

CSW62 Young Feminist Caucus Statement

Preamble

We are a diverse group of young feminist advocates, gathered in New York at the Sixty-Second Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), working for gender, reproductive, economic, ecological, and social justice and political transformation. With extremism, isolationism, and radical conservatism on the rise all over the world, the fundamental human rights of young women and girls are under greater threat than ever, especially for those living in rural areas. Their empowerment is not possible without recognizing the importance of economic justice; ending harmful practices such as gender-based violence (GBV) and child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM); access to youth-friendly health services, including sexual and reproductive health and rights and comprehensive sexuality education; preventing climate change; and institutionalizing meaningful youth participation.

We call on Member States to draw from the commitments made in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its review documents so that the language in the Agreed Conclusions is as inclusive, youth-friendly, intersectional, and rights-based as possible. We further call on Member States, the United Nations, and the Secretary-General to make United Nations processes and participation as inclusive and diverse as possible, by ensuring funding for participants from rural areas, assisting in access to visas to come to the United States, or else creating systems and processes that allow for the meaningful participation of those directly affected by the very agreed conclusions being negotiated. We urge Member States to consider the implications of deciding on the fates, rights and futures of the very young women and girls from rural areas that are unable to have their voices heard during decision-making processes.

Therefore, at CSW62, we call on governments to:

Economic Justice

Ensure that young women and girls from rural areas have equal access to economic opportunities and resources, and promote financial literacy and inclusion by introducing a gender perspective into financial products, services, and policy. Young women and girls from rural areas are not just food producers and do not work only in agricultural fields, despite that being the prevailing perception, and they should be ensured decent work, technology, and food sovereignty. In addition to access to microcredit and other small-scale economic programs, sufficient macroeconomic policies must be in place to ensure adequate social protection.

Ensure that development projects undertaken in rural areas, whether by governments or corporations and other private actors, bring economic benefit to the community without violation of the human rights of those living in those communities, specifically with respect to land rights

and climate justice. States should not accede to agreements, specifically trade agreements that undermine human rights commitments and Agenda 2030. Additionally, member states must support global tax cooperation required to finance human rights inputs required to advance rural women's human rights.

Child, Early and Forced Marriages (CEFM)

Commit to ensuring that young women and girls from rural areas are fully able to exercise their right to make decisions about their own lives and retain their bodily autonomy. We call on Member States to tackle gender inequality, which is the root cause of child, early and forced marriage, and address the barriers to gender equality created by child, early and forced marriage. These include the complications resulting from early pregnancy, higher rates of maternal mortality, and increased vulnerability to violence, among others. Governments must also ensure victims of child, early and forced marriage have access to comprehensive services, including, but not limited to: educational systems, including programs that allow married, parenting and/or pregnant girls and young women to return to school; fair and just legal systems; comprehensive healthcare; financial literacy; access to land; and programs which assist in the successful and healthy transition to adulthood. All of these must be provided with the goal to ensure the full enjoyment of the human rights of young women and girls.

Recognize that communities, through social pressure, and parents often force young women and girls into marriages, and this dynamic cannot be forgotten in efforts to end the practice. Parents and communities, including traditional leaders, can play a critical role in preventing CEFM but only if they are aware of the negative implications and human rights violations associated, see viable alternatives to marriage, and are willing to buck societal trends and traditions.

Youth-friendly SRHR Services and Information

Ensure young girls in all their diversity living in rural areas are provided with comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare services that are universally accessible and available; of high quality; youth friendly; culturally sensitive; and free of stigma, discrimination, institutional violence and influence from conservative groups. This includes access to affordable, stigma-free, private, confidential medical facilities for safe abortion, as rates of unsafe abortion and consequent maternal death is much higher in rural areas, as well as comprehensive post-abortion care.

Provide health care providers and workers in rural areas with security, resources and infrastructure to do their work adequately, and training in providing youth-friendly, culturally sensitive health care.

Guarantee participatory, gender-sensitive, evidence-based, and human rights-based comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). Governments must work with parents, teachers, and

authority figures in communities, including religious leaders, in order to implement CSE and provide young girls and women with information about their bodies and bodily rights so that they are able to have safe and healthy reproductive lives.

Climate change

Recognize that climate change is not only an environmental issue but a pressing social justice issue which has major implications for young people, and for future generations to come. It is also well-documented that climate change disproportionately affects women and girls living in rural areas.

Take immediate renewed and forceful action to drastically reduce emissions, mitigate current damage and promote sustainability. Governments should reaffirm their commitment to the Paris Agreement and work towards implementing systems of accountability and improved transparency. Governments should also take stock of the additional burden and vulnerability that falls on young girls and women and provide gendered responses that reduce inequities, focusing on areas such as food and water security, land rights, disaster and emergency response and healthcare. Additionally, young women and girls from rural areas are more likely to be forced to migrate due to climate change, and governments must increase protections for such migrants and refugees.

Prioritize a just and equitable transition that includes an equitable redistribution of resources, including land, property, sustainable and environmentally safe development, technology, capital, and finance, including divestment from fossil fuels and reinvestment into renewable resources and community-based solutions that mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Meaningful Youth Participation

Recognize that young people, in all our diversity, have the fundamental right to meaningfully participate in all decision-making processes. Meaningful youth participation should be particularly prioritized when creating programs or policies that have a direct impact on our lives, including peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

Include meaningful youth participation in all stages of decision-making: during formulation, development, implementation and evaluation of laws policies, plans and budgets. To ensure meaningful and equitable youth participation, governments must provide access to accurate information and non-formal training, including through the use of appropriate and accessible media and information-communication technology, which will build and attain certain professional skills for employability. We call on Member States to provide technical and financial support to youth and to prioritize sustainable, flexible funding for youth-led organizations to fully develop our potential.

Prioritize diversity and inclusion when youth are meaningfully engaged throughout UN processes like the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). It is inexcusable that the priority theme of the 62nd CSW is the advancement of the rights of women and girls from rural areas, yet these very parties are not even present in discussions and negotiations about their own rights and empowerment, much less actively leading such discussions. We call on the UN and all associated stakeholders to remember to look beyond the quotas to address the underlying social determinants which perpetuate inequalities and work towards full and equal participation.

Ensure that all persons looking to attend official UN processes are able to obtain a visa to the United States. If their visas cannot be guaranteed, we urge the United Nations, Member States, and the Secretary General to seriously consider moving the location of these important UN processes to a country with fewer visa restrictions and lower costs associated with travel, food, and accommodation, in the global South. Not taking concrete steps now will ultimately endanger the relevance and legitimacy of the CSW.

Intimate Partner Violence and Gender-Based Violence

Recognize that gender-based violence (GBV) is a violation of human rights and a significant barrier to women's, girls', and young people's empowerment. In many countries, women and girls from rural backgrounds experience intimate partner violence at higher rates and more severely, and survivors are left more vulnerable due to intersecting challenges, such as poverty, lack of access to healthcare, discrimination against LGBTI women, and more. We demand that Member States strengthen their response to GV, by passing laws to make sexual coercion and domestic and intimate partner violence illegal by providing survivors of GBV with safe, affordable, accessible, and youth-friendly health services, including mental health services and sexual and reproductive health services, including safe abortion. Furthermore, we call on governments to develop and implement prevention campaigns and programs, health care, counselling, and intervention services for GBV targeting the particular challenges that girls, women and non-binary people face in rural contexts.

Introduce policies to protect young feminist activists and human rights defenders, and to bring perpetrators of violence and discrimination to justice.

Conclusion

In order for women and girls in rural areas to become empowered, we believe it is necessary to fully integrate all of the above priorities across all implementation strategies, including the Sustainable Development Goals, ILO conventions, ICPD Program of Action, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and binding human rights treaties. We call on governments to measure progress with gender-sensitive, and youth and adolescent specific indicators, supported with data disaggregated by gender and age and other necessary information in order to monitor inequalities and discrimination across intersectional identities. The above priorities must be

supported by resourcing frameworks including flexible, core and long term funding for youth led organisations at the grassroots and international level.

We call on governments to recognize that just as young women and girls from rural areas cannot be tokenized, their rights discussed in rooms in which they are not present, we, as young people, are rights-holders, experts in our fields, and agents of change. We demand that we be included and fully incorporated into processes that involve decisions about our bodies, our lives, and our communities, and that our voices be heard. We are just as, if not more committed to ensuring that human beings in every corner of the world are able to live justly, compassionately, equitably, and safely.