



## Commission on Status of Women, United Nations

### Graduate Women International - Advocacy at UN CSW 68 - March 2024

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*CSW 68, the best so far, because it ventured beyond the known issues to address critical intersectional areas of the inclusion of Women to Positions of Power and Decision making, to address crucial emerging issues of Artificial Intelligence and their impact on Economy, Health, and Education. We made significant strides in exposing the dire need of Including women to Impactful Leadership Decision making in all sectors and by participating heavily with world entities to strengthen efforts for concerted positive for women and girls – Shaila*

#### Reflections and Overview

As I gather my thoughts and perspectives on the 68th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), I share my determination and passion to exponentially advance case for women and girls. CSW is a vibrant global platform, a pivotal fulcrum to numerous areas of civil society engagement, facilitating:

#### Purpose and Passion

- The power of collective action towards shared purpose, to dismantle barriers, amplify voices, and ignite change and fuel passion.
- Impact: through resilient action and solidarity to influence decision making and our ripple impact to improve lives of women and children

#### The Agreed Conclusions (AC) and implementation

- Negotiated by respective Member States resonate expectation that critical issues of outcome will be address, i.e. equity, poverty, strengthen institutions, and infuse gender perspectives into financing, education health, climate, and artificial intelligence
- We influence the AC 68 outcomes for equitable policy inclusions, impact high decision makers to make sound commitments to impact classrooms, boardrooms, and corridors of power.

#### CSW 68 Theme of Financial Empowerment and Decision-Making lies at the heart of Equity

- Financial institution's role in gender equity and barriers of access, was addressed for the first time and CSW committed to integrating gender lens in national budgeting, the unbanked, access to capital and credit, regressive taxation, and ensure women's economic security.
- Inclusion of Women in high Leadership and decision-making is central to conversation, and, advocating for women's participation in high-level STEM leadership, research, and governance.



### **Innovation and Technological Change and Artificial Intelligence:**

- CSW68 delved into Artificial Intelligence, innovation, and technological change. Forecast expected future trajectory of STEM education, entrepreneurship, and Fintech, to envisioned girls coding algorithms, women leading AI initiatives, and breaking barriers in health tech.
- Our role as architects of this future. Our advocacy shapes policies that nurture STEM talent, bridge digital divides, and empower women to thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
- Our collective journey, from Beijing 1995 to 2030, CSW is our platform toward the Beijing Declaration and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Equity as Our North Star:

CSW68 was not an endpoint; it was a milestone. As architects of gender equity, together we will build a sustainable future for all, across sectors, intersectional fields, member states,

### **Priority Theme For 2024**



The 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68), held in 2024, focused on the 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”. This theme reflects the urgency to advance gender equality globally.

CSW 68 stands as a pivotal moment to assess pressing gender equality issues, build consensus, and drive transformative actions. It reaffirms the commitment to a more equitable future for all women and girls worldwide. The central focus was on addressing poverty and strengthening institutions with a gender perspective to accelerate gender equality. The urgency to accelerate progress, highlighted by data, showing 10.3% of the world’s women live in extreme poverty, and are impacted disproportionately compared to men. Progress toward ending poverty by 2030 needs to be accelerated by a factor of 26 to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Method of Work, Participants and Process**

The Commission discusses best practices and policies, addressing gender-poverty gaps as follows

**Discussions and Negotiations:** The goal was to lift both women and men out of poverty and foster just and sustainable economic development for nations. Representatives from non-governmental organizations delivered statements on critical issues related to poverty and gender equality. Civil Society had a significant presence in making statements, participation in negotiations, working with their own member states and organizing influential parallel events. Youth participated in dialogues with decision-makers and presented their recommendations.



**Outcomes and Commitments:** By the end of the second week, the Commission agreed upon a set of actions and recommendations which serve as a blueprint for improving the lives of women and girls by reducing their time and income poverty and boosting their leadership. Member States, UN entities, and NGOs hosted hundreds of side events alongside the Commission's session to rally around critical gender equality issues.

- The outcome of CSW68 was the adoption of agreed conclusions on the priority theme as negotiated by all Member States. The agreed conclusions emphasized the need to address poverty, strengthen institutions, and promote gender equality through financial mechanisms.
- Resolutions: CSW68 adopted resolutions, including one on women, the girl child, and HIV and AIDS, provide a roadmap for action and policy implementation.
- Blueprint for Change: By the end of CSW68, the Commission agreed upon a set of actions and recommendations expected to serve as a blueprint for improving the lives of women and girls, reducing time and income poverty, and boosting leadership.

**World Entities' Involvement:** The United Nations Secretary-General emphasized that tackling poverty and strengthening institutions with a gender perspective are critical for accelerating gender equality. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the International Labor Organization (ILO) actively participating and engaged in discussions, sharing available sources, to raise awareness and catalyzed discussion on embedded financing practices perpetuates poverty

**Civil Society :** Impact of Civil Society and NGOs is to contribute and influence adoption of agreed conclusions, during live negotiations at CSW68 by bringing critical in matters to the attention of member states and negotiation process. This year they raised awareness about gender biases in artificial intelligence, AI systems, poverty's impact on women's healthcare access, and other critical issues. CSO's and NGOs actively advocate for gender equality, influence global outcomes. Civil Society alongside Member States, UN entities, & NGOs hosted countless side events, addressing critical gender equality issues, and NGOs hosted discussions/ collaboration

- Advocated for women's rights, gender equality, and empowerment.
- Organizing parallel events, workshops, and discussions alongside the official sessions.
- These events provided additional platforms for dialogue and knowledge sharing<sup>1</sup>.
- Submit written and oral statements, highlighting critical issues and proposing solutions<sup>2</sup>.
- Network with other CSOs and NGOs, Member States, and UN entities to collaborate.

## Country Perspectives and Members States

Implementation of CSW 68 varies across countries, with several active member states making statements and commitments to take concrete steps. Successful implementation will depend on political will, collaboration, and sustained efforts by member states, civil society, and international organizations. Following are few examples of supporting members, amongst others:



United States of America (USA) actively reaffirmed its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and focused on gender-responsive climate action, integrating a gender perspective into environmental and climate change policies <sup>1</sup>.

Canada urged the government to address poverty, invest in comprehensive poverty eradication policies, and make sustained investments in the care economy, including accessible childcare.

Denmark: contributed to the agreed conclusions and emphasized implementing the 2030 Agenda comprehensively, considering its universal, integrated, and indivisible nature <sup>2</sup>.

Sweden: known for its commitment to gender equality, actively reaffirmed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, emphasizing comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda <sup>2</sup>.

United Kingdom (UK): actively participated in CSW68 poised to accelerate gender equality and empower women by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions <sup>1</sup>.

## Key Elements Deliberated and Negotiated



CSW 68, overall deliberation was on Gender Equality Acceleration and the prioritization of advancements in gender equality, by addressing disparities in education, economic opportunities, and decision-making authority. Strategies were explored at local, national, and global levels to promote progress in these areas and several others.

1. Empowerment of Women and Girls to highlight the multifaceted nature of empowerment, encompassing economic empowerment, access to healthcare, political participation, and freedom from violence. Specific issues discussed are as follows
2. Financial Institutions and Economy, focusing on financing and institutional strengthening on issues such as biases in financial institutions and the unbanked population. Strategies to empower women economically and bridge financial gaps were discussed.
3. Institutional Strengthening by Advocacy for institutional reforms to ensure gender-responsive policies and programs, which aligning laws, policies, and institutional practices for gender equality goals, focusing on biases, unbanked populations, and economic empowerment.
4. Gender-Responsive Financing and Budgeting identifying critical role of financial mechanisms in advancing gender equality was highlighted. Member States committing to integrating a gender



perspective into budgeting, resource allocation, and aligning financial resources with gender equality goals, addressing the needs of women and girls in budgeting processes.

5. Inclusion of Women's leadership in high decision-making and policy level, as crucial strategic acceleration reaching meaningful equity before by 2030 and pulling in the predicated 150 years.
6. Poverty Alleviation: Strategies to address poverty as a significant barrier to gender equality and empowerment included social safety nets, access to credit, and training for women-led entrepreneurship.
7. Artificial Intelligence (AI): An interactive dialogue on "Artificial intelligence to advance gender equality: challenges and opportunities" exposing AI impact on gender equality, address biases, and ensure equitable access.
8. Women's Security: Discussions may have touched upon women's security, including violence prevention, safety, and protection, although detailed information on this topic may require further research.
9. Care Economy and Childcare: The need for transformative care-led strategies and increased investments in social services, including discussions on childcare, caregiving responsibilities, and recognizing the value of unpaid care work, was highlighted during CSW 68.
10. Focus on Marginalized Groups: Emphasis was placed on highlighting the experiences of women with disabilities, indigenous women, and LGBTQ+ individuals to ensure their inclusion and empowerment in discussions on gender equality and women's rights.

## Gains and Losses for Women

Each year agreed conclusions start as zero draft with many closed paragraphs lifted from ACs of previous years. The core language continues, in essence the account deficits are carried forward and restrictions imposed on the permitted language that is allowable for introduction of new content.

We are often squeezing our emerging issues and innovation through a bottle neck, often recycling the gains and losses. In summary, while the CSW68 agreed conclusions made strides, addressing existing biases, ensuring financing, and implementing actionable steps remain critical for achieving true gender equality and empowerment as follows

### Gains for Women:

1. Increased advocacy, awareness and attention to critical emerging issues affecting women globally, including efforts for awareness about gender disparities and the need for action.
2. Commitment to financing, focusing on financing with a gender perspective was a positive step. Acknowledging the importance of financial resources for gender equality was a gain.
3. Recognition of AI impact, the inclusion of artificial intelligence, AI in discussions and the potential impact, addressing embedded bias in AI's and associated gender implications for future policy and investment decisions.
4. Emphasis on Rural Areas and Climate, addressing rural women's needs and climate resilience gained prominence. Prioritizing these areas can lead to positive outcomes for vulnerable groups.

### Losses for Women:



1. Insufficient commitment to implementation, despite the AC, translating them into concrete actions remains a challenge, and hinders implementation strategies hinders progress.
2. Persistent gender biases in institutions and infrastructures continue to hinder women's advancement and the AC lacks clear mechanisms for dismantling discriminatory systems.
3. Underrepresentation of women in decision-making, despite recognizing the importance of women in power, progress is slow, and needs concrete steps to increase their participation in decision-making are needed.
4. Challenges in financing women's access to finance, although the need for women's financial inclusion was highlighted, barriers persist and access to credit, entrepreneurship support, and financial literacy programs require sustained investment.
5. Inadequate investment in health and education, while health and education were recognized, funding gaps persist, and insufficient resources hinder women's access to quality healthcare.
6. Limited focus on violence against women, while violence against women was mentioned, specific actions were lacking, and comprehensive strategies to combat violence are crucial.
7. Complexities in addressing caregiving burden, the AC only touched on caregiving but lacked detailed solutions to supporting unpaid caregivers, often women, remains a challenge.

## Recommendations and Actions:

After two weeks of intense negotiations, the 68<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) adopted by consensus on 22 March 2024 its outcome Agreed Conclusions, which puts forth concrete measures to accelerate empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty. CSW recognized that embedded practices and systemized biases and exclusions in financial institutions contributed to exclusion of women in high leadership and all levels, thus perpetuating poverty.

Through the outcome document, the Commission expressed concern that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and that the feminization of poverty persists. It also recognized with deep concern that women and girls experience higher poverty risks and rates than men and boys and that the gender-poverty gap is projected to persist. It acknowledges that currently, 10.3 per cent of women are living in extreme poverty.

### General Recommendations

**Mobilizing Financial Resources:** The CSW68 Agreed Conclusions recommend mobilizing financial resources from both public and private sources. Strengthening the international financial architecture is crucial to support gender equality initiatives. Ensuring a gender lens in national budgeting processes is emphasized <sup>3</sup>.

1. Strengthening Institutions and institutional reforms to promote gender equity. Member States are urged to align laws, policies, and practices within institutions with gender equality goals.
2. Robust institutions are essential for effective implementation of gender-responsive policies.



3. Gender-Responsive Financing to integrate a gender perspective into budgeting and resource allocation is a key action.
4. Member States commit to ensuring that financial mechanisms prioritize gender equity to include targeted investments in areas such as education, healthcare, and economic empowerment etc.

### **Specific Key Recommendations**

- Ensure women's participation and leadership in public life, economic policy, and poverty eradication to address gender biases.
- Strengthen national and local budgeting to address challenges of vulnerable women and girls.
- Allocate adequate resources and integrate a gender perspective into development financing, policies, and evaluations.
- Safeguard women's right to work, ensuring fair treatment and access to decent work.
- Foster partnerships to combat poverty through improved tax systems, financial inclusion, and employment opportunities.
- Ensure equal access to credit, social security, and resources, and eliminate legal barriers to women's economic rights. Ensure access to banking and addressing the unbanked.
- Develop financial literacy programs to promote women's access to formal financial services.
- Ensure access to quality healthcare without financial burden.
- Facilitate equal access to technology and digital spaces for women and girls.
- Enhance international tax cooperation, prevent regressive taxation, and eliminate gender-based price differentiation (pink tax).
- Data collection to improve multidimensional poverty data and statistics.

### **GWI Impact at UN CSW 68**



At CSW68, Global Women's Initiative (GWI) played a pivotal role in shaping the agreed conclusions, which are crucial policy recommendations for Member States and the international community. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs advocated for specific language and priorities, ensuring that the final text reflected the diverse needs and perspectives of women worldwide. Their active participation in negotiations held governments accountable for gender equality commitments and provided a normative framework for addressing gender-related challenges.



GWI brought visibility to critical issues that may otherwise have been overlooked, such as intersectionality, marginalized voices, and data gaps in policymaking. Through capacity building and knowledge sharing, CSW68 facilitated skills transfer, North-South cooperation, youth engagement, strengthening gender advocacy efforts. Despite facing challenges like funding constraints and political backlash, GWI and other NGOs demonstrated resilience by adapting to virtual formats and forming coalitions to amplify their impact. Equally emphasized importance of Data collection and gaps in current processes. Worked with UN agencies and external educational entities to promote engagement with youth, and facilitate youth-led organizations participated actively, bringing fresh perspectives and innovative solutions. Our involvement ensures normative framework for addressing gender-related challenges and guides national policies, legislation, and programs.

Our Advocacy leadership spearheaded the charge by organizing high level events with World Bank and International Monetary Fund and UN Women, invited to represent GWI at the US, Canadian and UK mission briefings and events. We highlighted the thematic issues of importance of Women in Power and decision making and impact of AI and gender equality and access to health, and addressing the UN Members state delegation as well as keynoting for the UN Conversation Circles leaving a lasting legacy that continues to influence policy discussions globally.

In summary, GWI's contributions at CSW68 significantly advanced gender equality through their influence on agreed conclusions, visibility efforts, capacity building, resilience, and individual leadership. The following is the breakdown GWI influence

### **Advocacy Vice Presidents' Participation at CSW 68**

This CSW 68 more than others, addressed real time emerging issues such as Women in Leadership, Funding and Financing for Women, financial Institutional frameworks, Artificial intelligence were addressed. AI came up at most of the 11 different events I was part of organizing or speaking. Also was the most inclusive CSW because it included all sectors, addressing several SDG areas of Poverty education, health and VAW but also was intersectional with technology, leadership, and AI.

CSW 68 Engagement - Participated till the very end of CSW on Friday 22 .6.00 pm EST, many of us sitting at our computers waiting for delegations to return from their closed-door deliberations. For the first time CSW was not completed, instead held over to Wed March 27Th for final conclusions. The chair Ambassador Lagdameo of the Philippines called for a vote on the AC, final version from facilitator, Amba. Yoka Brandt, Netherlands, circulated at 5:30 p.m. But Nigeria objected to "recycled Language and said her delegation could not agree to adopt the Conclusions. Mauritania didn't approve or some language about reproductive and sexual rights. See video [//webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1q/k1q3z22kuy](https://webtv.un.org/en/asset/k1q/k1q3z22kuy)





Agreed Conclusions - Much of the language that we had worked on and submitted prior to the zero draft was included into AC, CSW 68. Many paragraphs, which were presented as closed, had already accepted some of that language. During CSW negotiations process, responded to call for language and inclusion. Items that were still not acceptable are still being debated. Will report in more detail in my report on CSW 68. First CSW 68 that was held over after CSW 68 had ended

Made an Oral Statement on Artificial Intelligence at “The Interactive Dialogue” on behalf of GWI to entire delegation at the CSW68 member States Delegation focused on the emerging issue: Artificial intelligence to Advance Gender Equality. Reported GWI, previously IFUW’s long engagement and leadership, and track record in digital spaces in advancing digital rights since 2003 at the World Summit of Information Society in Tunisia and Geneva.

Launched GWI Advocacy Influencers Global - Advocacy Without Borders at the CSW 68 Member States Assembly addressing Artificial Intelligence at the CSW 68 Member State Assembly on Artificial Intelligence Dialogue. Presented and outlined recommended courses of action, highlighting challenges and opportunities.

Presented AWB, strategic plan to collaborate with our GWI Regional leadership to address shared issues.

[FIND Statement](#)

UN Women - Chaired the “Conversation Circles for UN Women CSW” on Gender Equity and Economic Bias- Made the keynote presentation and lead the event on “Women in Power” with 380 registered attendees.

Parallel Events, Organized, Moderated and Presented

1. WG sponsored - Parallel Event Title: Poverty Impacting Women’s Healthcare Access: Gender biased Artificial Intelligence and Infrastructure Creating Barriers. Expert, speakers from Artificial intelligence, Health, Journalism and Davos leadership CEOs. Excellent feedback.
2. GWI sponsored event -Financial Institutions and Infrastructure Perpetuating Poverty - Gender Bias in Economic Policy Virtual Event: We were honored with high-level expert speakers from



World Bank, IMF, and UN Women. 137 registered - 90 attended. Collaboration will continue. Excellent feedback.

3. Who’s Minding the Kids? US Childcare as Vital Infrastructure, US Women’s Caucus
4. Strengthening Ties Between the US and the UN CSW 68 US Women’s Caucus
5. Collaborative CSW 68 Updates, North America, and Europe
6. “Financing and Female Lead Innovation and Entrepreneurship” Mutale Foundation
7. “Alleviating Poverty through Digital Technology” Pacific Rim Institute for Development
8. “Ethical Business and empowering Women to alleviate Poverty - Ethical Business Building Future.

Attended countless high-level invitation only events with World Bank, IMF and other invited to member state missions and other parallel events. Reports and feedback to be shared at meetings and webinars.

## GWI Hosted Parallel Events

### 1 Financial Institutions and Infrastructure Perpetuating Poverty- Gender Bias in Economic Policy

The flyer is for a Commission on Status of Women event. It features a title, a date (Mon, Mar 18, 2024), a description of the event's focus on financial institutions and gender bias, a registration link, and a list of speakers with their titles and organizations. The speakers include Shaila Rao Mistry (GWII), Hoda Bital (Global Investor), and Menkhat Nowak (GWII).

Developed by GWI VP Advocacy, Shaila Rao Mistry, and GWI VP with support from Memcom and GWI and Advocacy Influencers Global, Advocacy Without Borders The event considers financial institutions and infrastructures intended to promote economic growth and alleviate poverty, systematically contributing to perpetuating and widening gender bias. Understanding inhibitive financial policies exposes the causal linkage with poverty, and the intersectionality of infrastructures with mindsets, which exclude women’s economic participation. Expert speakers address improved access to financial services as foundational to economic growth and gender equity. We identify effective policies for inclusion of unbanked women and diversity, as critical steps redress exclusionary, gender biased differentiating practices and predatory individuals to drive meaningful advancement to systemic barriers to access the money-well. Speakers: World bank, International Monetary Fund’ UN Women, STEM - Institute

### 2 Educating Outside the Classroom: Women’s Museums Empowering Girls and Women

Developed by GWI VP Education, Shirley Gillett, and GWI Education Committee Chair Lucia Guzman, with support from EduCom and MemCom. The event will treat the subject of relatively recently established specific women’s museums or a women’s section of a current museum. Such institutions are a public



good and funding them is vital in the education and empowerment of girls and women and the achievement of gender equality. Based on the country poor women and girls may or may not have access to museums. All Women must have access, regardless of background, to participate in museum, as living embodiment of history and culture, are valuable in deconstructing the status and position of women.

### 3 Sustainable Financing for Gender Equality: Young Women’s Perspective



Developed by GWI Young Member Network President and GWI Treasurer, Sudha Srivastava, and GWI Executive Director Stacy Dry Lara. As the world is moving towards a sustainable future, we cannot imagine gender equality without sustainable financing specially for young women. This interactive event will explore gender disparities due to financial factors with examples from various regions of the world. An expert panel of young women will present a comparative analysis based on strong database and research. A range of innovative solutions from various collaborations will be presented including public-private partnerships, development finance, public policies, gender budgeting and international funding. Followed by or audience interaction via opinion polls and Q&A session and a surprise performance by a young woman.

### Action - Implementation - Next Steps

As stated, the 68th session of the CSW 68 is a prolific platform for global stakeholders to assemble and address pressing issues of gender equality and women's empowerment. Participants from governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector engaged in thought-provoking dialogues on topics of intersectional feminism, such as financial institutions perpetuating inequity and poverty to the role of women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Delegates shared best practices, innovative approaches, and success stories in advancing gender equality in their respective contexts. They also made commitments to take concrete actions to address the systemic barriers that continue to hinder progress towards gender equality. The discussions were marked by a spirit of collaboration, inclusivity, and determination to drive meaningful change for women and girls worldwide.

Moving forward it is imperative that the outcomes of CSW 68 are translated into tangible sustained measurable efforts and results from all stakeholders to implement the agreed-upon recommendations, policies, and programs that emerged from the session. By prioritizing the rights and needs of women and girls in all decision-making processes, we can create a more just, equitable, and inclusive world for all.



Through continued collaboration and advocacy, we can build a future where gender equality is not just a goal to strive for, but a reality. Following are some next steps for implementation by all stakeholders, including civil society in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment:

1. **Policy Implementation:** Stakeholders should prioritize the implementation of gender-responsive policies and programs that address the specific need and rights of women and girls, and equal access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and political participation.
2. **Women's inclusion and participation in Leadership in Power and Decision Making** in all sectors of Government, Private sector, and UN high level Agencies. Specifically increase the number of women in these positions through targeted pipeline building, appointments, and mandatory quotas.
3. **Capacity Building:** Invest in capacity-building initiatives that empower women and girls with the skills, knowledge, and resources to thrive in various sectors, including STEM, entrepreneurship, and leadership.
4. **Data Collection and Analysis:** Improve data collection and analysis mechanisms to better understand the challenges and opportunities facing women and girls, including disaggregating data by gender, age, ethnicity, and other relevant factors to inform evidence-based decision-making.
5. **Advocacy and Awareness:** Engage in advocacy efforts to raise awareness about gender equality issues and mobilize support for policy changes that promote women's rights and empowerment, including leveraging media, social networks, and community outreach to amplify women's voices and experiences.
6. **Partnerships and Collaboration:** Foster partnerships and collaboration among governments, civil society organizations, the private sector, and academia to leverage collective expertise, resources, and networks in advancing gender equality, including promoting cross-sectoral initiatives to address root causes.
7. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establish robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress towards gender equality goals and hold stakeholders accountable for their commitments. Conduct regular assessments, reviews, and reporting on the implementation of gender-responsive policies and programs.
8. **Intersectionality and Inclusivity:** Recognize and address the intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalization faced by women and girls based on factors such as race, ethnicity, class, disability, sexual orientation, and age. Adopt an intersectional approach to policy development and implementation.

By prioritizing these implementation points and working collaboratively towards their realization, stakeholders can make significant strides in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment at local, national, and global levels.

