



Resource Center
for Women & Girls

**REPORT ON THE COMMISSION
ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN 2017
(CSW 61)**

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**THEME: WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN
THE CHANGING WORK OF WORLD**

Date: 13 March-24th March 2017

BACKGROUND

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. 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. During the CSW, emerging issues that affect gender equality and the empowerment of women are discussed. Member States agree on further actions to accelerate progress and promote women's enjoyment of their rights in political, economic and social fields.

The Resource Center for Women and Girls (RCWG) works with 15-18 year old rural and rural-urban girls from informal settlements of Kenya. Our agenda is to transform girls' mindsets through exposing them to possibilities outside their own realities. We offer skills and training that sometimes contradict the values and norms that preside over their lives, including stark realities such as forced marriages, teenage pregnancies, harmful traditional practices, and of their environment. These values and norms are also in contrast because they deny or do not provide fundamental freedoms to girls and in turn women. We raise awareness of girls on their rights. Marginalisation and violations of girls' rights is practiced in an environment where there is no awareness that even they themselves would be able to bring about or lead change.

The work of the RCWG therefore in line with the CSW agenda, addresses SDGs³ Good Health and Well-being through our sexual and reproductive health and rights program, SDG⁴ Quality Education through our work with schools, ensuring a reduced number of school drop outs, through our menstrual management and proper infrastructure and sanitation programme, that girls go to school, stay and finish school, SDG⁵ Gender Inequality through our mentoring programmes where girls are taught about their human rights and the emphasis that women's rights are human rights and SDG¹⁷ Partnerships for the goals respectively through collaborating with like-minded organisations. Through partnerships and collaborations with other organisations, our work also addresses SDG⁸ promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Our organisation's mission is to empower adolescent girls holistically and to facilitate personal growth and increase the knowledge base and awareness of girls so that they can be part of a critical mass of young African women who are making informed and effective choices about their lives, and who will be part of a new generation of female African leaders and agents of transformative change in their communities. Through participating in the CSW, we are able to gain insights and learn from organisations represented at the CSW doing similar work around the world

OBJECTIVES

- Attending side events that are relevant to the work of the organisation
- Explore possible ways in which the organisation can participate in 2018's CSW e.g. through collaborating for a side event
- Reach out for more collaborations and partnerships with other like-minded organisations represented in the CSW
- Link up with existing partners of the organisation who will be represented
- Linking up with the Kenyan government at the Kenyan Mission to the UN and explore ways that RCWG can be part of the Kenyan delegation in the next CSW

SIDE EVENTS ATTENDED

1. Step it up together with Rural Women to End Hunger and Poverty
2. Gender Responsive Humanitarian Action: GenGap De-Brief
3. Women, Peace and Security
4. Women Entrepreneurs: Empowering Women's Economic Leadership
5. Putting Advocacy for Women's Rights at the Center of Sustainable Development
6. Fighting Stereotypes with Judit Polgar, Chess Grandmaster and planet 50-50 champion
7. Engaging and Providing Structural Strategies that will Encourage Women and Girls and Enable them to Empower each other at every step of their Lives
8. Ending Violence Against Women: Prevention and Response in the Changing world of work
9. Accelerating Rural Women Farmers' Access to Markets and Trade
10. Gender Equality in Nationality Laws
11. Engaging and Providing Structural Strategies that will Encourage Women and Girls and Enable them to Empower each other at every step of their Lives
12. Making a Difference: Innovation and Women in Power
13. Pathways to Economic Justice for Adolescent Girls and Young Women
14. Financial Inclusion of Women: Facilitating Economic Empowerment of Grassroots women in the changing world of work
15. Young Women's Leadership and Voices at the United Nations
16. The Role of Family in Achieving the SDGs for Women, Men and Children
17. Women in Leadership Positions
18. Child Marriages: 'The Girl Child is our Future: Lets End Child Marriages
19. Transforming Violence towards Women in the Workplace Empowering BOTH men and women

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SIDE EVENTS

1. In side event 2, **Gender Responsive Humanitarian Action: GenGap De-Brief**, the panelists explored gender budgeting, closing the gender gap and the different needs for men and women in gender budgeting. One of the panelists in the side event was Agnes Odhiambo the controller of budget in Kenya. Ms Odhiambo presented on the status of Kenya and how they were implementing Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in Kenya through the constitution by allocating 30% of resources to women, youth and persons with disabilities (PWDs). After the presentation, I raised a question to Ms Odhiambo, asking about the resources that the government of Kenya has put aside for rural adolescent girls and how girls were accessing these resources. She responded by stating that the 30% resources allocated for women, youth and PWDs factored in adolescent girls.

2. In Side event 3, **Women, Peace and Security**, the UN was urged to be more effective and have less fragmented systems in order to include more women in the top ranks of the Security Council and negotiation tables, so that they can be part of providing solutions of preventing war as opposed to making war safer for women.
3. In side event 4, **Women Entrepreneurs: Empowering Women's Economic Leadership**, there was emphasis on the 30% funds allocation for women, youth and PWDs. The Permanent Secretary (PS) for Gender office in Kenya Ms Zeinab Hassan who was one of the panelists mentioned that out of this 30%, women contribute to the highest number of borrowers from the government and this in turn has led to creation of more Savings and Credits Cooperatives (SACCOS) which are women run and led and have borrowed up to \$50,000 to date. She further mentioned that she has reports where women borrow from as low as \$500 to \$7500 without securities or interests, a clear demonstration that women are bankable.
4. In side event 5, **Putting Advocacy for Women's Rights at the Center of Sustainable Development**, there was emphasis on bringing more grassroots representatives to spaces like the CSW and empower them to represent their issues. Dinah Musindarwezo, FEMNETs executive director mentioned the need for respective governments to realise the expertise civil society and non-profit organisations have in dealing with gender equality because there has been a notable lack of willingness to address structural inequalities by governments
5. In side event 7, **Engaging and Providing Structural Strategies that will Encourage Women and Girls and Enable them to Empower each other at every step of their Lives**, the discussions were about ending FGM practice in the Gambia, and other countries in general. There was emphasis on hearing more voices of young women in the fore front fighting FGM and more involvement of men was highlighted as a critical component in stopping FGM because men's voices can and do make a big difference.
6. Side event 8, **Ending Violence against Women: Prevention and Response in the Changing world of work** focused on how Violence against Women (VAW) paralyses the work of women. One of the panelists shared an example of the restaurant business in the United States. She stated that it was the biggest employer yet the lowest paying in the US. Women who work in restaurants tolerate a lot from their customers because they depend on the tips from these customers who for example grab and touch them in various parts of their bodies. Therefore, if the employers could pay the workers a full minimum wage, sexual harassment could be cut by half.
7. In side event 10, **Gender Equality in Nationality Laws**, the discussions revolved around discrimination of women in conferring nationality. Senator Zipporah Kittony was one of the panelists and mentioned that in Kenya to date, individuals are required to provide their father's documents when acquiring passports. The Kenyan law discriminates against women in that, fathers can confer citizenship to children born outside Kenya while mothers cannot. Other examples include Somalia where mothers cannot confer citizenship to children or spouses while in Togo, women can confer citizenship to children. The Kenyan members of parliament present agreed to take this up with the Kenyan government because Kenyan citizens are still required to produce father's documents when acquiring passports, yet there are many factors which could make a mother not want such documents presented or a relationship disclosed and this should be respected.
8. In side event 11, **Engaging and Providing Structural Strategies that will Encourage Women and Girls and Enable them to Empower each other at every step of their Lives**, the panelists addressed various ways in which girls can be empowered to realize their full potential and

notably the role Education plays in ensuring gaps of inequality are filled. Needs of girls are many and to address them, we must focus on specific issues that affect girls. Encouraging and respecting women leads to better contribution by women and better production. More men should be engaged to join in the empowerment of women and the process of gaining equality. For women to realize their full potential and be economically empowered, they must be of good health and well-being. Women must and should be listened to before any process of their empowerment can start.

9. In side event 12, **Making a Difference: Innovation and Women in Power**, the discussion was about how women can use innovation to empower themselves and participate fully in leadership processes. Musimbi Kanyoro, the CEO Global Fund for Women was one of the panelists and her contribution was about how women use technology to empower themselves. She cited an example about how Global Fund for Women asked women to enroll on an online survey and 95% of rural and sub Saharan women were tech savvy and agreed to have access to internet, Facebook, twitter and WhatsApp. In this event, I met a woman who shared a link we can use for girls to explore different careers which we can use during one of the mentoring camps.
10. Side event 13 **Pathways to Economic Justice for Adolescent Girls and Young Women** had H.E first Lady of Zambia as one of the panelist and Ms. Nyaradzayi as the moderator of the panel who opened the session stating the fact that women and girls are an agenda for the present and not for the future. Mrs Lungu talked about girls and women having control over resources as opposed to only access of those resources. Girls and women should be employed in productive sectors and should be empowered to have skills to enable them to earn, spend and save. More support could and should be directed to local initiatives that support girls and young women because economic vulnerability gives impetus to spouses and society to exploit women and girls. Other panelists shared about their organisations and how they were providing opportunities and spaces to empower women and girls economically.
11. Side event 15 **Young Women’s Leadership and Voices at the United Nations** had an all-girls panel. The session was opened by Aasha Shaik, a former girl advocate in the working group on girls of the UN, who sang the theme song she had played part in composing for the International day of the girl. All the panelists contributed by stating that girls do not have an opportunity to have their issues heard and girls face unique challenges which are neither women’s challenges nor children’s challenges. Girls should be brought to the discussion tables in panels and conferences so that they can speak about and for themselves. This is because girls face marginalisation from different spheres and even though their experiences are different, they are valuable. Equality for women and girls should cut across and girls need to be told what is in the outside spaces for them and those spaces should be opened and they should have access. This way, people who are not directly affected by girls’ issues can stop giving suggestions and solutions, whilst girls can be and provide solutions for their own issues. There should be more funding for girls’ work because girls are usually accommodated in other peoples’ spaces. In this side event I commented by noting that girls do get confused because whilst they are given adult responsibilities in the home and the community, they are treated as children.
12. Side event 16 **The Role of Family in Achieving the SDGs for Women, Men and Children** was co-hosted by the Kenyan government, Ambassador Koki Muli opened the session by noting that the role of women is critical in achieving SDGs and at the same time, family also plays a key role in achieving SDGs. She handed over to Jane Kagai, one of the panelists representing the office of H.E First lady of Kenya’s beyond zero campaign who went ahead to

note that in the spirit of the SDGs theme of not leaving anyone behind, engagement of every individual is essential in achieving the SDGs. She spoke about the \$6 million the campaign has spent to ensure there is a mobile clinic in every county in Kenya. The campaign has created awareness on the role of women in giving life to humans and has stimulated dialogue against harmful cultural practices. The other panelists spoke about the importance of father-daughter relationships, the importance of marriage in reducing risks for children and that children do best when there is team work between mothers and fathers. One of the panelists stated that there should be more character education instead of sex education.

13. Side event 17, **women in leadership positions** had a mixture of young and older women. The two young women panelists were Irene Kagoya of Akina Mama wa Afrika and Jean Ann Ndow of World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS). Irene shared her personal experience trying to campaign for an elective post and was dismissed on the grounds of being a single woman, and after she got married, attempted again but was dismissed on the grounds that her husband wasn't from the area she was vying at. She mentioned how politics has been commercialized in many African countries and only rich people have access. Jean Ann-Ndow an advocate for WAGGGS talked about the lack of confidence among girls going into the work place due to how they are socialized and their experiences growing up. She explained the need to keep girls motivated, build their confidence and mentioned the Juliet Low seminar for girls and young women between 20- 30 and the Helen Storrow seminar for girls between 18 to 25 which is open for girls guides and girl scouts only as spaces where WAGGGS does this.
14. In side event number 19, **transforming Violence towards Women in the Workplace Empowering BOTH men and women**, Ms Joy Lynn Alegarbes the director of Huru International was one of the panelists. Her organisation which manufactures re-usable sanitary towels and distributes them through huru kits, a drawstring backpack which contains 8 huru pads, three pairs of underwear, bar soap, a re-sealable water proof bag for storing soiled huru pads and educational materials on SRHR. The huru pads are made in Mukuru kwa Njenga in Nairobi, and are sold to organisations for \$35. Huru has a team who have been trained on SRHR and train other organisations interested in partnering with them on how to train, distribute and use the huru kits.

LESSONS LEARNT/RCWG CAN LEARN FROM CSW61

- Networking is key in ensuring visibility of self and organisation
- I met women who have come to more than 21 CSWs, I think it's important to give young women and girls the platform to attend CSW
- The picture painted by Kenyan delegates about Kenya were far from truth in my opinion
- To apply and stay connected to the Kenyan delegation secretariat in order to ensure our organisation is added in the next delegation list
- In order to maximize the CSW opportunity fully, discipline is needed.
- Kenya did not have any representation by a young woman, and I raised the point to Ambassador Koki Muli who responded by mentioning Youth was represented although the youth in this case was a man.



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- Resource Center could be the organisation that produces the young women representatives at the next CSW
- The Cabinet Secretary indirectly cautioned Kenyans from asking questions and putting Kenya on the spot in side events if the issues can be addressed at the mission 'Not washing dirty linen in public'