

Government Equalities Office (GEO) National NGO Consultation for CSW60

Monday 9th November, 13:30 – 16:30

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, London

The Government Equalities Office (GEO) invited women's rights NGOs and those working towards gender equality to comment on their priorities for CSW60.

The **Priority Theme** for CSW 60 – taking place 14th – 24th March 2016 at the UN Headquarters in New York is:

Women's Empowerment and its relation to the Sustainable Development Goals

The **Review Theme** is: Violence Against Women (review of the Agreed Conclusions for CSW58).

Nicky Morgan, Minister for Women and Equalities, followed Helene Reardon-Bond (Head of UK Women's National Machinery, GEO) with a speech welcoming those present. Nicky said that NGOs 'represent the heart of the women's agenda'. She commented that it can be hard to translate talking in to tangible action. The UK Government it was urged have gender equality as a priority, and support CSW 'as a global forum acting on behalf of women everywhere'. Gender Equality is also at the top of the UN agenda, which underpins the importance of CSW, in addition to the knowledge that 'no country has gender equality'. Opportunity, Freedom and Choice are the signs of women's empowerment. The Government in recognising this has done important work Nicky asserted, including; getting more women in to work and business, reducing the gender pay gap, doubling the amount of women in FTSE 100 companies, and ensuring that prosecutions and convictions for gendered violent acts are at an all-time high.

Charles Ramsden, head of EU and International Policy at the Government Equalities Office, was invited to speak on CSW59, and the UK Government delegation's approach to CSW60. Baroness Northover led the delegation to CSW59. The usual process of CSW did not apply in 2015 due to the reflection on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and planning for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS). This meant that there was not an Agreed Conclusions Document but a Political Declaration that was drafted in

advance of CSW59. It was felt that progress since BPFA in 1995 had been 'slow and uneven', and since this time new challenges had emerged. The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality and the importance of NGOs was welcomed. The UK delegation to CSW59 wanted to see a stand-alone goal on gender equality, and mainstreaming of this throughout the SDGs, 'gender sensitive elements in other goals'. The working methods document agreed at CSW59 saw the introduction of a Ministerial segment (dedicated days for Ministers to attend to allow NGO participants to attend only on these day if time limited); the review process for previous sessions becoming more interactive, and the ability for delegations to raise emergency issues. The working methods document will be reviewed at CSW60. There is the hope that NGOs will have allocated time to speak at CSW60 and contribute.

CSW60, the UK delegation will encourage progressive movements on the Working Methods Document. They welcome the interactive review of the Agreed Conclusions from CSW58, violence against women and will work with NGOs on reflections to this.

Evelyn Fraser, Development Manager at Scottish Women's Convention, spoke on NGO and civil society involvement in CSW. Scottish Women's Convention is sponsored by the Scottish Government to assist women in impacting on Government Policy. In Scotland it has been felt that there has been a shift in women's voices, and an increase in engagement since the Scottish Referendum in September 2014. The Scottish Government has nominated a 50:50 Women's Cabinet, and aims to have 50% female MPs in Scottish Parliament by 2020. Scotland has a female First Minister, the first woman to hold this position. The Government has a Violence Against Women (VAW) Strategy and is currently discussing a Bill on revenge porn.

Evelyn emphatically emphasized the role and value of the UK NGO CSW Alliance as the main mechanism at UK level for women's voices. The UK NGO CSW Alliance has a very good relationship with the GEO and parliamentarians, even down to constituency level. The UK NGO CSW Alliance lobbies as a collective and works on responses and input to key texts and policies.

Evelyn advised that those attending CSW for the first time in 2016 should plan what they will attend and do in advance, and speak to as many women as possible. Networking with

women from NGOs and delegations from around the World is an invigorating feature of CSW.

As many NGOs as possible should have a chance to attend CSW, however there are challenges to this in the expense of going to New York and the limited amount of accreditations to attend available.

We should all 'work together' to ensure that the outcomes of CSW are implemented. UN Women advise that some civil society representatives should be present on Government delegations, which is supported by NGOs.

Scottish Women's Convention ensure that they report back to civil society after CSW to inform those who were not able to attend of the outcomes and impacts, and to energise civil society to carry on the work of CSW throughout the year.

Dr Maddy Coy, who works at the Children and Women Abuse Studies Unit at London Metropolitan University, was invited to talk about Violence Against Women (CSW60 Review Theme). Dr. Maddy felt that the Agreed Conclusions from CSW57 - at which the priority theme was VAW- were comprehensive and clear. There are challenges in implementing these conclusions, starting with local level. Maddy asked, what local level has implemented a VAW strategy? Additionally the recession has meant that Organisations who work in services that aim to prevent and protect women from violence are squeezed, e.g. case-loads are increased and services are over capacity).

For Specialist Services provided by experienced NGOs there are difficulties in continuing their work. These specialist services are 'practice based' services, and most women who have experienced violence seek support from specialist women's services. However, there are funding and commissioning threats (with non-specialist but well-funded Organisations bidding for and being awarded commissions despite their expertise gap in delivering these services). With these funding threats come closure of specialist services, and thus loss to women and loss of decades of women's expertise. Women want women only services and non-specialist services do not always provide these. Imkaan calls for specific fund for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women, and a 'grant based model'.

The Female Rape Support fund is a positive, with the Government pledging to give £92 million in 2015/2016 to Organisations supporting women who have suffered rape or other sexual violence.

However, we need to not lose sight of a gender analysis of violence, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) 'is caused by and a consequence of inequality between men and women'. The United Nations identifies that it is: 'rooted in historical and structural inequality in power relations between men and women'. There are wider societal influences that reflect this inequality, including the media and pornography which create a 'conducive context' for VAWG. Coy and Horvath surveyed over 1,000 young people for a BBC programme, Porn: what's the harm? This programme is available on YouTube, *trigger warning* some footage on this programme and in the sidebar of YouTube may cause distress, hence we are not linking to it in this report.

Maddy said, Countries that have the greatest gender equality in the World have criminalised the purchasing of sex. We need to create connections between behaviours and actions, e.g. exploitation and masculine ideas.

The report: Coy, M., Kelly, L., Elvines, F., Garner, M. and Kanyeredzi, A. (2013). *["Sex without consent, I suppose that is rape": How young people in England understand sexual consent.](#)* London: Office of the Children's Commissioner identified perspectives on prevention. For instance, there is still no compulsory Sex and Relationships Education (SRE), there are difficulties (and perhaps it is not desirable?) to implement a whole schools approach when power for school's goes to local councils, that we need to change the story about women's bodies and violation, 'prevention has to be at the heart of what we do'.

Maddy specified several reports that give further information on the topics she discussed, these were:

[Finding the Costs of Freedom](#), Solace Women's Aid, 2014

[Still We Rise](#), Women's National Commission, 2009

Maddy can be contacted at: m.coy@londonmet.ac.uk

Caroline Dinenege MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice and Minister for Women and Equalities at the Department for Education, led the second panel of the consultation. She emphasized that BPFAs was 'ground-breaking'. Additionally Caroline highlighted Government actions, including how [Clare's Law](#) had meant 1,300 women had sought disclosures on their partner's previous history of violence or any past actions that may pose a threat to them. Caroline felt that making sure women's voices

were heard should include embracing technology to do this. 'Harnessing men' to work toward gender equality, e.g. in the White Ribbon Campaign was also felt to be positive.

Dr. Alison Parken, of Cardiff University, conversed about the gender pay gap. Noting that women are the majority of those that earn component wages, e.g. not enough to live on. Women are the majority of those employed at part time jobs, which is now the core of European long term work.

Fiona Gray, Rape Crisis South London, discussed online challenges and benefits. Women's restrictions to public space, e.g. in a physical space catcalling has transferred also online with the haranguing of women in forms of online social media. Online forms of VAW are expanding. In order to reverse this, education of persons and inclusion should be introduced.

Jessica Woodroffe, Gender and Development Network (GADN), discussed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She expressed that there is a danger of getting lost in empowerment as within the Sustainable Development Goals this relates to all sections. Jessica felt: women's equality and rights should be considered central to SDGs, 'at the heart'; gender inequality holds back women's participation in development; and, gender relations shape societies development, as women and girls face systematic barriers to development.

'Discriminatory social norms' legitimise gender equality and is part of how it is allowed to continue.

In relation to the SDGs, NGOs need to:

- Lock in gains at CSW
- Prioritise effective areas that work, e.g. increasing women's agency
- Ensure collective action on lobbying
- Push for more mainstreaming of gender equality across SDGs, 'leave no-one behind'
- Ensure that funding to implement SDGs is 'fit for purpose'
- NGOs need to flag at CSW any areas that they felt were missing from SDGs
- Lastly, there needs to be celebration of successes in SDGs, e.g. pulling out the 'best, new and innovative' bits.

In relation to providing education for girls and young women, we should be mindful that there is an imperative not just to provide education but good educational provision.

With domestic violence, Jessica asserts, that many women feel that they must stay in the abusive situation because they cannot financially survive if they leave, this is compounded by finding it harder to access support services (explained by Dr. Maddy Coy earlier), and the reductions in benefits.

A focus on enterprise as a way of empowering women should be encouraged, small enterprises create the most jobs across Britain. Micro-finance and micro-business benefit women.

Questions from the floor were taken, and then the attendees were split up in to four groups.

Zarin Hainsworth (NAWO), and Charles Ramsden lead the group that I was present at: Group C exploring Civil Societies for CSW60. Zarin gave a brief background to important documents that NGOs can use or have impact on: the Mandate of CSW; 2013 ECOSOC working methods document; and the working methods document 2015.

Zarin asked, how can we put in to practice Agreed Conclusions at CSW? How can we ensure CSW is a catalyst?

Answers were: to collectively produce leaflets on key issues and distribute at CSW60; workshops in schools to raise impact of CSW; and lobbying for civil society on delegations.

In the group discussion that followed many thoughtful comments were made, for instance asking for a Gender Audit of the UN itself, and using CSW as a chance to put pressure on Governments about female representation in politics 'at home'.

Charles emphasized that it is very important to bring MPs in to CSW, and thus we should all write to our MPs and Government Ministers about CSW.

It was felt that young people should also be encouraged to enter in to the process of CSW and engaged actively in discussions around the Sustainable Development Goals. However, it was explored that it is difficult to engage persons who are facing serious disadvantages and challenges because of their life situations. How do we ensure we

speak to these people, and that if they have been effectively 'silenced' by family and society we can assist them in speaking?

It was felt that the CSW Alliance in bringing together specialisms and knowledge, can give voice to these persons partially by those who work with them reflecting their experiences through the Alliance voice. Also, that specialists within women's sector could find the 'key women' in communities and give them support.

The SDGs should be mainstreamed, so that effective monitoring occurs, and that the gender perspective is taken forward in all areas. NGOs therefore need to be involved in the process to establish indicators, and need to know these. For instance, can we create regional and national indicators? E.g. Sub Indicators. We, as civil society can create and propose these. Perhaps in order to aid this process, Universities could be encouraged to gather research and data. There could also be local level training of players keen to record indicators, so that everyone is 'singing from the same hymn sheet'.

A free adult education class on CSW would assist in publicising the event, and allowing more voices to be involved. Whilst videos and infographics could ensure the message was effectively communicated to young people.

The individual groups all fed back, which was recorded by the GEO and will be released in due course. To sign up to the GEO mailing list, visit the [website](#).

This report was compiled by notes taken by Rosie (NAWO) at the Consultation.