

Session 8: Review of Implementation: SDG5

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Ms. Nalini Singh

Introduction: Progress in ending structural discrimination against women

Two years into Agenda2030, we see our governments, as also outlined by the panellists, set in legal amendments and institutional frameworks that attempt to tie the development agenda to human rights conventions with the aim of eliminating discrimination against women. While the Jordan and Ugandan presentations have outlined remarkable efforts on laws and policies, two years is still early to map out the full progress. And systemic and structural changes takes time.

However, I am concerned when I see states' siloed approach on gender equality. Both the thematic and national reviews indicate that states are inclined to maintain "business as usual" or even deepen the systemic inequalities in order to gain international comparative advantage. This approach is why we now see 8 men owning the same amount of wealth as half of the world's population and that much of the SDGs indicators are not able to address structural inequalities.

The progress in the last two years means nothing if Systemic Barriers are not addressed.

Systemic and Structural Barriers to Achieving Gender Equality which perpetuate and entrench discrimination against women include:

1. Patriarchy and the rise of authoritarian governance:

In recent years, the world has experienced a resurgence of authoritarian, patriarchal governance propagating the notion that countries need strong, aggressive leadership. In doing so, state governance becomes increasingly patriarchal and authoritarian control and violence becomes normalized. The consequence is diminished participatory democracy with a higher tolerance for sexism, racism and discrimination. The shrinking of democratic space and increased political repression. And increased attacks on women human rights defenders and organizations as well as environmental, land and labour defenders. And if I have to pick one indicator that we are all well aware of, then this can be seen in the percentage of women in parliaments which remains low globally at 23.3% and in my sub-region –the Pacific remains at 7.5%, with Fiji at 14%, PNG at 2% and Vanuatu at 0%.

2. Militarism:

Patriarchal, authoritarian governance often leads to increased militarism, by both state and non-state actors. There are ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and Africa, territorial disputes and build-up in military threats in Asia Pacific. There is always a threat of reverting to military rule in countries which have had a history of military interventions. And we know that militarism directs much needed state resources away from social spending and what might be better spent on sustainable development initiatives.

3. Neo-liberalism, Trade Agreements and Corporate Influence:

- As a woman from the global south I am glad that the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) Agreement did not proceed and the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus has been rejected by Fiji, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea. Yet approximately 3,000 bilateral and multilateral trade agreements remains negotiated across the world in secret. Many of these agreements will impact women negatively, not to mention, contradict the promises governments have made under Agenda2030.
- This economic model perpetuates, and often relies on, the systematic discrimination and disadvantage experienced by women. All done to generate growth through below subsistence wages, through making women's labour invisible and through the use of women's unpaid labour to prop up social protection and the care economy.
- The target to reduce and redistribute unpaid care work requires public investment and states have not reported on efforts to invest in public care systems that will alleviate the burden.

4. Land and resource threats

- Women are losing land, and without land, women are driven to urban centers or into external migration to become cheap labour to power global growth.
- The acquisition of land by agro-business or wealthy farmers, for large scale infrastructure (including those conducted under the guise of 'green growth'), or for extractive industries routinely results in forced evictions and displacement of communities. Indigenous peoples and communities face increasing threats to their territorial rights and livelihoods without respect for their right to free, prior, and informed consent.
- Whilst significant efforts are being made in my region to reduce emissions and pollutants as well as to build resilient communities, everyday we are living the dire consequences of climate change and the expansion of harmful extractive industries.

SO in the face of these barriers, how do we achieve Agenda2030? A closer look at the Means of Implementation:

1. Are state resources really diminishing?

We note that all VNR countries reporting this year offer tax holidays to foreign investors. Foreign corporations often use evasive practices, like trade mis-invoicing. In other words, many countries are failing to collect taxes from corporations and the wealthiest and instead increasing regressive taxes. This results in diminished public investment and social protection. It also pushes countries to enter into public-private partnerships, ultimately transferring more public wealth to the private sector and creating for-profit services that particularly harm women.

While states express scepticism on mobilising the \$3 to \$5 trillion dollars that will be required annually to finance Agenda2030, between \$21 and \$32 trillion dollars currently sit undisturbed in offshore tax havens. Why have we not tapped into this?

2. Realise that Women's Rights/ Feminist Movements and Organisations are the core MOI

A comprehensive global research spanning over 40 years found that the single most important factor in influencing positive policy change relating to violence against women was the existence

of autonomous feminist movements. Their existence was more significant than the number of women in parliaments, the wealth of a country, the status of treaty ratification or other conditions tested. The presence of autonomous movements with support from progressive social movements advanced women's economic and labour rights.

We also hope to see deepened commitment of many governments to CEDAW, Beijing Platform for Action, Cairo Programme of Action, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other conventions and commitments as we continue to work towards achieving the Agenda2030. And a deepened commitment to public-public partnership - between governments and the people, where women and people exercise real power and control over their own lives and the terms on which they engage with social, political and economic structures. When women's movements are able to challenge and transform public space and discourse and instigate interventions that advance women's rights and achieve Agenda2030.

[1] <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/pregnant-muslim-woman-burned-to-death-for-marrying-a-hindu-dalit/story-OXjWlwpF0Xp4Za2QygAS5O.html>

[2] <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/pregnant-muslim-woman-burned-to-death-for-marrying-a-hindu-dalit/story-OXjWlwpF0Xp4Za2QygAS5O.html>

[3] Human Rights Watch, World Report 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/india>

[4] 267 I. Granoff et al. (2016). „Beyond Coal: Scaling up clean energy to fight global poverty”. London: Overseas Development Institute. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resources/documents/10964.pdf>

[5] Empower Malaysia was the subject of a police raid (details or link to details).

[6] OECD, Gendernet 'Donor support to southern women's rights organisations: OECD findings". November 2016. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/OECD-report-on-womens-rights-organisations.pdf>