



Commission on the Status of Women 68

Despite progress made in recent decades, **gender inequality** is deeply embedded in our world. With increasingly widespread conflict and crisis, it is



women and girls who bear the brunt of their devastating impact, often serving as *'shock absorbers'*. **As Secretary General Antonio Guterres** noted in his opening address at the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68)** on 11th March, *"tackling poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective are critical to accelerate gender equality. The reason is simple: globally, poverty has a female face"*... The recent report presented by the UN Secretary General to the Commission presents the data. Globally 10.3% of women live in extreme poverty today. Women have less access to land, natural resources, and financial assets than their male counterparts. They suffer the impacts of climate change more than men

and they are more likely to be food insecure.

Priority theme:

Accelerating the **achievement of gender equality** and the empowerment of all women and girls by **addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing** with a gender perspective.

In addition to the formal sessions of the Commission, some **750 events** relating to the **theme of CSW 68** engaged more than 15,000

participants, predominantly women and youth, drawing on the lived experience, testimony, research and practice of

participants gathered in person and virtually from around the world. After intensive negotiations, an outcome document consisting of **"Agreed Conclusions"** was adopted unanimously by the Commission, despite some protracted debate about specific language used in the text. The wide-ranging document, 25 pages in length, built on previous UN agreements but added strong calls that specified more than **75 areas of action**. These ranged from a call to integrate a gender perspective into financing for development commitments, to strengthening public institutions and implementing gender-responsive economic and social policies with more investment focused on ending poverty for women and girls. The Conclusions included robust commitments to strengthen financing and institutions to eradicate women's and girls' poverty.

➔ Watch [a short video....](#)

Did you know that:

- **Progress** towards ending poverty needs to be **26 times faster** than it currently is in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.
- **Closing gender gaps** in employment could **boost Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita by 20 %** across all regions.
- On average, women have only **64 % of the legal rights** enjoyed by men.
- The **monetary value** of women's unpaid care and domestic work globally is **at least \$10.8 trillion annually**, three times the size of the world's tech industry.
- **Just 5% of Government aid** is focused on tackling **violence against women and girls** and **less than 0.2% is directed to its prevention**.

Women's Land Rights

Without access to land, millions of women displaced from their homes or disempowered within them are more likely to experience food insecurity, gender-based violence, and economic hardships that also impact their children. This is particularly true for widows. Issues relating to women's rights to land were addressed in many of the sessions during CSW and innovative practices were shared. Despite the negative effects experienced, most women in **Kenya** do not feel comfortable approaching their local authorities regarding land rights' abuses through fear of retaliation by their communities and governments. To combat this issue, an interesting partnership was formed by the **Kenya Land alliance, the Rainforest Foundation UK, and TMG Think Tank** along with various local partners of these three organizations to build an anonymous reporting mechanism that is being tested out in Kenya. The tool is known as [Haki Ardhi](#), and it is a toll free number that women can call or text to anonymously report land rights abuses and violations. The women are then connected with trained caseworkers and paralegals who are able to take their cases forward in the courts.

➔ Watch a [short video](#) ➔ and [another video](#)

Realizing women's rights to land in the law



Dominican Sisters' Commitment to the Empowerment of Women through the Eradication of Poverty



The virtual event featured Representatives from **Dominican ministries** from various regions of the world and in very different situations. Sister Josepha, working in a conflict zone of **Cameroon**, gives the women hope. She provides

Day Care so that the parents can work and earn an income. In 2000, Marie Williams began the Young Mothers Network (YMN) in **Ireland** to serve the 1 in 10 women living in poverty. Recently there has been a rash of refugees and the law requires that they stay in one residence for no more than 6 months. Sandra, in **Northern Brazil**, works with women who have been trafficked. They have suffered domestic violence and have programs including self-knowledge, agricultural education including how to grow organic vegetables. In **Zimbabwe**, the Dominican Sisters have a girls High School giving the girls a way toward economic strength. They help them gain skills to start small businesses and in this way prevent pregnancies and early marriages. Finally, the girls from Dominican High School in **Camden, NJ** presented a set of values they are choosing to live by, namely: 1) *Provide leadership.* 2) *Treat the most vulnerable with attention and kindness.* 3) *Empower others by supporting one another.* 4) *Education breaks down stereotypes of weakness and vulnerability.*

Civil technologies for women-friendly cities.

How can technology help to protect women from sexual harassment? Three speakers highlighted innovations. **The Red Dot Foundation** developed the **Safe City app** which enables women and girls to report sexual harassment and assault anonymously. Women can consult the report, identify places where crimes took place and take precautions when in the area. This has been successfully adapted to Kenya where a **'talking box'** is used to share information. **Ehtesab** is an app developed in **Afghanistan** to protect women and girls after the Taliban takeover. Realtime emergency alerts are transmitted and can be supplemented by citizen reports. The **"HerCity"** toolbox was developed by **UN Habitat**. It connects girls to city planners in order to provide a girl-centered approach to urban planning, starting from the idea phase right up to the implementation phase. → [Read more....](#)



The Future of Africa : An intergenerational Dialogue on Strengthening Institutions for Financial Inclusion of Women.

In 25 years' time one quarter of the world's population will be in Africa, - which will also be the youngest continent in the world. There has been growing awareness of including women in the financial sector, yet to this day men outnumber women in this sector. How is wealth acquired? By ownership, investment and having a salary. Women need to be able to sustain and support a family. They need loans with a means to pay them back. Several organizations of Kenyan women are helping the women to have a more prominent place in their society. This event held at B'hai center on 13th March featured the Kenyan delegation. There were at least 7 Kenyan men present who hold important positions. They were aware of the need to improve the economic stability of the women. → [Read more....](#) → [Watch a video](#)



The call for Gender Equal Governance

On the second last day of CSW an important panel addressed the issue of **women's role in shaping justice systems** and their underrepresentation in almost every space where there is power. Panelists came from Canada, Ecuador, Uganda, Fiji and Liberia and included women who were judges, career diplomats and headed Departments of Justice, Women's rights movements as well as one of only 4 women who have ever been elected President of the UN General Assembly over its 78 year history. Referring to the forthcoming **CEDAW General Recommendation #40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision making**, **Maria Fernanda Espinosa** said "it is our opportunity to turn the tide". She noted the importance of more women serving in courts, judicial systems as well as in institutions at national level and referenced two current campaigns calling for rotative criteria to be introduced in UN elections and the "Madame Secretary General" campaign. → [Read more....](#)



COMMISSION on the STATUS OF WOMEN

Voices from the ground.

Palestinian Women.

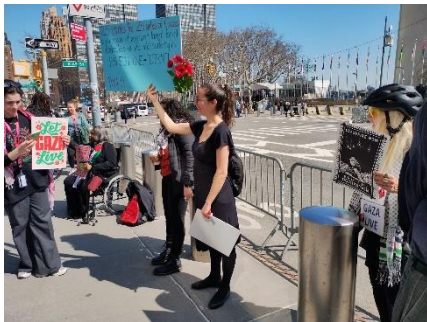
A number of events during CSW 68 highlighted the tragic experiences of Palestinian women in Gaza and gave voice to their pain. Sharing moving testimony about her family's experience a young Palestinian woman said:



“Our houses were bombed in 2023. 26 of my family members died including my parents and siblings; only a 7 year old survived. Other people who survived are injured and are now in Qatar or Turkey...some are stuck in the middle. A 15 yr old girl lost her life because of kidney problems in the hospital in the

north. How many others are silently fighting for medical care? These are real people...with untold struggles. We need to do more; we need to be their voice. People in northern Gaza are facing forced starvation. Today I'm standing for every life at risk in Gaza...I call for humanity to act decisively against these atrocities...”

A Silent Pilgrimage of Lament was organized in solidarity with the women of Palestine. Over the period of several hours we walked around the block on 45th street, midtown Manhattan, where the **US Embassy to the UN** is located in a solemn and silent procession to call out the genocide in **Gaza**. Dressed in black and carrying messages calling to “*stop the killing*” the pilgrimage made 25 rounds of the block to signify the **25 mile length of the Gaza Strip**.



➔ Read more about the plight and resilience of [Palestinian women.....](#)



Thanks to **Sr. Virginia Dorgan RSHM** and **Iliana Mejia** for contributing to this issue of *News from the UN*

Zimbabwe

Melania Chiponda is a researcher, activist and educator from Zimbabwe grew up near Chiadzwa, the area where diamonds were discovered in 2006. She raises some of the concerns about the gender dimensions of the exploitation of minerals and highlights the effects of extractive industries on women. In several panels at which she spoke she highlighted the ways in which discussions about a **just transition** to renewable energy have continuously excluded women from the conversation. She placed specific emphasis on the importance of creating policies that protect women in the informal sector and those who are in extreme poverty. Speaking about **Lithium mining in Zimbabwe** she said.



“Women don't know what Lithium is for. Because of the mine, some have lost the land they had for farming and the environment is devastated. They don't have access to energy and they are being impoverished by the renewable energy sector while carrying its negative impacts. Where coal mines have closed, women cannot even pay for the electricity that is being generated”.

Pakistan

Hadiqa Bashir is a 22 year old activist from Swat Valley, Pakistan who escaped being married off at the age of 11 and has worked tirelessly since then in combating child marriages and championing women's rights. On March 22nd she was awarded the prestigious **Global Citizen Youth Leader** award. Speaking on a panel during CSW she said...



“I am a survivor of child marriage..... When I turned 11 the marriage proposal came for me. He was a taxi driver. My family said ‘Yes’ because it was a good proposal. I was 11 and I should marry. Marriage at 11 was a tradition in our family and I would not continue my education. I was crying...My uncle told me about the law regarding child marriage and human rights and I bravely told my family that if they got me married to that man I would fight a case against them in the court of law....That was when I started my advocacy...”

Distribution

Institute Leadership Team; Area Leaders, JPIC Animators; Global Network of RSHM Schools; UN Interest Group
Portuguese translation by M. Luisa Pinho RSHM