



YOUNG FEMINISTS WANT SYSTEM CHANGE

A global advocacy toolkit,
for the Beijing+25 process
and beyond.



wecf

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POWER TO WOMXN AND GIRLS



A

Introduction – power to womxn and girls

“I love to see a young girl go out and grab the world by the lapels. Life’s a bitch. You’ve got to go out and kick ass.” Maya Angelou

Advocacy spaces such as international processes and negotiations can be quite complex from the outset and difficult to access for youth. This manual aims to motivate and support young feminists to participate in international policy-making and foster system change beyond Beijing and the multilateral stage. It has been developed in the framework of the project “Re-booting Womens’ Rights” financed by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ). Organisations and individuals with different levels of skills, expertise and experience are of course also welcome to make use of it.

Within the United Nations (UN), an intergovernmental organisation made up of 193 member states, the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) deals with gender equality, women’s and girls’ rights and their empowerment. 25 years ago, the UN Fourth World Conference on Women resulted in a visionary policy agreement to advance women’s human rights and gender equality: the Beijing Platform for Action. With the 25th anniversary of Beijing (Beijing + 25) this manual will celebrate and renew the commitments from 1995.

This manual draws from the excellent and detailed description of the CSW process and guidance for civil society by the NGO CSW “A Guide for NGOs and Women’s Human Rights Activists at the UN and CSW 2019” (<https://ngocsw.org/advocacy-guide/>) available in various languages and as an app. We also reference the Resource Mobilization Toolkit for Girls, Young Women and Trans Youth by FRIDA, the Young Feminist Fund (see here: <https://youngfeministfund.org/publications/>).

A useful online gender glossary can be found here: <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36>

WOMXN IN ALL THEIR DIVERSITY

Comes from the independent policy Or “women in all their diversity”, as it is short for, is used throughout the spelling and recognises that women are not one homogenous group.



FROM CAUSE TO ADVO- CACY

B From cause to advocacy

Issue I care about



I don't think my decision-makers are doing enough on the issue I care about.

I've been waiting for people to bring this issue up, but still haven't seen enough action to tackle it.

So I decided to do something about it myself!

From cause to advocacy

During

Before

Strategy meetings

My advocacy network has a strategy meeting the day before the Process X meeting starts. They also meet daily to strategise how we get decision-makers to act on the cause we care about.

Interventions

The network has a working group that drafts these.

Side events

I host an event and give interventions on my expertise during someone else's.

Online campaigning

Twitter storms, photo campaigns or livestreaming is bridging the gap between local and global.

Meeting with delegates

Can be one-on-one or with the network. Preparation is key.

Creative disruptions

These are solidarity actions that are powerful if there is a critical mass.

Contact my delegates

To see who will be at the meeting, what their positions are, and ask if they want to participate in my side event.

Position paper

I join my network's working group and use my expertise to give input to our common political positions.

Side events & booth

I apply before the deadline and start preparing for these well in advance.

Read up

I prepare myself thoroughly on the topic.

Logistics

I book hotel, flights, and apply for visa. I register and prepare all documents I need for registration.

First I started by looking within my own networks. Together with some friends we set up a small feminist collective, such as a book club.

We then started joining talks, workshops and watching online webinars. We started mobilising nationally through networks, attending round-table policy meetings with national actors.

Then one person in my group got in contact with Anja who works for an NGO who also cares about this issue, she put me in contact with Nadya, who is very active in a global advocacy network called Awesome Feminists Unite.*

This network is one of the official networks following the international Process X, and is open to all feminist and women's rights organisations following the process. It mobilises through emails, on a listserv and it has several different working groups. For example, one group is writing political position papers, another group is doing outreach etc.

I'm attending the high level meeting on Process X at the United Nations headquarters, in New York.

WHAT IS AN ADVOCACY NETWORK?

They are activists and experts who voluntarily are fighting for a common cause and keeping an eye on decision-makers. It can for example be a network of gender experts and feminists who are following and giving input to the climate negotiations to ensure they create gender-just and sound policies. UN policy spaces are rather complex, and for each intergovernmental process there are usually different rules regarding civil society's participation and different networks.

Ways to influence

There are various ways for me to influence decision-makers during the high-level policy meeting on Process X. The work starts at home.



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

C Know your rights

Herstory of policies, rights and world conferences

1. The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

o What Is It?

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), one of the main organs within the United Nations. CSW has been described as the UN organ promoting gender equality and the empowerment of womxn. Every year, representatives of member states gather at United Nations Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and the advancement of womxn worldwide.

The CSW is one of the commissions of the UN that do not limit participation to states only. For example, NGOs are also allowed to participate in sessions of the CSW, attending caucuses and panels and organising their own parallel events through the NGO Committee on the Status of Women (NGO CSW/NY).

o Short history of the CSW

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) first met at Lake Success, New York, in February 1947, soon after the founding of the United Nations. All 15 government representatives were womxn. The CSW forged a close relationship with non-governmental organisations. In the beginning, the Commission worked towards establishing principles and international conventions to change discriminatory legislation and raise awareness of womxn's issues, including the use of inclusive language in the international law arena.

The Commission drafted the early international conventions on womxn's rights, such as:

- o In 1953 the Convention on the Political Rights of Women,
- o In 1957 the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women,
- o In 1962 the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages.
- o In 1979 the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which was adopted in 1967 and in 1999, the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which introduced the right of petition for violations of the Convention.

SRHR

Sexual and reproductive health and rights is a concept of human rights applied to sexuality and reproduction.

For its 25th anniversary, the Commission recommended that 1975 be designated “International Women’s Year”. Thus, the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City was held, followed by the 1976–1985 UN Decade for Women. In the 80s, the focus was on issues of violence against womxn. These efforts resulted in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (adopted in 1993), followed by the appointment of a UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. Subsequently, other special procedures that work on gender equality and womxn’s rights (e.g. the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls and the Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity) were mandated.

The Commission served as the preparatory body for the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, which adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Furthermore, the Commission was mandated to play a central role in monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which it is also doing for the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2020. In 2011, the four parts of the UN system working on gender equality merged to become UN Women, now the Secretariat of the Commission on the Status of Women.

2. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

The [Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#) is an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Described as an international bill of rights for women, it was instituted on 3 September 1981 and has been ratified by 189 states (see interactive map of status of ratification here: <https://indicators.ohchr.org/>).

The Convention was the culmination of more than thirty years of work by the CSW. The Commission’s work has been instrumental in bringing to light all the areas in which womxn are denied equality with men. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the body of independent experts that monitors the implementation of the Convention. The Committee may consider individual communications alleging violations of the Convention by states parties to the [Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women](#).

For a list of the UN human rights treaty system see: NGO Committee on the Status of Women, New York, 2019, A Guide for NGOs for Women’s Human Rights Activists at the UN and CSW 2019, p. 17.

INTER-SECTIONALITY

The term was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw and in simple terms means that a person does not only experience the world from the perspective of patriarchy, but through an interplay of various discriminating power structures. In other words, the interplay of discrimination due to race, education, sexuality, ability, class, age, language, culture, gender and ethnicity determines a person’s opportunities and how they interact with society.

3. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action

The [Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action](#), adopted by 189 countries at the UN's Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) held in Beijing, China, addresses in particular 12 critical areas of concern to womxn globally. It is a non-legally binding agenda for womxn's empowerment and a key global policy for gender equality. It aims at removing all the obstacles to womxn's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through ensuring their full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. This means that the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between womxn and men at home, in the workplace, and in the wider national and international communities. Equality between womxn and men is a matter

of human rights and a condition for social justice. It is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace.

To this end, governments, the international community and civil society, including NGOs and the private sector, are called upon to take strategic action in the following [twelve critical areas](#) of concern identified in the Platform for Action:

- o Women and poverty
- o Education and training of women
- o Women and health
- o Violence against women
- o Women and armed conflict
- o Women and the economy
- o Women in power and decision-making
- o Institutional mechanism
- o Human rights of women
- o Women and the media
- o Women and the environment
- o The girl child

There are two policy processes looking at the Platform for Action this year. Firstly, member states will report during CSW64 on how far they have come in the implementation of the agenda. Access the official website of UN women for more information about Beijing+25:

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020>

GENDER STATISTICS RELY ON SEX- DISAGGREGATED DATA

Gender statistics rely on sex-disaggregated data: prerequisites are that they reflect questions, problems and concerns related to all aspects of womxn's and men's lives; that they are based on concepts and definitions that reflect the diversity of womxn and men; and that the methods of the data collection take into account stereotypes and social and cultural factors that may induce gender biases.

Secondly, with the 25th anniversary of this visionary agenda, UN Women has announced 6 action coalitions, which they wish to inspire tangible action.

These are: 1) Gender-Based Violence, 2) Economic justice and rights, 3) Bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), 4) Feminist action for climate justice, 5) Technology and innovation for gender equality, 6) Feminist movements and leadership. These are to be finalised during the

Generation Equality Forums in Mexico and France in the summer. Governments will then have 5 years, or whatever timeframe is decided during the forums, to accomplish these actions.

Further reading: <https://www.wecf.org/global-feminist-benchmarks-for-b25-process/>

4. The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), adopted by all UN member states in 2015, provides the world's plan for peace and prosperity for people and the planet up until 2030. It reaffirms and builds on previous agreements such as the millennium development goals, but it is not legally binding. At its heart are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries (including the Global North and the Global South) in a global partnership. They recognise that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. Goal 5 focuses on gender equality and is a cross-cutting goal throughout the Agenda.

The mechanism to review progress and hold governments accountable to their commitments under the 2030 Agenda is the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), mandated in 2012 by the outcome document of the [UN Conference on Sustainable Development \(Rio+20\)](#), „The Future We Want“. The format and organisational aspects of the Forum are outlined in [General Assembly resolution 67/290](#). The Forum meets annually under the auspices of the [Economic and Social Council](#) for eight days reviewing each year a different cluster of SDGs. Governments will provide Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) according to their own schedules and are encouraged to engage stakeholders, e.g. major groups, in their preparation. Civil society can provide their own reports, as WECF is doing under the [WOMEN2030 programme](#).

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY (UNGA)

In the UNGA all 193 member states of the UN are represented to discuss and work together on a wide array of international issues covered by the Charter of the United Nations, such as development, peace and security, international law, etc.

BEIJING AND 25 YEARS ON - 2020 THE JUBILEE YEAR -

BEIJING DECLARATION & PLATFORM FOR ACTION - 1995

Advancing the goals of equality,
development and peace for all women
everywhere in the interest of all humanity



JUBILEE BEIJING PLUS 25 - 2020



Pivotal year for the accelerated
realization of gender equality and
the empowerment of all women and
girls, everywhere

JUBILEE BEIJING PLUS 25 - 2020

Comprehensive national-level reviews
of the progress made and challenges
encountered + regional commissions of
the United Nations 25-years reviews



EVENTS BEIJING PLUS 25 - 2020

March
New York - 64th Commission on the Status of
Women

May
Mexico City - Gender Equality Forum



July
Paris - Civil Society Forum
Paris - Gender Equality Forum
New York - High Level Political Forum

September
New York - United Nations General Assembly

Generation Equality Action Coalitions

1. Gender-based violence
2. Economic justice and rights
3. Bodily autonomy and sexual reproductive health & rights
4. Feminist action for climate justice
5. Technology and innovation for gender equity
6. Feminist movements and leadership



HOW DO I ENGAGE?



D How do I engage? Finding your way through the wiggly maze of global advocacy (UN)

The chapter Herstory concentrates on those international processes that deal with women's and girls' rights, their empowerment and gender equality issues. To reach our goal of a feminist future, civil society work hard at influencing these processes and their outcomes (this is called advocacy). This chapter will look at how to engage in these processes best and which networks are relevant for us to get involved in.

1. The intergovernmental process

o Actors, roles and actions

Within international processes negotiations are taking place, they result from the interactive dialogue between member states, the bureau of the respective UN body – including the secretary and the chair – and other stakeholders, e.g. non-governmental organisations, intergovernmental organisations and academia. For the main organs of the United Nations please click here: <https://www.un.org/en/sections/about-un/main-organs/index.html>

Member States send their delegations for general discussions, these are mainly government representatives and officials. In these delegations experts of different topics should be included (e.g. civil society). The conclusions (there are different types varying between the different intergovernmental processes) will be made widely available by the member states to the public in their own country. Follow-up action must be encouraged.

The UN **Secretary-General** is the chief executive officer of the United Nations and is a spokesperson for the interests of the world's people. Tasks are entrusted upon them by UN organs, such as the General Assembly, ECOSOC and the Security Council.

The **Bureau of the UN** has a crucial and proactive role in the preparation for the session of the CSW (in other intergovernmental processes it is the bureau of the respective process). The bureau organises regular briefings and consultations with member states.

The Chair facilitates the different sessions and applies different statements and prepares the outcome of discussion in form of a summary.

Non-governmental organisations can gain consultative status with the ECOSOC, one of the main organs of the UN. With this they have access to ECOSOC, subsidi-

ary bodies, human rights mechanisms of the UN, ad-hoc processes and special events. NGOs facilitate together with the Secretary- General broad-based participation.

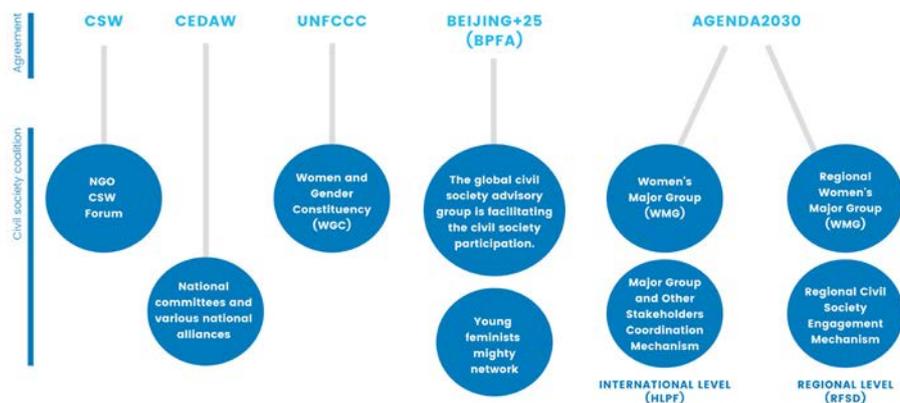
o How the UN influences our lives

Sometimes the United Nations seem far away from us, especially in our daily life. The question follows, why should we even care about the process and the outcome documents?

The UN develops international law and legal responsibilities of member states in their conduct with each other. On the national level the UN supports governments in the implementation of (binding) conventions and other international law and policies and in enhancing their effectiveness in order to establish good laws, institutions and processes, which impact on the daily life of every countries' inhabitants. The UN supports countries with the UN Development System (UNDS) to implement and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. However, it all depends on the political will and commitment of the member states to provoke real change. Civil society plays a major role also on national level. There are national associations that promote the work of the UN on national level as well as organisations working on specific topics including respective UN processes and/ or agreements. The role of civil society organisations is also crucial within the implementation of the Agenda 2030: they deliver new perspectives and solutions, serve to enrich debates and help to build global awareness of the Agenda 2030. Civil society organisations have the expertise and knowledge needed to achieve many goals and to facilitate the voices and the participation of womxn and girls in all their diversity within these processes.

2. Civil society networks and UN spaces – Who acts where? Where are the entry points for civil society?

Intergovernmental agreements and civil society coalitions observing them



D How do I engage?

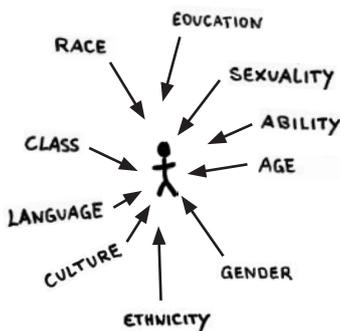
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/aboutmajorgroups.html>

After the Earth Summit in 1992 the UN Environment Programme (UNEP, now [UN Environment](#)) adopted the Major Group Approach, as defined in the [Agenda 21](#), a comprehensive plan of action for the environment. Similarly, for intergovernmental processes on sustainable development the [Major Groups and other Stakeholders \(MGoS\)](#) system was established. The Major Group Approach means that civil society are allowed to access these two policy processes through self-organised thematic groups. Originally these major groups were: Womxn, Children and Youth, Indigenous People, Non-governmental Organisations, Local Authorities, Workers and Trade Unions, Business and Industry, Scientific and Technological Community, Farmers. Since Agenda 2030, these groups are being expanded on with other stakeholder groups that self-organise when they see a lack of representation, e.g. the LGBTIQ constituency was recently officially recognised. The MGoS coordinate civil society's participation in the official meetings of these processes, they make

sure their members have access to official documents, coordinate recommendations. Dialogues with the major groups and other stakeholders increase the diversity and provide insights from all areas of civil society, they also have an awareness raising and multiplier effect.

The MGoS were integral to the development and adoption of the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs and they are still active in the annual follow-up and review process, regionally at the [the Regional Forums for Sustainable Development](#) as well as at the [High Level Political](#)

Diversity



THERE IS NO SUCH THING
AS A **SINGLE-ISSUE**
STRUGGLE BECAUSE
WE DO NOT LIVE
SINGLE-ISSUE LIVES.
Audre Lorde

www.womenmajorgroup.org

Forum.

For womxn's and gender equality issues the [Women's Major Group \(WMG\)](#) was established and is active since the 1990. It is a self-organised network with around 1000-1500 organisations from over 100 countries with the focus on womxn's human rights, womxn's empowerment and gender equality through engagement with intergovernmental negotiations on sustainable development and environment. It is open to interested organisations working on these issues.

Within the WMG some organisations serve as [Organizing Partners](#). To ensure regional diversity, there are currently 2 global OPs and one OP for each of the following regions: Europe & Central Asia, Asia, Pacific, Arab States, francophone Africa, Anglophone Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean region. There is also a mandate for North America. They facilitate the participation of their members internationally and regionally; so the members can deliver their expert knowledge and competency in sustainable development and womxn and gender issues. Some of the OPs' tasks are regular consultation with the network members, the coordination of written and oral policy positions and input, the collection of data and information, capacity building and communication. A major task is the facilitation

tation of guaranteeing representation in the various processes. The core framing principles and values of the Women's Major Group are

- o Gender equality and justice
- o Womxn's human rights
- o Respect for planetary boundaries
- o Social, economic and environmental sustainability
- o Global sustainable development framework

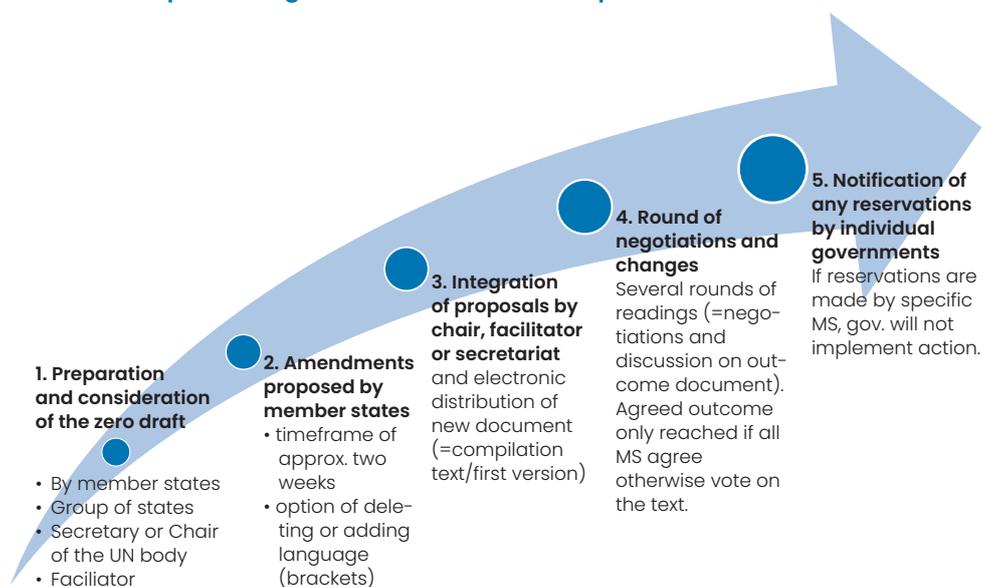
http://www.womenmajorgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/WMG-Principles-and-Values-Statement_FINAL.pdf

In short, the MGoS is a structure where thematic constituencies come together and take collective decisions on how to coordinate civil society. These thematic constituencies, such as the Women's Major Group, in parallel also coordinate their members on a more common ideology ground, drafting position papers etc. The Major Groups also coordinates regionally thematically.

3. The CSW play

One major outcome of the CSW's negotiations are the "agreed conclusions", a kind of outcome document that provide guidance for member states on implementing the issue of concern. The following infographic shows briefly the various stages, a detailed description of the process can be found in "A Guide for NGOs and Women's Human Rights Activists at the UN and CSW 2019" by the NGO CSW (https://www.ngocsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Advocacy-Guide-EN_2019.pdf)

o Who takes part in negotiations and how is the process conducted?



Note: Amendments to the Zero Draft should begin at national level. Once the Zero Draft is published, NGOs should contact their own government delegates with wording proposals. The time frame is two weeks. Here is the key moment to introduce new, non-agreed language in the Zero Draft.

o Tactics and trade-offs during negotiations

During negotiations it is very important to have a planned strategy and to act carefully always with your values, principles and goals in mind. These are some strategies:

- o Reveal your positions gradually, not at once. Take notes of the positions presented by governments.
- o Hardline language is important to give room for “trading-off” positions.
- o Keep difficult paragraphs for the end of discussion. It is very helpful to be aware of all the compromises made by all groups of Member States.
- o The final round of negotiations contains meetings at a higher level such as between the ambassadors. One might need allies within a government delegation in order to keep track.

4. Then what?

o Outcome documents – what is it?

At the CSW the outcome document is normally the “agreed conclusions” which do not have the legal effect of an international treaty. Agreed conclusions contain an analysis of the priority theme and a set of concrete recommendations for governments, inter-governmental bodies and other institutions, civil society actors and other relevant stakeholders, to be implemented at the international, national, regional and local level.

However, they do not become national law and often they are not directly implemented as they are not binding. The language of the outcome document is most important since it is political language that becomes by regular use and referencing to it soft law holding the potential to turn into hard law.

o Implementation

Governments put into place domestic measures and legislation adhering to their treaty obligations originating from ratification of international treaties. Where domestic legal proceedings fail to address violations of these obligations, mechanisms and procedures for individual complaints or communications are available at the regional and international levels. That is not the case for the agreed conclusions or similar outcome documents since they do not have the same legally binding effect as treaties do. Therefore, the implementation of CSW outcomes is for the respective governments to take on or not and depends on their political will and on the pressure from civil society.

FROM WORDS TO ACTION



E

From words to action – practical tools for effective advocacy

The following section will serve as a toolkit and present various practical tools on how to effectively advocate for your cause. Most tools can be used in various international negotiation processes, however some, are exclusive.

1. Language matters

Inclusive language recognising diversity is a powerful way to promote gender equality and fight gender bias since language is part of society and does unconsciously define issues of justice and inclusion and many more and therefore shapes behavior (read more on why language is important: <https://charterforcompassion.org/languages-cci/language-and-social-justice>). It is important to check your own privileges, raise awareness and be conscious about the fact, that something can be a problem to somebody else even though it is not so for you as well as that language is not static and changes over time.

Gender-neutral language means not using gender binary language such as only “men & women”. You can find guidance in the UN toolbox for the use of gender-inclusive language in English, including the online gender-inclusive lexicon by UN Women as well as the gender-inclusive language guidelines.

<https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/toolbox.shtml>
<https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/gender-inclusive%20language/guidelines-on-gender-inclusive-language-en.pdf?la=en&vs=2129&la=en&vs=2129>

General tips:

- o Use gender-neutral expressions: Avoid expressions that use the masculine form when making generic references to womxn and men (example: “men, mankind” better “people, humankind”).
- o Writers should aim for gender-neutral sentences (example: “A good employee knows that he should strive for excellence”, instead use “A good employee strives for excellence”).
- o Use “their” when you don’t want to be gender specific: Replace the masculine generic form with a gender-sensitive expression (example: “Each professor should send their assistant to the conference.”)
- o Use of “x” within the word “womxn” in order to overcome gender stereotypes and incorporate diverse gender identities.

2. Shadow or alternative reports

In multiple processes member states are required to submit regular national reports on the progress of implementation of the respective multilateral agreement or treaty. Often governments ask their national civil society partners to provide input and comments to their national reports. The development of an alternative report or “shadow report” is a good opportunity to highlight your view regardless of having been denied participation or not. In any case a solid shadow report can be a powerful tool. It provides a platform to work across civil society organisations and build coalitions, it creates opportunities to engage with governments, helps determine a baseline to measure change over time, generates information and analysis to use in advocacy and media work, and helps to identify gaps and deficiencies in government policies and programmes that must be addressed.

To begin to develop a shadow report, the most important first step is to define the focus. What are the key research questions that you want to answer? Which issues are most important? Which issues and people are at risk of being neglected or left out of official reports? Define the priority questions first, then pick the data that are needed to answer those questions. Here some reference points:

- o Policy and legal framework: What policies and laws exist that advance the priority goals and targets? What are the budget commitments? Are the rights and needs of womxn and girls and the most marginalised taken into consideration in the existing laws, policies and budgets? What are the policy gaps? Which commitments are not funded or underfunded?
- o Implementation or process data: What is the state of policy implementation? Are laws enforced? Which are the most significant failures or weaknesses in implementation? What is scale and reach of the policies and programmes? Where is funding insufficient or not reaching the programmes it is supposed to reach? Who is left out? Also, importantly, are there social controls (community, religious, workplace) that limit access for womxn and girls, even if policies and programmes are in place?
- o Data availability and use: What data are being collected by the government? Where are gaps in data collection or analysis? Are the data disaggregated? Are gender statistics available? Are the data accessible, to civil society and others? Are data used to inform policy formation and implementation?
- o Outcomes or impact: What are the outcomes of the agreement's/treaty's implementation? How does it affect the lives of womxn and girls? How does it affect the lives of the most vulnerable? How does the failure to implement commitments affect womxn and girls?

Guidelines and examples of shadow reports can be found here: forus-international.org/en/resources/8 and <https://www.wecf.org/the-right-to-equality-the-status-of-ce-daws-implementation-in-germany/>

INDIVIDUAL COMMUNICATION/ COMPLAINT

That is the basic concept of a complaint mechanism under the human rights treaties allowing anyone to bring a complaint/communication against a state party alleging a violation of treaty rights to the body of experts monitoring the treaty.

3. Strategic civil society mobilisation and networking (including drafting position papers with like minded peers)

Before the intergovernmental process:

- o You should begin the preparation as NGO well in advance. This gives you the space to successfully influence the outcome of the CSW or any other intergovernmental process you want to engage in.
- o You need to be informed as good as possible, therefore try to gather information about the issues and allies through reading the UN documents and related research. Always remember there are not only your allies (NGOs and governments), but also the position of those defending another position.
- o Reach out to other NGOs as well as governments: member states concentrate their efforts on one or two topics and have diplomats working at their UN Missions. The main government body responsible for the negotiations at the UN in your country is the Ministry of Women's Affairs whose representatives are also valuable public persons. Arrange meetings with your country's delegation before and/or during the negotiations. Look out for your national/regional NGO coalition or the one that is focussing on the same topics as you and try to prepare a joint position paper.
- o Work with coalitions, caucuses and forums. The more NGOs present a message, the more powerful this message gets. Official delegation meetings with NGOs keep them updated on the negotiations. Within most processes there are daily briefings for NGOs – check the websites.
- o Be strategic in written and oral statements. The deadlines are often very early as the statements need to be checked for accreditation, translation and editing. The UN encourages NGOs to submit group statements. At the CSW written statements can only be submitted until mid October of the year preceding the year of CSW (please check website for deadline) and oral submissions need to be applied for.
- o Be ready to lose something to gain something else. Be prepared, it will be very hard to have 100 percent success. No government wants to lose face. The negotiator should ask for more, in order to get into "trading" and discuss about concessions.

During the intergovernmental process:

- o Intervene at key moments during the lifecycle of a decision. The actions of NGOs must be in sync with the lifecycle of a decision. For example, introducing a new theme in the final round of negotiations is too late.
- o Be observant during the negotiations. After each new version, the member states reflect on possible language that would offer an acceptable formulation for the other side. Here can NGOs be supportive by proposing language to streamline the text and supporting arguments for governments to defend preferred language.
- o NGOs should reach out to interested member states, go to side events and talk to the diplomats.

4. Interventions

Interventions are a good instrument to demonstrate the public and governments your research and demands. Especially during negotiations you can voice your position. You are often only given a few minutes (usually 2 min) after all decision-makers have spoken. So be well prepared! If you are part of a constituency, this means you draft the intervention collectively, many issues need to be covered in those 2 min and it cannot just be your demands.

Here are some steps, that can guide you writing an intervention:

Preparation: Establish a working group

Join or create a working group considering the framework of the process and its thematic focus where you want to present your intervention. Who will attend the session? In which setting will it take place? In order to achieve the most a working plan with a time schedule is very useful. Dedicate sufficient time to the research!

Input: Analyse and observe the background of the problems and issues You want to address

Which inequalities are happening? Why in this specific country/region? Why is this systemic? What legal mandates are there already regarding the issue that supports your argument? What are your recommendations

At this point, factsheets about countries and or issues are very useful. They can contain general and geographic information and provide some background on the issue, the situation of womxn's rights, living and working conditions, how the decision-making system works and how womxn can participate. UN documents and material and research provided by think tanks, IGOs and NGOs can help you in order to gain more information for your intervention.

In your analysis you can take a closer look at the different groups of society. Which groups are suffering?

Example:

- o Youth because of high risk of unemployment
- o Old people because of health care systems

Tip: You can include individual/personal stories in your intervention: This will increase the level of empathy in your audience.

Example:

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. What are regions telling us about implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs? Sarah Zaman, Women's Action Forum, Pakistan:

http://www.womenmajorgroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Agenda2030_VNR_SarahZaman.pdf

Delivering: Chose the right speaker and time

Let your group decide on the best person to deliver the intervention – try to show diversity and to provide people from marginalised communities a slot.

ZERO DRAFT

Is the first draft of a text submitted and open for input by member states and comments by other stakeholders published before the negotiations. It serves as the basis document for further negotiations on the outcome document.

Be there well in advance, even if you have to wait 2 hours until all the members states have delivered their interventions. When you arrive, let the whoever is coordinating civil society know that you are there so they can acknowledge it to the chair. If you are part of a constituency, and you have been selected to represent it, then grab their flag, otherwise grab the NGO flag. Be prepared, practice the intervention so it reads well and within the timeframe. Note that sometimes, due to poor time management by the chair, civil society might not get to deliver their intervention.

5. What to ask a delegate

Meetings with delegates of your government or of others are very important and can provide you with new information, insights and the opportunity to lobby for your cause. You often bump into delegates in random places, such as the lunch queue. You can then introduce yourself and pitch your demand or ask for an official meeting. Be well prepared and think of some questions you want to ask or a statement/position paper you want to share.

Examples:

- o What is your goal for the process on issue XX?
- o What are your “red lines” or immovable positions?
- o How are you relating to various UN processes currently in play such as CSW, Agenda 2030 or climate change treaty?

See WMG Guidelines: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1fOD7O30P-ZWnZMeGwyTzJJUndZZ0RQZzJpMDh3RnZfQlo0/view>

6. Side events

Many international processes allow for time and space to hold side events parallel or back to back to the negotiations. These events can be hosted by governments, IGOs and/or NGOs (also jointly) and provide the opportunity to share experiences, results of projects, legislation initiatives or research results and to spark the discussion about a specific thematic focus around the priority issue of the negotiations. At the CSW there are “official” side events and “inofficial” parallel events. The first are always organised together with a specific country/government and a room at the UN headquarters needs to be booked through the government, the second can be purely CSO led and will often take place at the [Church Centre](#) opposite the UN headquarters in New York.

CHATHAM HOUSE RULE

Comes from the independent policy institute Chatham House in London and is to encourage openness of discussion means that “whatever is shared under cannot in any way be shared with people who were not part of the original conversation.”

7. Creative disruptions

Another way of engaging in big policy meetings, is through what is called “creative disruptions” or “actions”. This is a very effective tool to bridge what is going on inside the policy bubble to the general public. You take policy lingo and make it accessible through art or a creative action. More importantly though, it’s a creative tool to bring the demands of the people into policy spheres, spaces that are usually very dry and strict in format. Examples of this can be [hosting](#) or [joining a local demonstration](#) outside the UN campus, having [online photo campaigns](#) for people to participate from afar, or an [action reading up names](#) of women’s human rights defenders that are no longer with us, or stage an [anti-fascist dance](#). Just let your imagination free and be creative!

The rules around actions are different depending on the venue and country. For example, the United Nations headquarters are very strict, usually they don’t allow actions, but they allow exhibitions. Whereas at the climate negotiations you can apply for actions with the UNFCCC secretariat. The rules outside the UN venue are generally more relaxed but are guided by city by-laws. E.g. in New York, you don’t have to apply for a demonstration in the streets, if you don’t obstruct traffic (as you would do by definition with a march or a rally), while in other places you might need to apply for a city permit with the local police.

If you plan on hosting an action inside the UN, these are a few things you might want to prepare:

- o Define what are you doing, why are you doing it and how;
- o Apply for an action with the UN civil society liaison (<https://outreach.un.org/exhibits/content/faq-exhibitors>), if you plan to have it inside the UN, or with the local police if you want to host it outside the UN campus. Apply as early as possible, as the application process can take a while;
- o Plan the props and prep your participants, select a few leads, and select who will film, take photos and live tweet or stream;
- o Draft a press release and share printed copies of it with the UN press office (and CSW media contacts) as well as local journalists who work on the topic;
- o Print press releases and bring them with you to the action;
- o Reach out to other groups and invite them to participate, power lies in the critical mass;
- o Track your impact online afterwards

8. Communication – how to make sure your communication follows feminist principles

This is not a conclusive list of “dont’s and do’s”, but a thought starter.

- o **Never use photos where men are active and womxn are passive.** Look at the photo and analyse, what is the photo, without any description, actually telling

- me? Is it upholding gender roles? Or is it pushing boundaries (use photos depicting the latter).
- o **Diversity matters** – think about what the photo is really saying, is it adding to a „white savour“ narrative? Think about – who is the narrator? Stories should always be told from the person who’s story it is. Same goes for class, gender identity and other social factors.
 - o **Queer the language if it’s binary**. E.g. call it “menstruator” instead of “menstruating women and girls”. Think about the audience – menstruator might be totally right for a 14-year-old, but if you are dealing with a 60+ audience you might want to change it to „people who menstruate“.
 - o **Always credit where credit is due!** Always check before regramming someone’s photo if they are ok with you using it (offer to credit them of course!). Don’t appropriate people’s content, or ideas.
 - o **Don’t tag people’s personal accounts** if you haven’t checked in with them first if they are ok with it (twitter is an exception though).
 - o **Never tokenize!** Think about the context. Make sure you match the content with what the person in the photo is representing (their expertise, what they work on etc). If you are writing an article about someone, and using a photo, check in with them before publishing if they are cool with the text.
 - o **Use positive language** – do point out structural barriers, but then what?! People want to know how you overcome them, solutions. People are jaded reading about what is wrong with society.
 - o **Take a step back and analyse the bigger picture** of what you are saying. E.g. sustainable stoves are better for womxn’s health, but shouldn’t we rather challenge that gender role of womxn doing most of the cooking at home.
 - o **Don’t pinkwash** – do live up to what you are saying. You are not automatically an intersectional feminist just because you have a wife or a daughter, as some decision-makers seem to think. Lead by example. Same goes for greenwashing.
 - o **Think about how you refer to people** in your online communication. Do you refer to men by first and last name, but others only by their first name? Same goes for when writing about white people and people of colour, and people of different socio-economic class.
 - o **Don’t body shame** or focus on appearances. In short, don’t shame, ever.
 - o **Don’t make differences in how you address people’s relation to their children** based on their gender.
 - o **Pay for content** – you might already have realised that free online stock databases are very white and filled with photos depicting old narratives around gender roles. It might be worth hiring a professional photographer who takes photos of new transformative narratives. In terms of graphic design, you cannot buy food and pay rent with Instagram followers and fame, make sure you pay for the designs that you commission!

More can be found here:

[UNDP, 2017, Principles of Gender-sensitive Communication](#)

RED LINES

Is a term you will hear quite often during negotiations. If one side of the negotiations says that x is their “red line”, it means that they are not willing to compromise on x.

9. Feminist self-care

Challenging patriarchy, racism and other structural barriers daily can be real hard work. Especially as we see the closing of civil society space, attacks on human rights defenders, rise of the far-right, constant fight for young feminists to access funding, and online haters.

[Sharanya Sekaram](#) states that self-care is not a new concept, created by Instagram influencers with their spa pictures, but dates back a long time. Audre Lorde said “caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.” Sekaram also raises that self-care should not be a capitalist affair, with pricy vacations or gym memberships. “those from oppressed racial groups – whose bodies, lives and pleasure have been denied to them, the act of reclaiming and doing what gives them pleasure is deeply political.” Self-care is not about furthering individualism, but about finding strength in and caring for the collective.

Practicing self-care should not be looked at as another burdensome task, but be treated as an essential outlook to prevent burn-out and it looks different from person to person. Some might find solace in looking through heaps of cat and puppy memes while others find power in local collectives or by detoxing from social media. Frida Fund has put together a list of resources to help you to identify signs of burnout and how to prevent it. They also provide some examples of self-care:

- o Re-evaluate priorities
- o Unplug yourself and respect colleagues when they go offline
- o Limit channels of communication for work
- o Consider joining a non-activist group/activity
- o Ask for help
- o Learn to say no and empower others to flag unreasonable expectations
- o Eat healthy
- o Don't compare yourself to others
- o Remind yourself why the feminist cause is so important for you
- o Seek out the positive
- o Find feminist folks in the real world
- o Start collective gatherings with positive affirmations of each other
- o Check-in with colleagues on non-work-related issues

Here's a [full list of tangible examples of individual and collective self-care](#) by FRIDA fund.

PLANETARY BOUNDARIES

Is a concept developed in 2009 that defines 9 boundaries which humanity can continue to develop and thrive within. If we cross these boundaries, we risk large-scale and irreversible damage to our environment. [Learn more about them here.](#)

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