



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 March 2024

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-eighth session

New York, 11–22 March 2024

Agenda item 3 (a) (i)

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Interactive dialogue among youth representatives on the 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”

Chair’s summary

1. On 14 March 2024, the Commission on the Status of Women held an interactive dialogue on the 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”, to facilitate exchanges among youth representatives from delegations of Member States. Participants exchanged experiences, knowledge, lessons learned and good practices, with an emphasis on the multiple dimensions of inequality, which exacerbate how young women and girls experience poverty. The Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources of the Philippines, Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga, made an introductory statement and chaired the dialogue.

2. The following speakers made opening remarks: a doctor and advocate for sexual and reproductive health and rights, Harshita Umesh (India); the founder of Voice of Romni, Anzhelika Bielova (Ukraine); a disability rights activist, Melike Bal (Türkiye); a researcher and activist working with the Youth Peer Education Network, Yassine Jrad (Tunisia); and a representative of Articulação Nacional das Mulheres Indígenas Guerreiras da Ancestralidade, Samara Vaxun Crendo (Brazil). Representatives from 27 Member States and 7 civil society organizations engaged in the discussion with panel members. The Assistant Secretary-General for Youth Affairs, Felipe Paullier, shared his reflections on the panellist’s presentations.



Context

3. Compared with their male counterparts, women and girls disproportionately face higher poverty rates, and this is exacerbated by such barriers as a lack of inclusive policies, inadequate funding and the impacts of gender-based violence and discrimination within communities, including those affecting Indigenous groups, persons with disabilities and individuals facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Recently, the world has witnessed various crises and the disproportionate impacts thereof on women and girls, pushing them further into poverty. A holistic examination of poverty through a gender lens is, therefore, imperative to develop a comprehensive understanding of the economic, social and political power dynamics involved and identify the actions necessary to dismantle barriers and implement solutions.

Multidimensional challenges and barriers faced by young women and girls living in poverty

4. Speakers underscored the imperative of recognizing and tackling the distinct obstacles encountered by underrepresented and marginalized women and girls, which heightened their vulnerability to poverty throughout their lives. The compounding socioeconomic hurdles faced by women and girls subjected to discrimination and inequality based on such factors as race, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity were emphasized as critical concerns. Effective strategies for poverty eradication must include acknowledgement of, and measures to address, the multiple and intersecting dimensions of poverty, with the comprehensive inclusion of all women and girls in all their diversity ensured in the design, implementation and evaluation of interventions.

5. Speakers emphasized that women and girls in impoverished circumstances faced significant barriers in gaining access to essential resources, such as food, health care, housing, education, skills training and employment opportunities. Speakers underscored the role of education, emphasizing that the lack of access to quality education at all levels was a major impediment for women and girls living in poverty. Furthermore, participants highlighted that school attendance and retention rates were adversely affected by several factors, including conflicts, the disproportionate burden of care and domestic work, harmful social norms and practices, and inadequate financial resources for educational expenses. Securing financing for education, establishing robust social protection mechanisms and redistributing the burden of care and domestic work were therefore considered essential in improving literacy rates and the quality of education for all women and girls.

6. Speakers voiced concern regarding the barriers to employment options and the overrepresentation of women in the informal economy and called for more discussions on the rights of Indigenous peoples, environmental justice and the effects of land degradation and deforestation. Lack of decent pay and the gender pay gap perpetuated the economic vulnerability and impoverishment of women. In addition, the substantial time commitment required for the unpaid care and domestic responsibilities taken on by women, particularly among the world's poorest households, remained a significant barrier to gaining access to the education, training and skill development necessary for engaging in formal employment opportunities.

7. Participants highlighted the critical nexus between poverty and violence against women and girls, including harmful practices, underscoring it as a major area of concern that profoundly affected the health and safety of young women and girls, resulting in heightened school dropout rates and hindering their ability to secure and maintain meaningful employment. Furthermore, speakers noted the concerning expansion of violence against women and girls into online spaces within the currently

evolving digital landscape. In addition, it was emphasized that conflicts worldwide were significant contributors to the escalation of poverty among women and girls. In addressing such complex challenges, survivor-centred approaches were considered essential for effectively combating poverty.

8. Speakers underscored the significant challenges posed by the lack of access to quality health-care services and by insufficient food and nutrition in the ongoing struggle to eradicate poverty among young women and girls. Access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health-care services, including contraception to prevent unplanned pregnancies, emerged as a crucial tool in breaking the cycle of poverty for many low-income families. Mental health issues among young women and girls in impoverished environments were also highlighted as an area requiring attention and urgent action in the fight against poverty.

The way forward

9. Speakers highlighted a range of strategies aimed at empowering young women and girls and enhancing and enforcing social protection schemes in which discriminatory gender norms were acknowledged and efforts were made to counteract them. They stressed the importance of establishing robust regulatory and policy frameworks with a gender lens to address the challenges encountered by young people. They also highlighted the necessity of achieving gender equality in political leadership and decision-making roles at all levels and supporting youth participation in electoral processes and intergovernmental decision-making, with a view to ensuring that youth voices were heard and considered. Furthermore, partnerships with youth-led and women-led civil society organizations were recognized as central to the eradication of poverty. Speakers recommended an increase in travel and technology grants to facilitate the participation of young people from conflict-affected or impoverished areas in international dialogues. A comprehensive approach involving government, international financial institutions, the private sector and non-governmental organizations was viewed as crucial for coordinated and impactful interventions.

10. Speakers stressed the importance of increased investments in key areas such as education, care systems, social protection mechanisms, digital literacy and skills, entrepreneurship, menstrual health, gender-responsive crisis response and rural development with a view to combating poverty effectively among young women and girls. Speakers called for the solutions proposed by young people to current challenges to be applied immediately and not relegated for consideration in the future. Speakers also highlighted the significance of the upcoming Summit of the Future and the Pact for the Future as important opportunities to integrate youth perspectives into efforts addressing global challenges and to collectively envision the future.