

Report on the UN Women Flagship CSW62 Side-Event: Leaving No One Behind for Planet 50-50 by 2030: Every Rural Woman and Girl Everywhere



Photo credit: UN Women



Introduction:

At the sixty second Commission on the Status of Women in New York, the gathering of Civil Society for the UN Women Flagship event: *“Leaving No One Behind for Planet 50-50 by 2030”*, provided a critical space and opportunity for women and girls coming from rural communities to demand accountability for gender equality. The event resulted in a set of policy guidelines for standards and benchmarks on how the implementation of the SDGs will ensure that no one is left behind.



Together with UN Women, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) co-convoked the event on 15th March, which was chaired by civil society leaders Nyaradzayi Gumbodzvanda and Sharon Bhagwan Rolls. The event presented an opportunity for rural women and girls to share their knowledge, leadership, strategies and experiences with other civil society representatives, activists, and policy makers on the principle of leaving no one behind in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda – and in the run up to Beijing +25.



The event was designed in a fully participatory fashion and the civil society partners that constituted the task force were in complete ownership of the decision-making process.

The task force was constituted of more than 15 organizations and 25 activists from throughout the world working on issues of women’s rights, widowhood, refugees/migrants rights, LGBTI rights and indigenous rights and people living with disability.

Each panel held intergenerational and interactive discussions., with a balanced geographic representation as well as gender diversity.



Conversation circles:

The first conversation circle was a moderated intergenerational dialogue that aimed at setting the context, with six civil society speakers sharing their lived experience.

Opening the half-day event, Lopa Banerjee, Director of UN Women’s Civil Society Division said:



“This is truly a tipping point. The fact that this Commission [CSW] is shining a light on the condition of women and girls in rural areas is very fitting, because they face some of the most daunting challenges of our time. When governments adopted the Sustainable Development Agenda and pledged that in achieving the Agenda, no one will be left behind, they were talking about these women.”

The second conversation circle was a moment to share good practices with eight speakers representing the different intersectional constituencies of women and girls living in rural areas (widows, migrants/refugees, LGBTI, indigenous people and people living with disabilities).



Each panel had the objective to identify and unpack what being a rural woman or girl living at the intersection of multiple forms of discriminations means.

Neish McLean, LGBTI activist from Jamaica, spoke about the need for visibility of LGBTI perspectives:

“Visibility is a sign of resilience and gives people a chance to see others like themselves. We want to tell our own stories.”



The third conversation circle was a discussion with high-level decision-makers in which each table was given the opportunity to present one recommendation to UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-NGCuka, to Her Excellency, Dr. Jean Kalilani from Malawi and to Ms Alette Van Leur, Director of the ILO Sector Policies Department.



The recommendations were gathered by the task force from the work of each table throughout the day and were categorized under four different themes: social marginalization, cultural discrimination, economic deprivation and lack of political voice.

[\(Click here to access the recommendations.\)](#)



UN Women's Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-NGCuka who listened to the recommendations presented said:

“Gender inequality is so complex. We actually need policy and action. We know how patriarchy is. We need to be bringing it down, but also putting in interventions at every stage of a rural girl’s life.”

These recommendations will be taken to the highest level of decision-making of the activist's countries and act as an accountability mechanism that will ensure that the most marginalized women and girls are brought to the forefront of the SDGs gender justice agenda. They will be widely shared by UN Women to policy makers, civil society networks and the event participants.



Lessons learnt:

- Round-table work: the strong participation of the people present in the room was made possible thanks to the format of the event, designed specifically to facilitate inclusive civil society participation and ownership of the process.

“We have the guidelines, we have the tools, we have good beautiful words on paper that high level people will say in meetings and panels, and yet, less than one percent of humanitarian aid targets gender equality and seeks to address the particular challenges of refugee and displaced women. We need for leadership to come from women and girls themselves at all levels – local, regional and global.”

Rose Orwa – Advocate for migrant, refugees and displaced women’s rights

- Diversity: Women, girls, activists from across regions and constituencies were present in the room representing the most marginalized communities, and almost every table was engaged in deep, challenging conversations creating a great sense of inclusion, diversity and enthusiasm towards the creation of those recommendations on how to leave no one behind.



“We as rural women are not only victims, but also development actors. We make important contributions to our families and societies, so our discussions should be brought into the frontline.”

Pratima Gurung – activist for the rights of indigenous peoples and women with disabilities in Nepal and South Asia.



- Strong social media presence, especially on Twitter and Facebook, also following the hashtag #LeaveNo1Behind.



United Nations CSW ✓
@UN_CSW



"Our issues are not micro"

Powerful intergenerational dialogue w/ @vanyaradzayi @parwasisa & @intywarmy on the intersectional issues that affect indigenous women, women & girls living in rural areas & women & girls w/ disabilities. #CSW62

11:09 AM - Mar 15, 2018

♡ 15 👤 See United Nations CSW's other Tweets



Phumzile Mlambo ✓
@phumzileunwomen



#FridayFeeling

I have been so grateful for the opportunity to not only listen to and talk with civil society members, but also to be able to celebrate their victories throughout Week 1 of #CSW62.

1:31 PM - Mar 16, 2018

♡ 195 💬 71 people are talking about this



Conclusions:

The UN Women Leaving No One Behind flagship event was a great opportunity for Civil Society actors and rural women and girls around the world to gather and share best practices. These best practice examples can be road signs on the path to a transformative paradigm for the achievement of the rights of women and girls in rural communities. In closing, Lopa Banerjee expressed:

“This is not the end. This is the beginning. This is an ongoing journey. The time is now.”

The space acknowledged the remarkable gathering of women all over the world, calling for opportunity and justice, building and gathering strength from grassroots movements networks and coalitions.



It is in this context that the event managed to give access, allowing the voices and leadership of marginalized groups (widows, women living with disability, indigenous women, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex women, gender non-conforming people, refugees/migrants, including women living with HIV) to reach decision-making processes.

Thanks to this vibrant and participatory event, civil society, women and girl activists/advocates in rural communities were able to generate a set of standards and benchmarks on Leaving No One Behind for policy makers to follow as they engage on the road to Agenda 2030, that will take into account the multi-dimensional discriminations that shape the daily lives of rural women and girls.

