



*This issue of the News from the UN focuses on the recent events surrounding **International Women's Day** and the **Commission on the Status of Women**. **Veronica RSHM** and **RSHM NGO intern Sofia Kac** share some of the most memorable events attended over the two week period.*

The Commission on the Status of Women - CSW 69



The **UN Commission on the Status of Women** met in NY from **10th – 21st March** at a time of rising tensions at both global and national level. Despite the many challenges, some 8,000 civil society participants registered, many of whom gathered in New York, together with the official member state delegations. The theme of **CSW 69** centered on the **30th anniversary of the 4th Conference on Women**, and featured an assessment of the progress and gaps in implementation of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**. This was an ambitious plan grounded on 12 pillars to achieve equal rights for all women and girls. The plan had been agreed by 189 governments in 1995.

In addition to the two weeks of official meetings of the Commission, numerous side events were organized by member states and UN agencies and some 750 parallel events took place in virtual spaces and in-person venues outside the UN.

➡ Watch the **video message** for [International Women's Day](#). ➡ Watch the [short video](#) ➡ [Read more](#)

The Secretary General's Report: Looking back

The UN Secretary General's report served as an appraisal of the implementation of the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action**. It was based on reviews received from **159 countries** and covered the progress made over the 30-year period and the challenges faced. It also identified priorities for further action in the journey towards gender equality.

Despite the evident progress that has been made on gender equality and women's empowerment, gender discrimination remains deeply embedded in all economies and societies. This imposes barriers and chronic constraints, limiting the fulfillment of the rights of women and girls. **Although 1,531 legal reforms**



have been made since 1995, women still have only 64% of the legal rights of men. In 2024, nearly a quarter of governments worldwide reported a backlash on women's rights. Despite this, and following negotiations conducted by member states over the course of the preceding months, a **Political Declaration** reaffirming states' commitment to advancing the rights, equality and

empowerment for all women and girls was adopted by consensus on March 11th.



"Legal frameworks are only as strong as their implementation".

The **12 critical areas** named in the Beijing Plan of Action remain as relevant today as they were in 1995. However, there are many new areas of concern that need to be addressed linked to the unthinkable changes brought by rapid pace of technological change and contemporary global crises. **The Beijing +30 Action Plan**, includes several issues not considered in the 1995 global context. Among these are the **need for equal access to technology** which provides online safety and privacy, **climate justice**, prioritizing women's and girls' rights in adaptation to climate change and full financing and inclusion **of women in national plans on peace and security** and humanitarian aid. Comprehensive social protection, legislative protection to end violence against women and girls and full and equal decision making power were also highlighted.

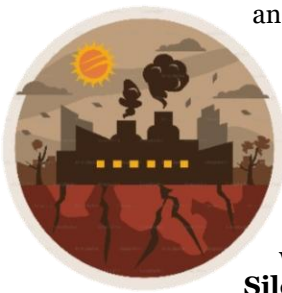
➡ [Read more](#)....



12 Critical Areas

1. Women and poverty
2. Education and training of women
3. Women and health
4. Violence against women
5. Women and armed conflict
6. Women and the economy
7. Women in power and decision-making
8. Institutional mechanisms
9. Human rights of women
10. Women and the media
11. Women and the environment
12. The girl child

Gender and the toxic legacy of nuclear weapons



A panel focused on the social **ramifications of nuclear weapons** and their devastating and disproportional impact on women and children. Women, as mothers, are directly affected by radiation, which also influences male fertility and child health. Dr. Jennifer Simons spoke about the **long-term health effects of radiation exposure**, including leukemia, cancer, and birth defects, referencing **Hiroshima, Nagasaki**, and ongoing nuclear testing in **Kazakhstan** and the **Marshall Islands**. She described these as crimes against humanity. Fallout from nuclear testing has had dire effects on women, with younger girls being particularly vulnerable to cancer. The need for gender-sensitive approaches to disarmament was highlighted with data showing high rates of miscarriages on islands near sites of nuclear testing such as the **Bikini Atoll**, Marshall Islands. Senator Mari Lu emphasized the importance of inclusive leadership and the need for women's representation in global disarmament discussions. The event concluded with a screening of **The Silent Fallout**, shedding light on the ongoing impact of nuclear weapons. ➡ Watch a [short video](#).

Testimonies From Gaza



Photo by Mufid Mainun on Unsplash

In a world where truth often becomes the first casualty of conflict, **journalists from Gaza** have continued to serve as the steadfast voice of a people under siege. An event during CSW 69 brought together a panel of journalists who have covered the conflict, offering firsthand accounts of their experiences, the challenges they face, and the role of journalism in such a volatile environment. These brave men and women not only face the daily challenges of reporting from one of the most dangerous places on earth, they also endure immense personal and professional sacrifices to shed light on the realities of life in Gaza.

Through their stories, we explore the resilience, courage, and unwavering commitment to truth that define the work of these journalists, and discuss the vital importance of their efforts in ensuring the world remains informed despite ongoing restrictions and threats. Israel is targeting the backbone of the community: the women. It is estimated **that over 12,000 women have been killed and more than 17,000 mothers** have lost a child and are dealing with insurmountable grief in the midst of a battlefield. With no honored safe zones, and battling erasure, the emotional burden on Palestinians is horrendous.

“12 million girls are married every year. That means 23 girls a minute”. (Ambassador Rae – Canada)

The Spotlight Initiative

This is a global, collaborative effort of the United Nations and the European Union. Launched in 2017, and identified by the Secretary General as a high impact initiative, it is now the world's largest targeted effort to end all forms of violence against women and girls. It tackles violence holistically and funds preventative and response programs, addressing problems that include domestic violence, sexual and gender-based violence, femicide, and labor exploitation. Among the results mentioned during a CSW 69 event, are the following:

“Investing in girls’ education opens doors. Investing in girl’s empowerment creates intergenerational benefits”.

- **548 laws or policies** were signed or strengthened and **50 countries** strengthened their national action plans
- **384 million women and girls** were reached in campaigns to prevent gender-based violence
- Nearly **8 million young people** participated in programmes promoting gender-equitable attitudes and behaviors and 6 million men and boys were educated in positive masculinity.
- The **overall rate of convictions** for gender-based violence doubled across 13 countries.

➡ Watch the [video](#)

Early, Forced Marriage and the rights of the Girl Child

Ending Child Marriage was the focus of a special session sponsored by **UNICEF** on March 11th. In his opening remarks, Canada’s Ambassador to the United Nations noted that no one has the rights to steal childhood away from a girl. *“The rights of a child..to be a child; to grow...to possess dignity and choice; this is what defines us as human beings”*. In 2014, Canada and Zambia first partnered in preparing a resolution to end Child Marriage. The campaign launched then has led to an ECOSOC resolution being passed each year for the last 10 years and the inclusion or adaptation of the legal frameworks in many UN member states.



Three young women who were married off as children shared their testimonies in person. All three are now tireless advocates for change in legislation and the implementation of policies that defend the rights of children. Among them was **Loveness Mudzuru, from Mrewa, Zimbabwe** who has started her own community-based organization and who, together with another child bride survivor, managed to bring a court case in Zimbabwe, resulting in the change of the legal minimum age for marriage and an amendment to the Customary Marriage Act in 2021. ➡ Watch a [short video](#)



Digital Gender Violence: Towards Transformative Policies and Partnerships in the Beijing+30 Framework:



The conscious decision by tech companies not to ban algorithms that promote sexual violence is both intentional and problematic. The argument that these algorithms are driven by human behavior allows platforms to become

free-for-alls, where harmful content is granted impunity. There has been **95 million dollars** spent lobbying **against** bills that **advocate for child protection**, instead tech companies protect harmful ideologies and dangerous behaviors so that they can flourish in anonymous spaces.

Under Threat: Life Near U.S. Military Bases in Japan:

The **U.S military bases in Okinawa** have had a long list of sexual assaults committed by U.S soldiers from 1945 to 2024 with over 1,000 cases. A panel of **young women from Japan** provided a woman's perspective on the colonialism and male-centrism in Okinawa that directly impacts their livelihoods, mainly their distress and safety concerns while walking around their hometowns because the fear of sexual violence by American soldiers who can act with immunity.



“How and with whom do we plan our cities so they work for women? We need to change from the past male focus”. (UN Habitat).

Climate Justice and Development: the role of women in Agroecology

A parallel event put on by a Brazilian NGO highlighted the important role that women play in **Agroecology** and the significance this holds for increasing food sovereignty, climate resilience while also promoting women's empowerment. In spite of the challenges women face in accessing the right to land and resources, their struggle has borne fruit in many areas of Brazil. Included among the good practices shared during the event was an **aquaponics project**. It involves integrating aquaculture (*fish farming*) with hydroponics (**soilless plant cultivation**) in a recirculating system, without soil. This project has helped to develop entrepreneurship among women,



while providing them with a source of income and healthy food for their families. It has been shown to be ten times more productive than aquaculture and particularly valuable in regions where drought is frequent and water scarce..

“Gender equality is not only about justice, it is about unlocking potential..” (Ambassador - Germany).

➡ Watch [the short video...](#) and ➡ [another](#)

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Global Network of RSHM Schools; UN Interest Group