

Women's Major Group

Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Thursday, July 7th 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM
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Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of civil society and Women's Major Group. The situation for women and girls has gotten dramatically worse since the last review of SDG5 in 2017. If you want to Build Back transformatively, then the needs of women and girls in all their diversities must be addressed more comprehensively.

1. First, more states should implement gender budgeting and locally led interventions to ensure that the needs of women, girls and gender diverse individuals are prioritized and supported. States must also invest in strengthening data collection and analysis systems, so that they can better identify and address gendered problems or gaps for the well-being of all women.
2. Prioritize financing of policies and programs that guarantee universal access to the full spectrum of sexual and reproductive health services. This includes contraception and access to safe abortions. These services should be integrated, of high quality, and accessible to all women throughout their lives. Provision of health services should be free of stigma, discrimination, coercion and violence, with full respect for bodily autonomy, privacy, confidentiality, and full and informed consent.
3. During the COVID period, the rights of older women were severely curtailed. Their voices must be included in discussions about their rights and their autonomy to make their own decisions, guaranteed. As life expectancies increase and the global population of older women grows rapidly, their needs must be included in development goals going forward.
4. Increasingly civil society is under threat from government surveillance, state-sponsored violence, and restrictions on funding and resources. Increasing populism, authoritarianism and anti-rights lobbying are part of an interconnected ecosystem that is trying to undo gains made by human rights activists. To counteract this, governments must implement quotas and other measures to increase women's participation in politics and higher management levels of organizations. They should guarantee civic space for discussion and advocacy by funding civil society organizations and protecting free speech. And they should put in place legal and other protections for women advocates and human rights defenders.
5. We must also repeal laws and policies that discriminate against women and girls, including laws against those with diverse sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. Progressive laws and policies should be implemented to address the intersectional challenges that women face such as sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices including female genital mutilation. Especially those women who

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have to migrate as a result of poverty, environmental disasters, violence or forced displacement.

6. To achieve the ambition of the 2030 Agenda of “Leaving no one behind”, the digital gender divide MUST be addressed. Governments should seek to remove barriers to digital access for women across the world, especially women at the grassroots and those that are low-income or from other marginalized groups.
7. Comprehensive sexuality education should also be delivered within and beyond schools and grounded in human rights, gender equality and bodily integrity. Such education should be evidence-based and accessible to all.
8. Linking with SDG4 (also under review at HLPF) & given that women in all their diversity have been most impacted by COVID as they are by disasters & war, & have the highest rates of illiteracy - access to quality affordable relevant education & training for decent work to enhance their economic & social wellbeing along with that of their families, communities & so national economies.
9. Finally we must ensure that women have an equal opportunity to lead, participate in and benefit from universal energy access, a just and inclusive energy transition and food and nutrition security. Without women's active participation in leadership, the goals for environmental sustainability and achievement of all SDGs, including #13 regarding Climate Action will never be possible.