



REPORT OF THE
Standing Committee on Gender, Youth and Information Communication
Technology on the Attendance of the 62nd United Nations Session of the Commission
on the Status of Women
From the 12 – 23 March 2018
New York City, United States of America

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1. Background and Purpose of Members of the Standing Committee on Gender, Youth and Information Communication Technology Attending United Nations Commission on Status of Women (SCW) Sessions

1.1 The Standing Committee on Gender, Youth and Information Communication Technology annually plans and budget to send representatives to attend United Nations Commission on Status of Women (CSW) Sessions in New York as part of capacity building initiative. Accordingly, to complete the implementation cycle of the Standing Committee's Annual Plan **2017/2018**.

1.2 On the first day, the Namibian Delegation had a briefing session with the Embassy staff. The delegation was taken through the official program and was assured of ground assistance if need be. Furthermore, the staff encouraged the Delegation, most specifically the Members of Parliament to harness insightful information by attending more site meetings as oppose to the General Assembly discussions. Hon. Mensah-Williams expressed her appreciation on behalf of the delegation to the Embassy staff for welcoming the group and giving them the guidance.

Brief Overview on the United Nations Commission on Status of Women

1.3 The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. A functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), it was established by Council resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946.

1.4 During the Commission's annual two-week session, representatives of UN Member States, civil society organizations and UN entities gather at UN headquarters in New York.

1.5 They discuss progress and gaps in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the key global policy document on gender equality, and the 23rd special session of the General Assembly held in 2000 (Beijing+5), as well as emerging issues that affect gender equality and the empowerment of women. Member States agree on further actions to accelerate progress and promote women's enjoyment of their rights in political, economic and social fields. The outcomes and recommendations of each session are forwarded to ECOSOC for follow-up.

1.6 The CSW is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

1.7 Given the platform's significance, the Standing Committee on Gender, Youth and Information Communication Technology considers the attendance and participation of the Members of the Standing Committee vital as it presents a rare chance to benchmark, learn, share experiences and interact with representatives from all over the world under one roof.

1.8 Themes

- Priority theme:
- Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls;
- Review theme:
- Participation in and access of women to the media, and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women

The just ended sixty-second (62nd) session that two (2) Members of the Committee attended took place in New York from 12 to 23 March 2018.

2. Composition of Participating Members in the CSW62

- i. **Hon. Ambrosius Kandjii** – Chairperson
- ii. **Hon. Victoria Kauma** – Member

Ms. Windeline Kausiona, Chief Parliamentary Clerk accompanied the two (2) members as support staff.

3. Methodology

3.1 The Sessions program consists of Opening Speeches, General Assembly discussions on various topics for half day with number of site meetings organized of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

3.2 The Official program of the Commission is organized as follows:

- Ministerial segment to reaffirm and strengthen political commitment to the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as well as their human rights and to ensure high-level engagement and the visibility of the deliberations of the Commission; (this Session is mostly attended by Ministers and technical staff)
- General discussion on the status of gender equality, identifying goals attained, achievements made and efforts under way to close gaps and meet challenges in relation to the priority theme and the review theme;
- Panel discussions on Rural Women and Girls Empowerment

3.3 Apart from the formal program, numbers of site meetings and panel discussion were conducted with the aim of sharing experiences, benchmarking and networking for the participants.

3.4 All the sessions were taking place concurrently, thus attendance of meetings and plenary sessions was based on determining which topics were more insightful for the Committee Members. To ensure maximum benefit from the interactions, the two (2)

3.5 Members were guided and required to brainstorm and agree on which meetings to attend. The topics of interest were grouped together thematically:

- a) Rural Women and Girl Empowerments topics;
- b) Combating of Violence Against Women and Girls topics;
- c) Girl's Educations and Women Empowerment topics;
- d) The Role of ICT in Empowering Rural Women and Girls topics.

3.6 Given the above grouping of topics, the members attended site meetings and panel discussions selectively at the end ensuring that information, ideas and knowledge gained covered all the key areas of the Standing Committee's mandate in terms of gender, youth and ICT.

3.7 Closed Meetings were conducted exclusively for working groups to consult and draw up resolutions of the SCW62 that were presented at the end of the Session.

4. The Site Meetings and Panel Discussions Attended during the CSW62:

The programme of side events, or activities organized outside the formal programme of the session of the Commission, provides an excellent opportunity for Member States, UN entities and NGOs to discuss themes of the Commission and other critical gender equality issues.

The events attended among others are set out below:

4.1 Empowering Rural Women and Girls by Addressing Land Degradation and Drought

This side meeting was organized by Namibia and Iceland, in collaboration with UNCCD and UN Women.

Land degradation in Namibia has been on the increase due to a variety of factors such as climatic variability, drought, soil erosion, overstocking/ overgrazing in rural areas,

deforestation and woodland degradation. This environmental changes combined with human activities are some of the key factors that are contributing to food shortages in rural Namibia. The effects are more acutely felt by women and girls.

Namibia's paper was presented by **Hon. Margareth Mensah-Williams**. Detailed concept paper is attached for further reading.

4.2 Empowering Rural Women and Girl

4.2.1 The issues of rural women and girls are taking the center-stage at the CSW's 62nd Session, which is being held under the priority theme: "Challenges and Opportunities in Achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Rural Women and Girls". This presentation focused mainly on the case study of South Africa.

4.2.2 The Parliamentary delegation, which is part of the SA country delegation that includes the Ministry of Women, presented papers with the following topics: "good practices in the empowerment of rural women and girls, including through access to education, infrastructure and technology, food security and nutrition" and "good practices in the empowerment of rural women and girls, including through prevention of gender-based violence and through access to justice, social services and healthcare".

4.2.3 Delegation leader **Hon. Thandi Modise** stressed that the necessity and importance of empowering rural women and girls and the realization of their human rights cannot be over-emphasized.

4.2.4 This meeting provided insightful information that was relevant and easily relating to status of rural women and girls in Namibia. Namibia, like in South Africa, women constitute a large proportion of the rural population, they have limited, if

any, access to the means of food production and remain vulnerable to food insecurity. Also, rural women are under-represented in local and national institutions - which inhibit their voices and participation in decision-making processes. Most women and girls whether in rural or urban areas in Namibia continue to bear the burden of cultural and traditional barriers and gender-based violence, amongst others?

4.2.5 Lessons from the interactions

- How to make the economy work for rural women by establishing agriculture parks for women; where women are given opportunities to sell their produce to hospitals and schools in specific areas;
- The need to intensify the oversight activities over the Ministry of Gender yearly programs aimed at eradicating poverty, women empowerment, programs aimed at ensuring food security for rural women and girls, decent education for young girls;
- The need to understand SDGs and how they are being implemented through Ministerial programs;
- Importance of collaborative efforts between the Ministry of Gender, NGOs and civil society to achieve measurable targets of women and girl empowerment;
- Importance of mentorship programs for young girls in rural areas to reduce the rate of early marriages.

4.3 Girls Education and Women's Empowerment and Empowering Rural Women and Girls: Measures and Achievements – Meeting organized by Zambia and Iran

4.3.1 The Government of Zambia recognizes that fighting the dual challenges of poverty and gender inequality is essential to the achievement of the inclusive growth. **Hon. Victoria Kalima**, Minister of Gender in Zambia shared the information on Girls Education and Women's Empowerment (GEWEL) Project.

4.3.2 The project objective is to support the Government of Zambia to increase access to livelihood support for women and access to secondary education for disadvantaged adolescent girls in extremely poor households in selected districts. The Project consists of the following three components:

4.3.3 Component 1. Supporting Women's Livelihoods

The objective of this component is to provide them with access to opportunities that will increase the productivity of their livelihood activities and their economic empowerment.

4.3.4 Component 2. : Keeping Girls in School

The objective of this component is to support adolescent girls in extremely poor households to access secondary education.

4.3.5 Component 3. Institutional Strengthening and Systems Building

The main objectives of this component is to strengthen institutional capacity and build systems to increase efficiency and improve coordination of targeted programs.

4.3.6 The Project targets women at two (2) key critical points in their lives, transitioning from:

- a) Primary to secondary school through “Keeping Girls in School Component, by offering bursaries that can delay early marriage and prevent teenage pregnancies. This help prepare girls to pursue productive jobs;
- b) Subsistence to sustainable livelihood through the “Supporting Women’s Livelihood” comprehensive approach to skills training, grants, savings support and mentorship to help women.

4.3.7 The project is an inter-Ministerial project with mainstreamed work programs that are carefully planned and executed by the key Ministries, namely; Ministry of Community Development and Social Welfare (MCDSW), Ministry of Education, Science Vocational Training and Early Education (MGE) and Ministry of Gender (MOG).

4.3.8 Parliament of Zambia through its Standing Committees have oversight over the projects and are assisted by the technical team of World Bank to ensure that targets are reached and recorded for reporting.

4.3.9 Lessons from the interactions

- The need establishing clear inter-Ministerial platforms where the key Ministries come together and work in harmony to achieve agreed upon targets in terms for all programs with overlapping responsibilities
- The need to mainstream key Ministries work processes do avoid duplication of efforts
- To find out what programs are currently effectively running with the support of donor agencies;
- The importance of the having specialized technical support when conducting oversight over ongoing programs, whether they are funded by the government for by donor agencies;

4.4 Violence Against Women – IPU Site Meeting and The Voices of Rural Women: Speak out to Address Social Norms that Perpetuate Gender Based Violence

4.4.1 These two (2) sessions focused on addressing and calling for genuine action to combat violence against women and girls.

4.4.2 Violence against women and girls is a grave violation of human rights all over the world, mostly perpetuated in developing countries. The Meeting focused its discussions on Opportunities and Challenges faced by developing countries in combating violence against women and girls.

4.4.3 The presenters shared the impacts of violence against women which often range from immediate to long-term multiple physical, sexual and mental consequences for women and girls, including death. It negatively affects women's general well-being and prevents women from fully participating in society.

4.4.4 The interjections from the participants during this meeting pointed out number of negative consequences violence has on families, the community and the country at large.

4.4.5 Opportunities

4.4.5.1 Women's right to live free from violence is upheld by international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), especially through General Recommendations 12 and 19, and the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women.

4.4.5.2 Decades of mobilizing by civil society and women's movements have put ending gender-based violence high on national and international agendas. An unprecedented number of countries have laws against domestic violence, sexual assault and other forms of violence.

4.4.5.3 Namibia has passed Combating of Domestic Violence Act and Combating of Rape Act, which provides a great opportunity to fight violence against women in any form.

4.4.5.4 The Government, civil society organizations and other institutions do advocate for ending violence, increase awareness of the causes and consequences of violence and build capacity of partners to prevent and respond to violence.

4.4.6 Challenges

4.4.6.1 Challenges shared by the group of presenters are crosscutting as almost most of the participants mentioned challenges in implementing the laws in place prohibit women from living a live free from violence. Women and girls are still limited to have access to safety and justice despite these laws in number of Member States.

4.4.6.2 Not enough is done to prevent violence, and when it does occur, it often goes unpunished.

There is also need to promote the need for changing norms and behavior of men and boys, and advocate for gender equality and women's rights, most specifically in Sub-Saharan African Countries.

4.4.7 Lessons from the interactions

- That it is not enough to have only laws passed without ensuring reinforcement
- That there is a need for multi sectoral plan to combat violence ;

4.5 Leveraging the Power of ICT for Rural Women and Girls and Ending Violence against women: Opportunities and Challenges of ICT

4.5.1 The 62nd Commission on the Status of Women focused on empowering rural women and girls, and considered the participation of women in the media and ICT. Given that, this session showcased the information and communication

technologies (ICTs) policies, practices and initiatives that are proven to be working for rural women and girls.

4.5.2 The goal was to raise awareness and inspire more governments and stakeholders to prioritize issues of ICT access for this key segment of the population, whose empowerment is vital for the achievement of the SDGs.

4.5.3 Countries shared national progress on advancing gender equality and women's empowerment through ICT. Belgium highlighted women's underrepresentation in media, stressing that women "practically disappear" from media as they age, and shared tools developed to address this challenge, including awareness-raising campaigns. Denmark called for governments and enterprises to be more proactive in promoting science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields. Saudi Arabia described initiatives to bridge the digital divide between men and women and urban and rural areas. New Zealand expressed concern about "digital harm," including cyberbullying.

4.5.4 Participants shared sentiments that often women and girls in rural areas do not have access to ICT, or if they do, have limited access. It will also highlight lessons learned, success factors and pitfalls to avoid for impactful programs on ICTs for rural women and girls. The session was conducted in collaboration between UN entities and the mobile industry association and other organizations in support of EQUALS (equals.org): the Global Partnership for Gender Equality in the Digital Age.

4.5.5 Lessons from the interactions

- The importance of access to ICT for rural communities as it improves access to other public services such as banking, health services and making participation in informal markets economy easier.

- The role media outlets play in shaping stereotypes surrounding rural women and girls. The media has the power and capacity to create positive narratives in communities and broader society. These outlets can be used as a platform to voice and document the lives of rural women and girls and can be used to inspire new societal norms

4.6 The Role Women and Girls in the Eradication of Poverty in Rural Ghana and Power of Effective Partnerships to Sustain a Path out of Rural Poverty

4.6.1 The critical role of women in advancing agricultural and rural development, and in ensuring food security, has been widely acknowledged. Member States have committed to providing rural women with equal access to productive resources. Despite progress made, rural women persist with low levels of income, sparse access to education and health services, limited job security as well as limited land and inheritance rights. Again and again, their needs as well as their contributions are relegated to the margins of policy development and budgetary considerations.

4.6.2 This session focused on sharing Ghana's experience. In the paper presented by the Ghanaian Minister of Gender, poverty is viewed in the broader context, the situation of rural women is but one of the symptoms of a social order characterized by inequity, violence and insecurity experienced in most Sub-Saharan Africa. As such, the vision of women's empowerment must go beyond making room for women to participate in society within the present social order, as this will not suffice to end the marginalization of rural populations and the entrenched patterns of discrimination against women.

4.6.3 In Ghana, the empowerment of women required profound changes in the minds and hearts of people and in every structures of society, being in politics, spiritual or

cultural. In Ghana, the critical role of women in advancing agricultural and rural development, and in ensuring food security, has been widely acknowledged.

4.6.4 Participants agreed with the paper presented as women perform important roles in many aspects number of countries national development. Women are responsible for the housework, of food provision and the families well-being. As mothers, women raise and nurture their children.

4.6.5 The Minister acknowledge that despite progress made, rural women persist with low levels of income, sparse access to education and health services, limited job security as well as limited land and inheritance rights and called on member states to do more.

4.6.6 Concluding the session, the Minister articulated that without women, poverty eradication and the conservation of nature cannot be successfully achieved. She encouraged participants to be the game changer in their own right as women. The session agreed that women and men are equally important in the community and national development and society should also offer women the same opportunities to fully participate in the community's affairs. The delegation from Ghana displayed various craft items produced by rural women in Accra with the assistance of the Ministry of Gender.

4.6.7 Lessons from the interactions

- That everyone one is a leader and has the power to change lives around them;
- That women empowerment does not end with the women put that it has a greater impact on the society as whole.
- That dedicated partnerships in society is needed to tackle poverty;

5. Conclusions

5.1 The Commission on Status of Women emphasized the mutually reinforcing relationship among the empowerment and women and girls, the realization of their human rights and gender equality and the full, effective and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Closing the 62nd Session, UN Women's Executive Director **Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka** described the Agreed Conclusions as a “vital step forward” for ensuring equality for women and girls in rural areas. She emphasized that women and girls have clearly stated what they want: “from the rights to own property, to the need for quality infrastructure, to the rights to make decisions about their own bodies and lives.”

5.2 The outcome of the Commission's consideration of the priority theme during its 62nd session took the form of agreed conclusions, negotiated by all Member States. The CSW Agreed Conclusions recommend specific measures to end poverty and enhance women and girls' food security and nutrition, access to education, health care, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, decent work, land and productive assets, and rural infrastructure and technology, such as safe drinking water and sanitation facilities and clean stoves.

5.3 The Conclusions called for ending all forms of violence and harmful practices that impact women and girls. This year's CSW theme was so fitting that the wealth of information we got exposed to and shared with will be beneficial for a long time for the Committee Members as well all the other Members as Representatives of rural communities. It was indeed a much needed international exposure and a learning intervention.

6. Recommendations

6.1 To ensure their full implementation, the Commission's recommendations focus on: strengthening normative and legal frameworks and eliminating laws and policies that discriminate against rural women and girls; implementing economic and social policies for the empowerment of rural women and girls, including by building the resilience of rural women and girls to climate change and environmental degradation such as deforestation, desertification and loss of agricultural biodiversity and systematically measuring and incorporating the value of unpaid work performed by rural women and girls in calculations of gross domestic products (GDP) and formulation of economic and social policies; and strengthening the collective voice, leadership and decision-making of rural women and girls

6.2 Parliament of Namibia has passed a number of progressive laws designed to advance the development of women in all spheres of their lives. However, much need to be done to ensure that these laws are reinforced is implemented.

6.3 Therefore, the Standing Committee is recommending the follow actions to be considered:

1. The Committee to request reports of the previous SCW Sessions that were submitted by the Ministry of Gender and Child Welfare after attendance. The aim is to investigate which recommendations and resolutions of the SCW Sessions were implemented and if there are some recommendations that are still pending for implementation what challenges are faced by the Ministry to ensure that agreed upon resolutions are implemented and recorded as part of Namibia's SDGs achievements.
2. Standing Committee Members to acquaint themselves with the national action plans that are in place to prevent and address violence against women and follow-up on what activities the Ministry of Gender has embarked on

3. Committee to request for statistics from Ministry of Information Communication Technology on rural communities in Namibia's access to basic ICT and network coverage for radio, TV and mobile services. Statistics to be specific in terms of demographics.
4. Committee Members to acquaint themselves with all laws passed by Parliament dealing with empowering of women in order to engage with the implementing agencies meaningfully;

7. Signing Off of the Report by the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Gender, Youth and Information Communication Technology

7.1 Signed

03/12/2018

Hon. Ambrosius Kandjii

Chairperson: Standing Committee on Gender, Youth and ICT