



GWI Advocacy Report 2019

UN Side Event: Women as Right Holders through the UPR and the SDGs

GWI Advocacy Goals

1. 100% of United Nations Member States commit to policy, legislation, budget and infrastructure to facilitate transition of girls from primary to secondary school and ensure gender parity and gender equality throughout secondary education by 2030.
2. By 2030, 100% of United Nations low income Member States have increased access to tertiary education for girls and women by 50%.
3. 100% of United Nations Member States commit to and implement policies for continuing education to empower women throughout the life course, within the formal and informal economies.
4. Influence the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.
5. All 17 SDGs will include girls' education targets.

Name: Valerie Nam (Intern – GWI)

City of UN Representation: Geneva

Session/meeting attended:

Geneva; UN; 08/03/2019; 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.; *International Women's Day*

Subject of session/meeting: Promoting women as rights holders and the importance of involving women in the development of technologies

Sustainable Development Goals addressed:

Primarily SDG 5 with mention of SDG 4, SDG 8, SDG 11, and SDG 16

Summary of Meeting

On International Women's Day, 8 March, UPR Info hosted a side event titled Women as Right Holders through the UPR and the SDGs during the 40th Session of the Human Rights Council. The event aimed to explore how women can be promoted as rights holders, as well as the importance of involving women in the development of technologies.

Four panellists were introduced by Executive Director of UPR Info, Mona M'Bikay. They were Yibza Aynekullu Tesfaye, the Minister-Counsellor of the Permanent Mission of Ethiopia; Alfonso Barragues of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Geneva; Eleonora Benhar, the Head of Medical Product at Natural Cycles; and Judith Fessehaie, the Trade and Development Manager at the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development.

M'Bikay proposed a series of questions for the panellists to consider. They included, "How can UPR lead to women's rights improvement?", "How can STEM and technology catalyse women's rights?", and "What is the added value of women in the STEM sectors?"

To begin, Tesfaye generally highlighted the purpose of the women's rights movement and why the empowerment of women is important. He expressed that improving women's rights not only impacts women and girls worldwide, but it also contributes to the achievement of all the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDG). Only by ensuring the rights of women and girls will the world see gender equality, economies that work for all, and sustainable shared environments.

Barragues highlighted the work UNFPA completed in collaboration with UPR Info. He shared that UNFPA primarily focuses on sexual rights and gender equality, and together with UPR Info they conducted an assessment on sexual rights. Through the assessment they discovered that less controversial issues receive more attention than other pressing issues such as the need for adequate sexual education. Barragues then called for the need to improve national accountability systems that put pressure on governments to enforce the laws they adopt but fail to implement effectively.

Representing the private sector in the panel, Benhar strives to empower women by putting them back in control of their bodies through a non-hormonal, digital birth control. In addition to the Natural Cycles app, the organization strives to have a gender balance at every level including within the traditionally male-dominated areas such as the health-technology field and the research & development field.

Fessehaie introduced the She Trades Initiative by the International Trade Centre. The initiative provides women entrepreneurs with a platform to network and connect to markets. Women entrepreneurs can share information and ideas with buyers and each other. Fessehaie also shared her recommendations for countries to promote women's economic empowerment. They included producing better data on women in trade, increasing the presence of ministries and agencies involved in gender equality at the table, and increasing the representativeness of those women's organizations that *are* at the table.

This side event provided a platform to share the amazing current work that is occurring for women's rights and education while simultaneously advocating for even more action and investment.

How this serves GWI members:

- **Share current ideas and projects that address women's rights and education**
- **Outline what next steps to take at the national and international levels**

Submitted by: Valerie Nam
12/03/2019