

My learning on UN CSW 67 Official Meeting:

Achieving gender equality in a context of overlapping emergencies- Is it Getting back on track?

I reached the UN Headquarters at 9:30 am on 3/16/2023. This meeting began at 10:00 am in Conference Room 4. In the opening remarks, Maris Burbergs (Latvia), Commission Chair-designate, stressed that “The world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030”, thus pointing out that women and girls around the world are facing extraordinary kinds of overlapping threats and challenges. Progress on Sustainable Development Goal 5 will not be achieved unless long-term structural barricades to gender equality are highlighted and pulled apart. He addressed the participants and encouraged them to make clear recommendations for vital actions that should be taken to strengthen the policies that, in turn, empower women and girls most affected by emergencies.

Annie Namala, Executive Director of the Centre for Social Equity and Inclusion, and National Convener of the Wada Na Todo Abhiyan campaign said that data generated by grassroots people brings together overlapping vulnerabilities and it is easier to identify solutions. During her work in the campaign, she said that volunteers helped collect and interpret data and they were able to establish direct communication with communities. She emphasized the importance of listening to the communities and underlined the vitality of talking to the key members of the community to interpret and completely understand the data and ended her talk by saying “data itself does not tell stories”

Lauren Phillips, Deputy Director, Inclusive Rural Transformation and Gender Equality at FAO. She spoke on Gender equality in relation to climate change. In developing and under-developing countries, due to gender equality, women have short-term strategies to cope with climate change. Building food security with respect to conflict-inflicted areas is very important as major hunger is due to insecurity in these areas due to accessibility and marginality. There is a very complex relationship between Food Security, Conflict, and Peace. FAO has found only limited data w.r.t. women and their response to climate change shocks. Underlining the obvious fact that the COVID-19 pandemic led to a widening gap between men and women and thus further worsening food insecurity. I could not agree more when she highlighted that we have continued the advocacy for strengthening the links between gender equality and women’s empowerment and food security and nutrition.

Next, Jerome De Henau, Senior Lecturer in Economics in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at The Open University, United Kingdom, spoke on transforming the economy via universal care services and well-paid, childcare-related leaves can reduce gender inequalities at work. He emphasized a harsh truth prevalent in many countries that spending on special care and health is not considered as important as spending on infrastructure even though the former is very important to the economy even now. He showed many charts and graphs to point out the

fragile underbelly of our universal care system and the pandemic showed how much it was relied upon to sustain economies.



Conference Room 4

Later, Marine Irigoyen, Gender Advisor for the SERVIR-Amazonia program at the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture, spoke on how Technology and geospatial innovations have shown an increase in population in the Latin environment and how it is very diverse. Thus, the gender gap is also diverse, and decreasing them is very much a necessity. Women may possess a phone via which they can call or at the most text but nothing more can be done as it is not a smartphone. Because of no proper accessibility and always the need to rely on their family, many indigenous women are forced to work in illegal mining work. With no public representation, communication, and access to information, Amazon is affected. Deforestation has become a major issue.

Women in Brazil in the state of Para, are now implementing cell phone use in their operations of collecting crops. As part of “Terra on Track,” a program that monitors deforestation, they can see who is invading their territory and send alerts to organize, sometimes with State support, to put a stop to those invasions. In Peru, protect homes are subjected to illegal mining which happens around their communities. Indigenous populations are trained to use the

drones in majority to monitor illegal activities. In Ecuador, GPS is used to keep track of any illegal trafficking that is happening in the region and monitor them.

She ended her talk by saying that – When training rural women in tech-related activities, they must be educated in an easy way so that they can access the land while playing a major role in the domestic sphere as this will impact her decision-making capabilities.



Hamsatu Allamin speaking on the devastation in Boko Haram

Hamsatu Allamin, Founder and Executive Director of the Allamin Foundation for Peace and Development, Nigeria, describes the countless Boko Haram atrocities by the extremists and the resulting devastation which is affected particularly women and girls. Humans lose their dignity and their hopes to live such is the cruelty, particularly in the gender dimension, where women, even mothers are raped, gang rapes of students in school, brutality towards wives and children, and fathers are killed. The men who protect their families are slaughtered opening in front of their families. Allamin Foundation's initiatives, including eight social networks for vulnerable groups of women, help those who are victims and survivors, and currently, they work with 29,000 registered participants registered in their database. This foundation was created with the aim of saving children from further brutality in their environment (Boko Haram to Boko Halal).

Allamin foundation's programs were successful in closing the gap between Christians and Muslims (Boko Haram Conflicts). They also were able to address and free the life of inequality women and disassociate themselves from extremist groups by making them attend programs for reporting and effective communication and maximizing their potential. Favoritism based on religious identity is been abolished and it is critical that at the intervention different religious groups are bonding. Even though the funding provided to them is very little, still, the foundation helps develop the resilience of people in the face of stress.



My notes during the Interactive dialogue session

Next, during the interactive dialogue, Member States speakers, regional agencies, and representatives from civil society and NGOs shared their experiences in addressing climate change and other emergencies, other speakers spoke about specific challenges faced by women and girls such as gender-based stereotypes, unpaid care work, conflict situations, gender-based violence, and disabilities.

Firstly, a European Union representative established a series of events that impacted gender equality in their union of countries especially Covid and the Climate crisis. EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility made €670 billion available to fight the pandemic, including the socio-economic impact on women. She also spoke on how quality care services e.g., sex reproductive services help to empower women especially childcare and long-term care. The women who are on the road to empowering other women face narcissistic comments and threats from people. Still, such activities do not discourage them to come out and speak on behalf of civilized women. We should extend our hand to these activists so that they can freely speak on gender equality.

The representative of Japan informed that the COVID-19 pandemic improved their government's use of digital technology especially to empower women through acquiring digital skills. The Human Resources department helps women to access digital funds for other women during the rapidly changing era of digitization. The Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare also promoted e-learning courses and online training for public employees.

A representative of the non-governmental organization Fundación Abba Colombia spoke on the lack of economic access in Latin American women who have overexposed themselves to provide support to families. They lack access to decent jobs, social protection, and sustainable livelihoods. Her NGO helps to guide women to social protection in these new emerging economies also emergency programs w.r.t. climate change, Food security, and education.

The representative of the International Medical Cooperation Committee, Denmark pointed out that unpaid care work is seen as a female responsibility. Domestic violence and unpaid care work are prevalent and there is no need for an extra status of making women strong as she is born strong and it is due to gender stereotypes, she is perceived otherwise. Men do not waste time in unpaid care work and women are 2-10 times more likely to end up in this situation thanks to the pandemic this situation has double-folded. She made a brilliant point towards the end about why we should talk about this – This will cause hindrance to women's empowerment as for every minute she spends on unpaid care work, there is 2 mins less time spent on her education!

The representative of Ukraine conveyed that her country is going through one of the most dramatic periods in history. Missiles caused land destruction, energy loss, and other activities related to the devastation of people. This continued destruction has exacerbated gender inequality and has deep repercussions on the rural female population. The country is now littered with mines, children with disabilities is increasing, and poverty is likely to double in the coming years. Gender-based violence and sexual violence have increased exponentially with 172 fresh new cases that week. In spite of the atrocities of Russia, Ukraine still continues to maintain its digital system intact. NGOs and civil society support are growing and they are helping to develop new businesses and existing businesses, especially in the field of agriculture.

The representative of the United States spoke on how women from marginalized demographics rural, indigenous, and even those belonging to LGBTQ+ face some atrocious situations, especially those who are fleeing violence and are likely to end up getting trafficked. To strengthen a society that is prone to gender-based violence and help the recovery system, there should be ways in which we can fund the GBV survivors, as they do not get enough humanitarian funding. Also, we must keep track of the efforts and not just subjective monitoring. USA Government recently launched an initiative called 'safe from the start' to promote women's leadership and prioritize gender-based violence programming.

Next, a representative of the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre (ARROW) began her talk by saying multidimensional gender equality has aggregated in different parts of the world. Human rights should not be compromised in any sector. Women played and play a key role in

covid management and thus it is important to keep them included in important decision-making processes to abolish gender equality effectively. Even more, information and services related to sexual and reproductive health and rights must be included in the national crises and disaster management policies, budgets, and programs.

A representative from Pakistan spoke on emergency situations in her country, ranging from climate change, gender equality, and violence against women. She points out the importance of collecting sex aggregated data, which is important to address gender equality. In Pakistan, 60% of the food producers and 70% of the livestock managers and breeders are women. The women, mostly in the reproductive stage, face the brutal challenge of climate change in agriculture. Action report 2021 produced by the government has included a special chapter on financial inclusion for agriculture funding, online key tools, and Gender-based violence happening all around the country.

A representative from Sudan highlighted that 2023 is viewed as the era of social change for women. While the country is going through an era of armed conflict circumstances and climate change effects on agriculture, programs for womanhood 'Safe woman' are being launched. The National Ministry of Health in Sudan has launched a social awareness program and the number of seats in parliament has been frozen for women so that they are present at the table when important decisions are being taken with respect to food security and climate change. There is an important need to tackle poverty and the vulnerable situations of girls in Sudan. The representative urges the panelists that the unilateral sanctions imposed on them should be lifted and this will give them more space and responsibility to address the emerging issue which is hampering Sudan's progress in 2023.

A representative from World Food Programme spoke on the deteriorating Food security in many parts of the world and the associated inappropriate gender equality is important for WFP. We recognize the food insecurity crisis that is driving women to a deeper pit. Women play an important role compared to men when maintaining food security. As of 2021, 150 million more women are food insecure. Programs and Interconnectedness are needed to reach women and girls, especially in rural areas. It also requires full participation from the women's end as well to get humanitarian assistance from WFP. Women when included in humanitarian aspects, fetch better results. Also when social empowerment opportunities are given to them, will always result in the betterment of the global society.

Lastly, a representative from International Justice Watch Association, speaking via video teleconference from Iran, spoke on how her organization is been serving in eradicating poverty, and creating policies for women. Inhumane sanctions on Iran will prohibit the access of Iranian women and children to significant healthcare. The women in Iran are also engaging the youth in decision-making situations. The infrastructure of virtual startups in Iran has multiplied. In the area of ICT, women's empowerment is a work in progress due to the huge gender gap. She requests the chair and other panelists for the upliftment of the imposed sanctions by USA, for the prosperity of Iran.

In response to this, the panelist answers were:

Ms. Namala spoke on the citizen-generated data that the United Nations Statistical Commission has taken steps to create an agreement with national statistical offices to fill data gaps with citizens' gender data. Ms. Phillips's response was that governments were already designing gender-responsive policies for women's participation in planning processes meant to have more gender-responsive policies. Mr. De Henau highlighted that care jobs are green jobs, have more men in this field, and more investment is needed to ensure the better sharing of care responsibilities thus evaluating gender equality. Ms. Irigoyen spoke on strengthening the idea of States, Local Governments, and NGOs' efforts on programs and underlined the importance of sustainability as well as promoting digital literacy. Ms. Allamin encouraged the member states to include the civil society actors at the table to collectively highlight the issue along with that it should be noted that development and empowerment progress create long-term opportunities for civic engagement while at the same time reinforcing a positive youth development approach.

There were also representatives of the Philippines, Burundi, Malaysia, Italy, Indonesia, Dominica, Sudan, Eritrea, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Solomon Islands, and Malawi who spoke in this session.

-Priyanka Prem Kumar, UIMF Member