

Workshop Notes - Protecting the Human Rights of Women

Please find below the links to the documents that were prepared by the Human Rights of Women Working Group:

- [Position paper](#)
- [Recommendations](#)
- [Background/resource paper](#)

Highlights and Summary:

- We affirmed the importance of **ratifying and effectively implementing CEDAW**, as the foundational document for the Human Rights of Women in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- We discussed strategies for advocating for women's human rights, including using the **Message House as an advocacy toolkit**. The Message House (last page of this document) includes key messages about the importance of the Beijing Platform for Action, the need for government commitment and funding for women's rights, and the importance of addressing violence against women.
- We highlighted the need for **inclusive and intersectional approaches to advancing women's rights**, emphasizing the inclusion of marginalized communities, the need for civil society to be more inclusive, and the importance of involving men in fighting for women's rights. Furthermore, we discussed the need to recognize the importance of the voices of young people and elevate the voices of rural women.
- We emphasized the importance of **all sectors of society** - governments, the private sector, and civil society - working together to achieve the goal of gender equality and non-discrimination of women.
- We had planned in the agenda to do a session on how the **BPFA is reflected in Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals**. Unfortunately, our working group member Eileen Dong was unable to arrive in time, however, if you are interested in viewing her presentation, you can [find it here](#).

Session notes:

We had a wonderful opportunity to introduce ourselves focusing on 3 questions:

1. What is your name and organization?
2. What do we want to see for Beijing + 35?
3. What is your superpower?

Although we spent a little longer on this exercise than I had originally planned, I thought that networking was one of the most important aspects of the Civil Society Forum, and I wanted everyone to get a chance to know who else was attending. Please find a list of the attendees and their organizations at the end of these notes.

We then went on to discuss the short-term, medium-term, and long-term recommendations, which I have summarized below but you can read in full in the link above.

I would like to clarify that the recommendations as submitted to the Member States are not being amended at this time, but that we would like to incorporate the suggestions from the workshop if further statements/position papers.

Short-term recommendations from the Working Group:

- **Secure core funding for women's organizations and ensure they are involved in policy making at all levels**
- **Enact legislation on sex-disaggregated and gendered data in all State policies and programs**
- **Implement a system for tracking, evaluation, and accountability to ensure outcomes are achieved; highlight intersections with other critical areas, e.g., education barriers, economic inequality, violence**
- **Use the roadmap provided by the Sustainable Development Goals and Methods as a tool for immediate action on gender equality and sustainability**

Additional recommendations/responses from the workshop session:

- Make use of institutional mechanisms, including infrastructure and monitoring mechanisms
- Require accountability, justice and transparency, through the use of penalties/sanctions, ensuring that any penalties fell on governments/companies rather than on people
- Make civil society and other more inclusive, break glass ceilings in order to encourage voices from new participants or younger generations
- Affirm the effective universality of human rights
- Involve men in fighting for women's rights
- Ensure the inclusion of marginalized communities
- Bring together the recommendations from the 12 critical areas and structure workshops to be inclusive of all the critical areas, reviewing all recommendations that cut across all areas
- Meet climate commitments
- Secure the human rights of refugees and asylum seekers
- Governments, civil society and the private sector must work together to achieve human rights goals - is there a political trigger when these situations become worse?
- Revitalization of CSW - power of civil society and the importance of its voice in decision making
- Ensure that the voices of young people/children are heard in these processes

Medium-term recommendations from the Working Group

- **Ratify CEDAW (all ECE Member States and EU)**
- **Ratify regional conventions to eradicate violence against women, such as the Istanbul Convention in Europe with open accession to other States and Belém do Pará Convention in the Americas**
- **Harmonize national legislation with human rights standards, principles, and guarantees set by the UN system and regional bodies, such as the European Court of Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights**
- **Develop and fund training programs for law enforcement as well as officials in the justice and protection systems regarding the legal tools within CEDAW and other regional conventions**

Additional recommendations/responses from the workshop session:

- **Ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families**
- **Achieve true equality**
- **Raise awareness of colonial legacies, changes made by colonization by Western countries**
- **Elevate the voices of rural women, including through information and education, as noted in CEDAW**
- **Recognize the importance of the voices of young people in bringing new ideas and insights from the communities we need to reach**
 - Requires that we commit to capacity building with youth - ensuring that they are able to learn from older generations on how to create change

Message House

At this point in the session, we turned to the Message House that the Working Group had created (see [last page](#) of these notes). The Message House is meant to be a part of advocacy toolkit that you can use in your communities with you are advocating for women's human rights. At this point we added more recommendations in the context of the Message House as an advocacy toolkit.

- Explore the intersection of development language with human rights goals
- Develop a roadmap/strategy for building a consolidated message house across all 12 critical areas
- Develop effective monitoring mechanisms, including:
 - Collecting disaggregated data
 - Defining data
- Explore how to use the message house with national news media, taking advocacy beyond grassroots and social media campaigns
- Go from silos to connections
 - Are women working together effectively across various identities/areas of concern?
 - How can we work more effectively toward unity?
 - How can we ensure diverse women leading this unity?
- What ways can women connect outside the UN system? How can we build more opportunities for networking, sharing ideas, etc, such as the Forum this weekend?

Attendees:

Imogen Harley	Widows Rights International, Young Women's Alliance
Patricia Foito e Camisão	UFEER
Rita Nogueira Ramos	Soroptimist International Europe
Danaé van der Straten Ponthoz	Global Survivors Fund
Colette Samoya Kirura	Bangwe et Dialogue
Francine Samoya	Bangwe et Dialogue
Michèle Vianès	Regards de Femmes
Marisa Beier	NGO Coordination Post-Beijing
Oleksandra Harmash	Rural Women Business Network NGO
Hana Mosarie	Pomegranate House
Latiyah Orneill	Outright International
Andrea Ayala	RFSL
Aida Yancy	EL*C
Flora Nasika	Soroptimist International Europe
Marelie Manders	FAWCO
Rosa Logar	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
Dr. Vanessa Rosser	Word of Life Ministries International (WOLMI)
Dr. Ali Lankerani	Global Alliance Office on Drugs and Crime (GAODC)
Stacy Ciulik	Soroptimist International
Sylvie Kormoss	Soroptimist International Belgium
Janet Hall Schempf	Soroptimist International of Anchorage Alaska
Connie Philipot	FAWCO
Mary Adams	FAWCO
Nesrin Comert	Welcome Clubs International (WCI)
Raha Sabet Sarvestany	University of Turku (UTU)
Tatiana Maroz	Ukrainian Women's Guard
Melanie Paiva Amaral	Women Visibility Project
Larysa Kobelianska	Center - Development of Democracy
Ella Lamach	Center - Development of Democracy
Milla Mardanenko	Center - Development of Democracy
Cathy Cotteridge	Soroptimist International Great Britain and Ireland (SIGBI)

Message House

Roof: Effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action is crucial for advancing the human rights of women globally.			
Walls: (Critical message)			
Despite widespread ratification, the Platform for Action faces significant implementation challenges , particularly due to insufficient funding and lack of government commitment .	CEDAW provides a vital legal framework for protecting women's rights, but its effectiveness hinges on addressing the gap between ratification and implementation .	Empowering women through education, economic opportunities, and access to healthcare are essential steps toward realizing their human rights.	Addressing violence against women in all its forms , including during armed conflict, is paramount.
Foundation: (Proof points)			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient financial and human resources have hampered the advancement of women and contributed to the slow progress in implementing the BPFA. • The success of the BPFA hinges on strong commitment from governments, international organizations, and institutions at all levels. This includes allocating adequate resources, promoting equal rights and responsibilities, ensuring equal participation in decision-making processes, and establishing accountability mechanisms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEDAW is a cornerstone for women's human rights and dignity. It serves as an international bill of rights for women, addressing discrimination and promoting equality. • CEDAW's effectiveness relies on bridging the gap between ratification and implementation. While the majority of ECE states have ratified CEDAW, challenges remain in translating these commitments into tangible action. • Reservations to core articles of CEDAW, particularly Articles 2 (policy measures) and 16 (marriage and family relations), hinder its full implementation. These reservations often stem from traditional, religious, or cultural practices that contradict the Convention's objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The BPFA emphasizes women's empowerment through various means, including education, employment, health, and economic and social activities. • Access to education is crucial for eliminating stereotypes and enabling women's full participation in society. • Promoting equal employment opportunities, economic resources, and social services for women is essential for their advancement. • Ensuring women's access to healthcare, including sexual and reproductive healthcare, is fundamental to their well-being and empowerment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The BPFA prioritizes the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls. • Addressing violence against women is paramount, including violence during armed conflict, trafficking, sexual abuse, non-State torture, and other forms of exploitation. • Protection of women's human rights during armed conflict is crucial, as violations of these rights are violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. • Special measures are needed to protect vulnerable groups of women, such as refugees, displaced women, women with disabilities, and migrant workers.
Basement:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) is a comprehensive roadmap for women's empowerment and gender equality. The BPFA seeks to remove obstacles to women's participation in public and private life, ensuring their equal share in decision-making across all sectors. • The BPFA is a crucial framework for global efforts towards a more just and equitable world for all women. Its goals align with the broader framework of sustainable development and international cooperation, as highlighted in agreements from various UN summits and conferences. 			