

## Keeping the Promise that No One is Left Behind



The 61st session of the Commission on the Status of Women commenced on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2017 for kicking off 12 days of deliberation on the priority theme, **‘Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work’**. The meeting is held at United Nations Headquarters, New York and is attended by representatives of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world.

***The Commission consists of one representative from each of the 45 Member States elected by the Economic and Social Council on the basis of equitable geographical distribution***

There are forty-five Member States of the United Nations serving as members of the Commission at any one time. Of the 13 countries in Africa, Kenya is a member State. The Kenyan delegation in the 61<sup>st</sup> CSW session is led by the Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, Ms Sicily Kariuki. At the commission level, the delegation is led by the chairperson, Ms Winfred Lichuma. She is joined by Commissioner Dr Gumato, Commissioner Ndubai and the acting CEO Paul Kuria. The Commission’s participation is facilitated partly by Ford Foundation through an accountable travel grant.

# CSW 2017: Delivering as one

During his opening remarks, the chair, H.E Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil), noted that the 61<sup>st</sup> CSW priority theme is anchored on evidence from the 20 year evaluation of the 1995 Beijing China Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace that showed that no country had achieved gender equality.

The session provides an opportunity therefore to review the 58<sup>th</sup> sessions agreed conclusions on challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls.

The member states, vibrant civil society organization and delegates will share experiences, best practices and lessons learnt to ensure successful accelerated implementation of the universal sustainable development goals with inclusion development and eradication of poverty in women and girls.

The session will identify categories of women who are left behind and how they are left behind including strategies for their inclusion in the transformative 2030 agenda. The session further acknowledges and identify economic empowerment for indigenous women as a focus and emerging issue of the year.

The Commission through its overall mandate and specific functions is responsible for promotion of gender equality and freedom from discrimination including monitoring, advising and auditing affirmative actions and programs established by law for the economic and social development of women, persons with disability, children, youth and minority and marginalized groups and communities in private and public sector.

During the first week of the 61<sup>st</sup> Session, the Commission participated in government-led side events and those planned and hosted by non-State actors, the interactive sessions and in scheduled meetings with other State senior government officials.

In all meetings, the Commission keep a tab of categories of persons left behind, describe how they are left behind, in what spheres of life, drivers of exclusion, and listen to proven global strategies proposed for including everyone.

# The power of procurement in women empowerment

**O**n 15th March 2017, the Commission secretary joined other government of Kenya delegates into a joint side event between governments of Sri Lanka and Kenya, and the UNWOMEN to discuss the power of increasing procurement opportunities for women in government and private sector as one of the single most effective tools for reducing poverty among women.

A few countries in the globe including Kenya and Sri Lanka have developed enabling legislative framework required to increase women competition in businesses.

This include laws that reserve certain quotas of government procurement to women while at the same time recognizing women as competitors like men in wide pie of businesses.

Kenya for example has a law that reserved at least 30% of the government annual procurement to women, youth and persons with disabilities and also provides these groups with catalytic funds to enable them start, develop and growth businesses.

Further, the government is working closely with private banking sector to remove collateral and security related barriers among women, youth and persons with disabilities in access to financial services. Other services include liberal money banking, tax exemption for persons with disabilities, and business skill incubations.

UNWOMEN is expanding a joint program with countries with such legislative framework and supportive policy guidelines and regulations to demon-

strate the power of procurement in women empowerment.

According to World Bank 2012, about 35% Small Scale and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMES) are owned by women despite women constituting more than 50% of the population in most of the countries.

Women owned SMEs produce around 20% of the global GDP yet less than 1% of spending by large businesses on suppliers is earned by women led businesses (Vazquez and Sherman 2014).

Corporations are well positioned to promote gender equality and empower women in their workplaces, in their communities, and through their purchasing policies and practices.

Investing in women-owned businesses and integrating them into

corporate supply chains is “smart economics” and good for business.

Women-owned businesses contribute significantly to the world economy, generating millions of new employment opportunities. The two countries acknowledge that GBV, low literacy levels, conflict and lack of security, lack of business skills, the digital divide among women, lack of access to financial services, are some of the factors driving women to insufficient participation in business.



# Empowering Women through Procurement Opportunities

Majority of existing procurement and business regulations are critical ingredients for furtherance of exclusion of women in businesses and all efforts must be made to create enabling legal environment for women in businesses. Global evidence shows that reservation procurement/quotas is one of the 7 critical drivers of empowerment among women.

But this has to be accompanied by necessary skills and competencies targeting women as business partners, entrepreneurs and consumers. The general community need also understand why governments and private sector established such affirmative actions in procurement. Agencies such as 'buywomenowned' are recognized globally for promoting change in attitude towards women owned products. Currently, there are basic tools created to help corporations, governments and other actors to provide a deeper understanding of the barriers and

*'The purchase of Women Owned products helps increase sales for the Women Owned businesses and in turn helps them grow. Women Owned businesses are growing at one and a half times the U.S. national average and in turn contribute over 1.5 trillion dollars to the U.S. economy, employing nearly 7.9 million people, and adding 340,000 jobs since 2007'.*

challenges women-owned businesses face, and practical tools and techniques to help increase corporate sourcing from women-owned businesses through gender-responsive procurement. The Commission will endeavor to domesticate and popularize these tools.

## Statelessness denying women economic empowerment

**S**tatelessness or the absence of nationality is a problem affecting every part of the globe. Nationality is a sensitive issue as it is a manifestation of a country's sovereignty and identity.

Thus disputes about citizenships often result in tension and conflict both within and between states. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was an increase in the incidence of statelessness around the world and growing awareness of an concern for human rights.

Principally the domestic jurisdiction of each of the State determines whether or not a person is a citizen of a given country. This means the State's arm of government responsible for the formulation of laws

that defines a person's nationality are critical. In most of countries that power rests with parliament and therefore this body has a responsibility of reforming law to prevent, reduce and end statelessness.

National laws that do not guarantee women equality with men to confer nationality to their children are a major cause of statelessness. Gender discrimination laws is therefore correlated with denial of basic human rights including right to medical care, education, travel, legal marriage , among others.



## Discussions to enable women acquire nationality

Today there are 26 countries with laws that discriminate women in respect to conferring nationality to their children or spouses.

The Commission delegates on 16<sup>th</sup> March participated in a side event at Uganda House organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union , UNHCR, a non-state actor called Global campaign for equal nationality rights, and the Kenya Senate represented by Nominated senator Zipporah Kittony.



The Commission is interested in ensuring all laws passed in Kenya do not discriminate women conference to nationality and further that internal regulations and guidelines including procedures that discriminate women resulting to statelessness or reduced opportunities to children born by vulnerable women to sexual abuse are reviewed. The session moderated by Mr. Martin Chungong received submissions from Ms Ninette Kelly, di-

rector UNHCR New York and Winfred Lichuma chairperson, NGECC.

In her contributions, the chairperson noted that intra country procedures such as documentation required for civil registration upon birth of the child perpetuate discrimination and may deny children basic rights. For example in Kenya if a woman would like to travel for overseas medical treatment of a minor, they are required to submit documentation of their husband including their identification and passports.

Indirectly, the mother is being requested to seek permission from the partner to travel yet in some cases the mother may have had a bad relationship with the partner or the child was born out of wedlock.

The UNHCR accepted to support Kenya in ensuring internal procedures and administrative guidelines are gender responsive.

# Harnessing efforts to address gender based violence in the changing world of work



**O**n the evening of 17<sup>th</sup> March 2017, the Government of Kenya held a successful side event on multi prong strategy for a preventing and responding to gender based violence in the world of Work in the Kenya Society. The side event was organized in the side-lines of the 61<sup>st</sup> CSW.

The Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Youth and Gender Affairs, the PS in the State department of

Gender Affairs, the chair of the gender committee for council of governors, Hon Prof Paul Chepkwony, were among the leading speakers. Winfred Lichuma the chair of the National Gender and Equality Commission moderated the session.

Other participants included the Deputy Ambassador Koki Muli, and members of senate and National Assembly .

# PICTORIALS



Kenyan delegates in a photo session after the side event



(L-R)NGEC Chairperson Winfred Lichuma, Maasai Moran Joshua a testimony for male involvement in reduction of GBV and female genital mutilation and Agnes, a representative of indigenous women in Kenya



NGEC acting C.E.O Paul and retired Judge, Joyce Majiwa in a Kenya led side event.



Executive director UN Women Making intervention in a side activity by Arab Women Organization in investing in Women in Developing World. The chairperson Winfred, participated in the event



# Is Gender Based Violence an Obstacle to Development?

The Commission joined its partner FIDA Kenya and other agencies in CSW 61 in a side event which demonstrated how SGBV deters women from participating in economic development. The event acknowledged that women's economic empowerment requires the creation of decent work with fair wages, extending to informal and migrant's workers. Further the event sought a strong recognition by governments that women's economic empowerment requires an enabling environment of macroeconomic policies that support gender equality and the creation of decent work, including increasing fiscal space.

The event highlighted that Violence against women: the most ignored obstacle for development. The physical and psychological aspects of violence against women are literally barriers to participation, when violence or the fear of violence stops women from attending community meetings, or reaching markets unharmed, or safely taking a bus to work.

Violence is also an indisputable barrier for girls attending and completing school. Research undertaken by ActionAid in Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Nigeria and Tanzania found that up to 86% had reported some form of violence against them in the previous 12 months.

The event noted that violence plays a devastating role in increasing the risks to women of HIV infection. It is now well recognized globally that HIV exacerbates poverty and yet the role of violence seems to fall off the radar.



FIDA Kenya chairperson making an appeal in a side event for increased resourcing for sexual reproductive health and rights for women and girls

See <http://www.actionaid.org/2012/11/violence-against-women-most-ignored-obstacle-development>

Action Aid notes that if health, education and economic empowerment are all recognized as key indicators of poverty and addressing them is an integral component of poverty reduction, violence against women must be seen in the same light.

One way of eliminating violence against women and girls is providing adequate resources to respond to the needs of the survivors, as well as resources to prevent and respond adequately to incidences of GBV.



## The Role of National Human Rights Institution in Enhancing Women's Economic Participation in the Changing World of Work.



**K**enya eminent women in varying careers and professions were identified either to chair or speak in select side events during the 61 CSW. NGECE delegates joined in such events.

On 17<sup>th</sup> March 2017 between 1130hrs and 1245hrs, the Permanent Missions of Afghanistan, Australia, Chile, Costa Rica, Germany, Morocco, New Zealand, Qatar and the United Kingdom jointly with APF, Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions GANHRI, ( the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions ) hosted a Side-Event at the 61st Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women on The Role of NHRIs in Enhancing Women's Economic Participation in the Changing World of Work.

The side event commentary noted in part thus, ***'National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) are uniquely positioned to protect and help fulfil the human rights of women, including their economic participation. For the first time in history, governments have set the concrete deadline of 2030 for the elimination of gender inequality so that women and girls are not left behind. It is recognized that NHRIs play a crucial role in the 2030 Sustainable Development***

***Agenda. NHRIs can act as a catalyst to empower women claiming and realizing their right equal economic opportunities and to help combat discrimination against women at work, whether it be in factories, on farms, in markets, in the street, in the public sector, in the private sector, in self-employment and in the formal and the informal economies'.***

The event engaged State Ministers and A-status NHRIs from around the globe in a demonstration of the value-add that NHRIs make to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). NHRIs shared examples of best practice in their work on women's economic empowerment as outlined in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

The case studies presented roles of NHRIs in accelerating progress towards gender equality in line with various conventions that many states are signatory to. The session began with opening remarks from Ms Florence Simbiri-Jaoko, the Chair and GANHRI Special Envoy and a former chairperson of the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights.



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