of the Economic and Social Council