

THE STOCKHOLM FORUM ON GENDER EQUALITY

GENDER EQUALITY POLICY AS A MEANS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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OVERVIEW

Gender equality is a matter of human rights, democracy and justice. Furthermore, gender equality is an engine driving social development and change. In fact, gender equality is part of the solution to many of the challenges we face. Including gender equality in policy-making is not only essential for reasons of social justice, it is also essential for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

To build dynamic and inclusive economies, the talents of all must be utilised. When women and girls are not integrated, the global community loses out on expertise, skills and perspectives that are critical for addressing challenges and harnessing new opportunities.

Even with abundant experiences and data showing the benefits of gender equality, all countries have remaining challenges in achieving it.

This panel explored gender equality policy as a means for development, hoping to have proposals on how to enhance gender equality policies and key factors that need to change in order to introduce a gender perspective in all policy areas.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Where are we?

Victoria Kalima – Minister of Gender, Zambia

- Political will is key to ensure implementation of gender equality in the policy making and the Zambian leadership is committed.
- There is an emphasis on inter-sectoral approach in these initiatives.
- Zambia is part of SIDO, the Beijing platform, to ensure that the gender equality agenda is advancing.
- A national gender policy was implemented in 2014, including a national strategy of ending child marriage and a gender equality policy act.

- Zambia has implemented programmes to ensure that poverty is alleviated. The Girl's Education and Women's Empowerment and Livelihoods Project (GWEL) for example is supporting the Government of Zambia to increase access to livelihood support for women and give access to secondary education for disadvantaged adolescent girls in extremely poor households in select districts. The programme also supports girls ending up in teen pregnancies.
- There is an advanced programme within agriculture targeting women and traditional leaders to distribute land and tractors, with the aim of distributing 100 hectares of land to ensure economic empowerment of women.
- Sensitisation on GBV has resulted in people reporting many more incidences/cases on GBV.

Phumzile Mlamb-Ngcuka – UN Under-secretary General, Executive Director, UN Women
Key policies that UN women is concerned about:

- Ensuring that all forms of discrimination against women are eliminated.
- Women who live in rural areas receive access, ownership and control of land.
- Intergovernmental focus – CSW.
- Equal pay – lobbying to change laws and policies in as many countries as possible.
- Mobilise as many women in every corner of the world as possible.
- UN Women is concerned with women who have no income and stand outside the labour market: these women are not covered by national labour laws. Non-employment also has severe effects on motherhood, and when these women grow older they tend to be poorer than other groups in society.
- There are lots of single mothers, but men are rewarded for having children due to the assumption they are bread winners.
- Allocation of resources in national economic policies: it is necessary with gender sensitive and responsive budgeting which also should be reflected in country policies, thus bringing systemic change.
- Long-term focus on education for girls and sexual and reproductive rights and information.
- The poorest people in the world now are women between 25 and 35 years old, because they have children and they are unable to work due to lack of gender equality and adequate support systems. This challenge is something that all political leaders, and others, should pay attention to.

Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim – Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social and Family Development, Singapore

- In Singapore equal opportunities for everyone has been put in focus – a goal that the government is committed to ensuring.

- Active participation of women is prioritised.
- Contribute to eradicating any barriers for women in the work place. The core principle is based upon meritocracy.
- The government in Singapore has taken measures to improve gender equality and has seen advancement of women in various sectors – but strong commitment and further efforts are needed.
- There has been a great increase in higher education and higher qualifications among women in Singapore during the last decade. The trend is strongest in the age group 24–35 years where 80 per cent of the group have higher education today.
- There is rural women representation in private companies; they have an action committee.
- The nature of women is playing multiple roles. Ensure women are participative and develop, and also that there is a retirement policy to ensure they have money by the time they retire.
- Women’s health committee concerned with women’s health.

Nened Neric – State Secretary of Labour, Employment, Veteran policy, Serbia

- The Serbian government has implemented a national strategy on gender equality which is part of the government’s action plan.
- In 2009 the Law on Gender Equality was adopted, determining that everybody is obliged to respect equal participation of women and men in all areas of private and public sectors. The areas regulated by this Law are employment and health protection, family relations, education, culture and sports, political, public life, and judicial protection
- Serbia is the first country outside EU to adopt the gender index.
- The government development policy acknowledges that there are still areas with a clear male dominance, one being within the sector of education.
- However, the government is committed to strengthening women’s representation in society as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- We need to include men, make them involved in the cause – sharing the agenda of gender equality and also see the enjoyment and goodness of family life and women’s rights.
- In order to move forward we need to identify and acknowledge areas of improvement. To a larger extent we need to exchange experiences with others in the field and learn from best practices – as well as from less successful initiatives.
- Even though every country is unique we need to realise that women’s participation in all levels of society is key in reaching the global goals.
- We need to address the fact that women lack economic benefits on the micro-economic level of society. Measures to position women better need to be taken. Many countries do

not have a policy for women in the informal sector, which is a huge problem. Efforts to sensitise women and stakeholders on these women's rights are crucial as are measures to increase literacy amongst this group.

- Trade unions need to take on issues concerning women's employment and labour rights. Women are over-represented in low-income industries with no upward mobility or minimum wage and are often subject to insecure work environments.
- To focus on rights, representation and resources is key! Each and every minister has the responsibility to be 'a minister of gender equality'. ■

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