



Interactive expert panel on the priority theme: Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

Harnessing synergies and securing financing

Friday, 15 March 2019, 3.00 pm - 6.00 pm, United Nations Headquarters

Overview

At its sixty-third session, the Commission on the Status of Women will consider “Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls” as its priority theme. Under this priority theme, the Commission will hold an interactive expert panel on “Harnessing synergies and securing financing.”

The interactive expert panel is an opportunity to highlight interconnections between the three focus areas of the priority theme from a gender equality perspective, and how the three can work in tandem to strengthen women’s income security, capabilities and rights. Examples of systematic approaches that have created positive change for women and girls by linking the three fields will be shared. Reference is made to the report of the Secretary-General on the priority theme (E/CN.6/2019/3).

Background

There is increasing recognition of the fact that social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure are closely interlinked and work most effectively when they are part of an integrated system. Cash transfers have been used to connect poor households to public services, such as health and education. Education is widely considered a public service, but it cannot function adequately without physical infrastructure, including school buildings with safe sanitation facilities for girls. Transport, energy and water are infrastructure-heavy sectors, involving roads, grids and pipes; but they also operate as public services providing access to mobility, electricity and safe drinking water.

To maximize their transformative effects, social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure also need to work in tandem with macroeconomic policies that create jobs and generate the resources needed for social investments. Recognizing and harnessing these

interlinkages is particularly important for advancing the empowerment of women and girls. Without affordable childcare services and safe transport, for example, women's ability to remain in the labor market, access better employment opportunities and secure social protection entitlements will be limited. While social protection may provide women and girls with health care coverage, the lack of safe and affordable transport may prevent them from reaching health facilities, while sufficient and well-trained staff are required for service delivery that effectively responds to their rights and needs. The need to strengthen these links is particularly urgent for women and girls who face multiple and intersecting inequalities.

Format, topics and proposed questions

The interactive expert panel will be moderated by a member of the Bureau of the Commission. It will start with short presentations (8-10 minutes) by five experts from national gender equality mechanisms, academia, civil society, and the UN system, followed by comments, questions and contributions from Member States and other stakeholders addressed to the panelists.

Guiding questions

The below set of suggested questions are developed to support the discussion.

- How can social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure work in tandem to support gender equality and women's empowerment?
- What are potential trade-offs when social protection, public services and infrastructure policies operate in isolation and what can be gained from more coordinated, multi-sectoral approaches?
- Are there successful examples of integrated approaches that strengthen women's income security and support their productivity, while recognizing and valuing unpaid care and domestic work?
- How can the design and implementation of integrated approaches ensure that no woman or girl is left behind?
- What pathways are there for financing access to social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure for all?

Outcome

The outcome of the discussion will be in the form of a summary by the Chair of the Commission, prepared in consultation with the regional groups, through the members of the Bureau.