

CSW63 Written Statement
New York Young Professionals, NGO Committee on the Status of Women

The New York Young Professionals Subcommittee of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, highlights the need to focus on young women in relation to the priority theme for the 63rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women, “*Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls*”. Young women have particular needs that are often unmet within existing social protection schemes, or the lack thereof. With both the future of humanity and the conditions of today in mind, we strongly encourage Governments to address the needs of young women and girls, many of whom continue to be among the most underserved on the planet.

Numerous studies have shown that when women are included in the decision-making processes of their workplaces, institutions, communities, and homes, the results are positive. For instance, health outcomes of entire villages improve when women have a greater role in overseeing finances. Regions of conflict have yielded to peaceful and resilient communities when women have played a part in peace negotiations. Corporate organizations with women among their senior leadership have generated higher profits. Yet, women are consistently excluded from decision making spaces and from leadership roles, altogether. Young women especially experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. As such, it is critical to pay particular attention to this demographic. For example, unemployment for young people globally is twice as high as the total unemployment rate, and young women, who on average earn less than their male counterparts, are hardest hit.

Overcoming Intersecting Forms of Discrimination

The degree to which young women are supported in their workplaces, schools or homes, and to which social protection schemes are catering to their needs, determine if they will be able to live to their full potential, engage effectively in society, and flourish in their lives. Young women tend to be discriminated against both on gender and on age. True inclusion will not be achieved without identifying the unique needs of young women and exerting a great effort to fulfill those needs. The DESA Report on the World Social Situation 2018 “*Promoting Inclusion through Social Protection*”, states: “failing to invest in youth... can have long-term costs, including squandered human capital and social unrest.” The economic empowerment of young women is a prerequisite to improving a whole vista of global issues, including linkages between conflict, poverty and inequalities.

Equal Pay for Equal Work

Equal Pay for Equal Work has long-term effects. Young women generally earn lower salaries than their male counterparts (50 to 70 percent lower than men on average worldwide). Those who choose to have children and engage in the care economy, ultimately take gaps in their careers and thus are at a disadvantage from young men. With age, this disparity only grows, with many older women, particularly the widowed, falling into poverty. Unequal pay affects not only standard of living but confidence levels. Research shows that lowered confidence may be a cause for young women avoiding to take on positions of leadership and decision-making. There

have been many studies conducted demonstrating the positive effects female leaders have on organizations. Therefore, it would benefit all societies to focus on releasing the inherent leadership capacities that women possess by providing them opportunities to build their capacities and spaces to exert their influence.

Redistribution of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work, Sustainable Livelihoods and Affordable Child Care

Young women who are of childbearing age and managing household chores and child care, are most likely to struggle with a stable livelihood without relying on others. Social and cultural norms throughout the world continue to generate expectations that cause young women to bear the brunt of unpaid care work while young men focus on making a living. This burden makes young women vulnerable to poverty. Child care must be shared and supported among both male and female members of the family. Laws that ensure women receive paid maternity leave are essential. The exorbitant costs of childcare in many countries can make it nearly impossible for women to return to work, or can lead women to take on multiple jobs thereby excluding them from meaningful time with their children. Social protection systems should ensure that women do not have to choose between family life or work life. The challenges a young widow faces are exponentially larger; therefore, special laws should take into account protecting women who are widowed at a young age.

Improving Health and Safety for Young Women

Providing safe sanitation facilities in schools and public spaces, meeting transportation needs and ensuring the safety of young women are of utmost importance as women form the majority of victims of sexual and other forms of violence. While enacting policies that would make public areas safe, including transportation systems, the needs of young women should be borne in mind in order to reduce the risk of physical and emotional harm. Young women are the majority of first-time mothers. Extra attention needs to be paid to this population who are raising the world's future.

With these considerations in mind, we recommend Member States and United Nations entities consider the following when developing or reforming social protection systems:

- Collect disaggregated data in order to accurately identify the unique circumstances of young women.
- Compensate young women and young men equally, based on skill, without discrimination, offering equal pay for equal work.
- Make social protection floors more gender and age responsive.
- Provide universal social protection systems and floors.
- Provide the infrastructure needed to support single mothers in both their family life and their careers.
- Mandate redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work, sustainable livelihoods and affordable child care affect young women as they are the majority of new mothers.
- Provide healthcare for all young women and coverage which appropriately addresses the needs as women of childbearing age.

- Give greater attention to the safety of young women and implement measures that ensure transportation areas are safely lit and service young women effectively as they are at higher risk for violence.
- Ensure adequate bathrooms and breastfeeding rooms are available at educational and work facilities.

We strongly encourage Member States and the United Nations system to ensure the experiences of young women are considered and that steps are taken to create an empowering and inspiring environment in which our young women can thrive, and develop the skills and capacities needed to build the world anew.