

ACCOUNTABILITY & MONITORING

a global independent women's body

Lead

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Contributors

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Structural barriers and negative trends

In the context of rising authoritarian populist regimes, women's human rights are under a new threats in both developed and developing countries. Misogynism is often a tenet of authoritarian/populist regimes. Anti-feminism, far-right and extremist movements are on the rise globally. The risk of being subjected to inequalities, violence, in-human degrading treatment, arbitrary arrests and detentions or other type of rights violations are increasing and specifically women and girls are deprived of their rights and liberty. There are setbacks and backlashes on gender equality in many countries and strikingly enough, even in multilateral or regional organizations and bodies. Thus, there is an urgent need to focus upon the shrinking democratic spaces and their impacts on civil society; specifically, on women's NGOs, feminist organizations and WHRDs. Recent years have witnessed growing antagonism by governments to women's organizations and their' activities in many arenas.

While such push backs are taking place, women activists, women human rights defenders and LGBTIQ+ organizations do not have a truly independent body to directly and freely appeal to when their rights are violated. There is a need for substantive protection frameworks (with enforcement authority) and resources to reduce the obstacles and risks women and women's NGOs face due to governmental threats violence and structural inequalities.



Progress on implementing the Beijing Platform for Action

The BPfA, in its paragraph 344 suggests that “...Consideration should be given to establishing a mechanism for collaborating with non-governmental organizations to promote the implementation of the Platform at various levels.” Although there exist some international monitoring and appeal bodies on gender equality and human rights, namely CEDAW and GREVIO and even though their experts serve in their own capacity, it is rather difficult to talk about total independence and autonomy as **the nominations and elections of these experts are made directly by the state parties/ governments**. This is clearly stated both in CEDAW (Article 17) and GREVIO (Rule 9) Rules and Procedures. In addition, these bodies offer very limited or no space for the participation of women’s organizations during nomination, election and decision-making processes.

Further, the intergovernmental body on women’s human rights, the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), where governments meet every March in New York and take decisions on women’s rights and gender equality policies globally, has severely closed its doors to Women’s NGOs in recent years.

In summary, in many countries, independent women’s NGOs have little or no fair access to the so-called independent international bodies. Furthermore, in recent years, authoritarian / populist governments have increasingly established their own NGOs (namely GONGOs – Government organized NGOs), which they support with all means, financially and in terms of government cooperation that also causes some donors to prefer working with these GONGOs. This leads to the total exclusion of independent women’s NGOs from policy making processes.



Recommendations beyond Beijing+25

In view of the above, **there is an urgent need to re-institutionalize gender accountability** since the existing bodies are not responsive to women’s human rights. Women and women’s NGOs all around the World do not have a truly ‘Independent Body’ that they can appeal to, expect fair decisions and interventions for improvements of their lives. It is high time that we had an independent body with independent investigative, decision making, and enforcement powers, free from any state influence and which will find solutions to the needs of all women: A body where women can appeal to without any barriers (such as language, geography etc.),

get workable solutions, **monitor and enforce the implementation of BPfA** and even devise policies on enhancing women's rights, gender equality, feminist values and women's empowerment.

This independent body would have the capacity to receive complaints, prevent violations of women's human rights, afford women protection, and be the intermediary body to demand accountability and reparations from those that commit crimes against women and girls, as well as from those that continue enacting gender discriminatory civil and fiscal laws to end impunity at all levels. It should have the knowledge, expertise and experience on the work over social demands, as well as an established reputation to be respected by governments and international institutions. It would also develop monitoring systems and accountability structures, including **monitoring the implementation of the outcomes of the Global Forums**. It should not be there to monitor only, its main function will be to **RESPOND**.

It should have a horizontal organizational model and horizontal working relations, respecting the diversity of women. The organisation should be flexible, inclusive and approachable and responsive worldwide through, in all its sections. It should be transparent in its methodologies, yet prioritises the privacy and security of information, especially regarding the safety of its applicants.

This body should be recognized by international organisations and governments and have the powers to make protocols with existing bodies e.g. CEDAW, GREVIO, special rapporteurs on women's rights and human rights and all other pertinent institutions so that it will have a legitimate stance to act as a social partner in global policy making and monitoring processes. **The body should be responsive to urgent needs;** for example, it must have the capacity to bring solutions to eliminate the language barriers which is a big hindrance for especially grassroots women.

Further questions remain, such as what will be needed to ensure the legitimacy and the power of this body in relation to states and multilateral institutions and how can the structure of this body be formed to enhance/ensure its powers. Funding will be another important part of the discussion which we are hoping to undertake in the future regional and global meetings. Sponsorship from independent sources will be sought. The sustainability and the format of the funding will be important in order to ensure that this body can undertake the important and extensive work that it sets out to achieve.

Continuous and coordinated efforts will be needed during the regional and international **Beijing+25 meetings and beyond**, to shape such an Independent Body, owned and managed by women. We are calling onto the World's women organisations and civil society to work with us and contribute towards the establishment of this organisation which would speak the demands for accountability of the women in need and monitor the actions of the stakeholders.

We need a global system responsive to women's needs. We need a world that will ensure equality and freedom for women. **This is a time for galvanizing change!**