



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
28 November 2014

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-ninth session

9-20 March 2015

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the special session of the General Assembly entitled**

**“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for
the twenty-first century”**

Statement submitted by Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Psychological contributions to the full realization of the twelve critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action

The Psychology Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations accredited at the United Nations welcomes the opportunity to join the 2015 commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, which resulted in the most progressive international commitments ever made on women's human rights — the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Reviews on the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action indicate that although significant achievements have been made, progress has been very uneven and significant inequalities between women and men and among diverse women and girls persist.

This statement by the Psychology Coalition contributes psychological perspectives to address significant gaps and challenges in three categories of the 12 critical areas: (1) The diversity of women's and girls' experiences of gender inequality and discrimination, (2) the pandemic of violence against women and girls; and (3) the empowerment and resilience of women and girls.

Mainstream the diversity of women's/girls' experiences of gender inequality and discrimination

Inequalities at the intersection of multiple forms of gender discrimination continue to threaten the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms by different social identity subgroups of women and girls. Racial, ethnic, indigenous, rural, disabled, less educated women and girls, and older women experience continuing inequalities in education, training, and employment; access to physical and mental health care; and access to social and political participation. Refugee and migrant women and girls and their families are especially vulnerable to social exclusion in countries of origin, transit and destination. These inequalities affect the survival, safety, full development, and psychosocial well-being of women and girls. Disparities between women and men, girls and boys, and among women and girls also have multigenerational and intergenerational psychosocial consequences that contribute to the persistence of poverty in families and communities.

Therefore, The Psychology Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations recommends that all Member States, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, and civil society and humanitarian groups:

Mainstream the diversity of women and girls into all public policies and programmes to enhance progress in each of the critical areas of concern.

Put human rights, including gender equality, at the centre of national development, and ensure that all services are implemented, respecting the human rights and dignity of women/girls.

Review and replace laws, policies, programmes and practices at all levels that discriminate against women/girls on the basis of diversities among them.

Eliminate educational, social, economic and health disparities of women/girls as violations of their human rights.

Provide public education to eliminate stereotypes, and discrimination against women/girls, as barriers to their equality and integration within society.

Reduce gender stereotyping of work by educating boys and men that caring for children, the elderly and the sick is family work to be shared by all.

Eradicate all forms of violence against women and girls

Violence against women/girls continues in all countries and sectors of society and includes: Domestic violence, rape in armed conflicts, sexual and labour exploitation in trafficking and abduction, genital mutilation/cutting, sexual harassment in work settings, media violence, and forced prostitution (World Health Organization, 2012). Although all women/girls are at risk, multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination can exacerbate the violence women experience (Manjoo, 2012; Ortoleva & Lewis (2012).

All forms of violence originate in structural and institutional inequalities between girls and boys, women and men, perpetuated through gender norms, stereotypes, and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. Gender-based violence has cumulative effects that increase the risk of subsequent violence and restrict girls'/women's survival, physical and mental health, full development of their capacities, and sociocultural, political, and economic participation (White & Frabutt, 2005).

Therefore, The Psychology Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations recommends that all Member States, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, and civil society and humanitarian groups:

Establish laws against all forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence against women/girls and institutionalize processes for apprehending and penalizing violators.

Educate about human rights and all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls, including their social, cultural and psychological causes and consequences in all schools.

Provide training for health, social services, government, law enforcement and other public service personnel on observance of human rights standards, including the Convention to Eliminate all Forms of Discrimination against Women, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Committee on the Rights of the Child and national legislation for detecting and preventing violence against women and girls.

Provide human resources, policies, programmes, facilities, and services to promote mental health and psychosocial recovery and well-being of women/girls who have experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence, including services delivered by psychologists or other trained mental health providers.

Establish programmes to mobilize men and boys as partners in the elimination of violence against women and girls.

Develop research and programme evaluations to assess the effectiveness of strategies to treat, eliminate and prevent violence against women and girls, and establish a best practices database.

Promote the psychosocial empowerment and resilience of women/girls

Psychosocial empowerment occurs when people are enabled to participate in decisions affecting them and to exercise some control over life choices (World Health Organization, 2010). Empowerment is essential to the sustainability of individual and societal progress.

Psychosocial empowerment develops in three stages (Zimmerman, 2000): First psychological distress must be reduced and social and economic participation encouraged. Then, isolation must be reduced through developing social relationships and networks. Finally, women's/girls' rights to voice their opinions and participate in decision-making at all levels should be supported. Recognizing that women/girls have rights to ownership and participation in decisions is critical to their psychosocial empowerment. Their empowerment and resilience are protective factors to be nurtured as psychological buffers for avoiding and recovering from stressors.

The Psychology Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations recommends that all Member States, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, and civil society and humanitarian groups:

Educate girls/women about their human rights and their personal strengths, skills, and resources against gender discrimination.

Encourage development of ownership, optimism, and confidence in women/girls ability to be effective by providing opportunities for participating in economic, social and other development activities.

Provide access to productive employment and decent work, which promotes psychosocial empowerment by developing a sense of efficacy/confidence in women's/girls' ability to be effective.

Increase and strengthen opportunities for training about entrepreneurship and income-generating activities.

Strengthen access to quality primary, secondary and higher education for girls and women of all ages as important pathways to psychosocial empowerment, decent work, and the alleviation of poverty.

Engage women/girls of all diversities as active partners in planning and operating programs at all decision-making levels and establishing capacity-building networks.

Reduce the physical and mental burden of paid and unpaid work women/girls do by providing access to simple tools and technologies (such as solar ovens, pump wells, electricity, indoor plumbing, cell phones and the Internet).

Provide access to quality physical and mental health care, including accessible multidisciplinary social service centres and mobile vans to provide one-stop services. Include literacy, continuing education, and entrepreneurial training in these centres.

Use a life-span, rights-based approach to implementation of the Social Protection Floor Initiative to take care of basic needs, including access to mental health care within primary health care, to prevent multigenerational and intergeneration poverty.

Monitor and evaluate progress

The Psychology Coalition of Non-Governmental Organizations recommends that all Member States, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, and civil society and humanitarian groups:

Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of approaches to achieve progress on each of the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Platform for Action so that data is available to assess programs for different ages, race/ethnicities, disability status, cultural origins, and geographic regions.

Co-Sponsors (listed alphabetically): International Association of Applied Psychology, International Council of Psychologists, International Union of Psychological Science, World Council for Psychotherapy.
