UNCSW-65 Report

Submitted by Malika Saher, Olympes de la Parole Canada Board member, April 2021

Mentorship, empowerment, and inspiration. These are the key takeaways from my participation to the 65th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women ("CSW65") held between the 15th and 26th of March 2021, where I represented the Olympes de la Parole Canada / International Alliance of Women (IAW) - alongside 34 other IAW delegates.

This year, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, CSW65 took place online with its priority theme set as women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, the elimination of violence for achieving gender equality, and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Issues addressed were varied and included the following – Understanding the Impacts of COVID 19 on Vulnerable Women; Women's Economic Empowerment, Ending Violence against Girls and Women, Migration issues.

With the Covid-19 pandemic excessively affecting girls and women (in this respect, Antonio Guterres said, in his opening address: "Covid-19 is a pandemic with the face of a woman"), we need – more than ever – their full and effective participation in public life. We need education, empowerment and advocacy for girls and women around the world. We need to sit at the decision-making tables. Inclusion and participation are matters of dignity that concern everyone, young and old, girls and boys, women and men.

I attended over fifteen online conferences. The speakers were astoundingly good, especially young women and girls. How insightful, informed and engaged they are! I feel inspired by them, and I am now more equipped to advocate for girls and women's rights.

1. **NGO CSW/NY Consultation Day**

   - Covid a exacerbé les enjeux que vivent les filles et les femmes dans les zones de conflits.
   - ONU doit faire + pour les populations locales du point de vue de la prévention et amplifier la voix des femmes
   - Protection légale + participation des femmes dans la prévention d'atrocités
   - Violence contre les femmes de + en + jeunes, isolation du marché du travail car n'ont pas la protection nécessaire. Les femmes doivent avoir l'opportunité de proposer les solutions et la capacité de décider. Participation des femmes est critique. Pays dirigés par femmes ont mieux performé pendant la pandémie.
   - Pandémie : femmes ont perdu emplois en plus grand nombres, car pas protégées. Nécessité de création d'emplois + emplois spécifiques aux femmes.
   - Sans la participation égale des femmes, chemin de rétablissement de la pandémie sera difficile.
   - Infodémie : croissance plateaux numériques ont contribué à création diffusion de fausses infos pour des fins politiques.

Régulation numérique nécessaire.

Intimidation et menaces numériques contre femmes et filles représentatives de ce qu'elles vivent en position de leadership
   - Leadership intergénérationnel et multiplateforme :
   - Multilatéralisme du féminisme.
   - Processus intergouvernementaux intergénérationnel et multi compétences. Busines splan inclusif. ONU : beaucoup de parole, peu d'exécution. A maintenant un plan d'implémentation mesurable. Commission intergénérationnelle pour implémenter plan – suite Beijing. Nécessaire pour pérennité actions.

   ➢ Conseil Mari, 28 ans, impliquée en politique au Michigan : Collaboration intergénérationnelle. Important que jeunes incluent les femmes plus âgées dans leurs conversations. Esprit ouvert pour intégrer à sa vie, à ses combats des gens avec qui on n'a pas l'habitude de discuter/qui ont des expériences différentes.

2. **Digital safety and citizenship development**

   - Interdiction - contrôles extérieurs utilisés au détriment d'une éducation digitale (protection d'eux-mêmes, leurs pairs, et la communauté)

- Digital dictatorship vs digital citizenship
- Projet Rockit - Australia: from protection to empowerment
- Exclusion of women online. The pandemic brought lot of scope and lot of hope. Controlling the content – the space. participation for women.
- Human rights framework around safety for every ages. + guarantee. empowerment.

3. **Prioritizing Education and Intergenerational Mentorship in advancing Women and Girls Leadership**

- International co-leadership/mentorship
- Covid exacerbated the lack of access to education. Domestic work is a burden for girls, less time to concentrate on education
- Connecting + promoting girls rights: education & mentorship are keys.
- Safety at school – especially in Nigeria
- Education is everyone's responsibility, not just the government
- Early child marriage
- Scholarships to be able to effectively compete on a global perspective. Partnerships with universities all over the world
- Involving the boys in the promotion and respect of girls' rights. Education can transform a nation.
- Educate the boychild as much as the girlchild. Only way to get equality and women in leadership.
- Knowledge – education: platform – it has to translate into the economic ecosystem. Build economic strong ecosystems that are local global and international.

4. **Dignity Law in practice**

- Dignity rights are human rights. Dignity: inherent, universal, equal, worth.
  dignity rights: the legal rights that flow from the recognition of human dignity. Peacemaking, new world order.
- UDHR: recognition of the inherent dignity. CEDAW: reaffirms the dignity and worth of the human person, and the equal rights of men and women.
- This recognition has legal consequences. More than 160 countries recognized dignity in their constitutions. Examples: Germany 1949, art. 1: human dignity is inviolable. India 1950, preamble + art. 51A: dignity of women.
- South Africa 1996 Art. 1 &10 mention dignity.
- Gambia chapter IV: equal dignity of women

- Mexico, art. 2: dignity and safety of women
- Uganda, art. 33. Kenya 2010, art. 19.
  Peru 1993, 2009, art. 1: the supreme purpose – advance human dignity.
- ➢ States have to protect dignity not only in their negative obligations, but also in positive obligations.

5. <u>COVID-19's impact on sexualized exploitation of women and girls online</u>

- Covid has exacerbated the sexualized exploitation of women and girls online
- Art.6 CEDAW.
- CSQ has very few seminars that address this violation of women and girls right
- Sexualized exploitation: human trafficking for sexual purposes, onlyfans, webcamming,"glamblogs", striptease, prostitution, sugar daddy dating, pornography. All these forms are interconnected.
- Onlyfans: 75M users. +500%. Testimonies about how easy it is to get in the industry, and how difficult it is to leave: Blackmail, threats, depression

Russia:
- 40% how they got involved – advised by friends/partners
- 45% after seeing a job on social media or headhunter websites (false advertising/misleading information)

USA:
- The pandemic: multiplication of platforms, exploitation ++.
- Big moneymaker, 100billion in profits from sex trafficking, 2nd largest criminal enterprise worldwide. Produces continuous profits: a person can be used over and over again.
- Easy and instant access.
- Organization meets physiological needs, then safety needs, love and belonging, esteem, self-actualization.

MAN – **Sweden:**
- Engage men and boys in gender equality- redefinition of masculinity.
- Creating destructive masculinity: gender norms cement it. Emotional numbness and lockdown. Men's status systems propel it. Being at the winning end makes it harder to get off. Isolation: no one tells you you're wrong.

- Sexualized culture is driving destructive masculinity. Lack of consent, it's a drug, creates impossible pictures of bodies and sex – for both genders, makes intimacy a matter of achievement and domination, makes boys feel lonely, ashamed and confused.
- Engaging men: how? Addressing male entitlement, "we're the problem – and the solution". Addressing responsibility and accountability, bystander approach – the ripple effect, the offer to recover intimacy, lowering the threshold – making it easy to join, "you're not alone"

6. <u>**Youth Empowerment and Civil Society: Partnerships for Quality Education and Youth Activism through Local Change in the Promotion of Global Impacts**</u>

- Model for academic institution UN
- High impact learning – student advocacy – physical representation at the UN (pre-covid) [Lehigh university] = 6th university to gain non-governmental status with the UN.
- The un youth rep program at Lehigh Univ: youth representatives.
- Nor Luyce:
- 3 phases:

Programs:
- ILO externship (human trafficking, living wage, child labor, AI, automation.
- Global village: brings young leaders with diverse backgrounds to develop leadership and entrepreneurial skills and learn how to work across cultures and thrive in a global community
- UN provide toolset for NGO-academic institution cooperation

7. <u>**Participation of girls and young women: "We are nowhere near being part of it!"**</u>

- Change is necessary for gender fair society.
- Plan international – which is in over 40 countries - involves youth opinions.
- Examples of projects: Gender stereotypes in media /school against sexism /share your power.

Julia Ventura, 19 years old: Guatemala
- indigenous in Guatemala. Knows the needs and the culture of the Maya. Access to education/healthcare. Child labor. Violence ++. Participation is not a priority in these cases. Expectation: getting married and being mothers at an early age.
- Many cannot have life projects.

Greta: Germany
- We cannot change what we do not know. Income and social class cannot dictate who participates and who does not.
- Sick of not being taken seriously. Participation is a learning process.

Rahile, 22 years old:Togo
- Women count for more than half the population in Togo. Only 20% representation in politics.
- No visibility. Society does not allow women to participate.

Daravordy: Cambodia:
- Negative image of politics and political participation.
- Always been told it's dangerous / not a women job.
- Inspired by Hilary Clinton.

Birgit: Germany
- Mainly women who work part-time.
- Daycare laws are a priority to allow women to go back to work and participate. 2021: in the world: 6% elected. 7% heads of gvt are women.

Heike: Germany:
- Covid exacerbated women and girls' condition.
- Form of violence on the internet.
- Not allowed to express themselves. Internet is being a source of opportunity for expression but also for harassment toward girls.
- Young women are not considered as equal by politicians.
- Institutionalization of youth participation – it must not depend on a political or individual choice.

Challenges faced by young activists:
- Not being taken seriously
- Sexism / patriarchy
- No youth participation

Biggest success-best experience:
- Inspiring other young women (ex: studying abroad when it is not culturally accepted)
- Being seen as an equal in a local organization

What kind of structure will help you know that your voices are heard?
- Official national youth council in Togo

8. **Conversation Circle: Future of Education**

- School /school meals programs /safety all taken away because of covid.
- The transformative capacity of education
- Self: empowerment safety, security.
- Society: social mobility, equity, flourishing local governance and systems
  world: transformative leadership, engage citizenship, flourishing nation-states communities and eco system.

Future of education: (and the environment, violence against women, economy, social justice, feminism, human rights, politics.

How do we rethink education to address the inequities and opportunities illuminated by the covid? how do we imagine this more just future through education?
- Educate girls about their fundamental rights but also boys, who are an important part of the solution.
- Insert gender equality and equity in curriculums
- Diversity / inclusion / Human rights in general also have to be in curriculums https://www.power-humanrights-education.org/about-us/
- As western countries, have to look at nonwestern countries that are doing good in gender equality and women and girls' participation in politics

- Communities' centers, leaders, cross-collaborative space for different level systems
- Trauma-informed education is essential
- Push politics: needs advocacy, Formal and informal education.
- Much of the social justice/transformative change work comes from student activism and leadership. They are leading the way in developing innovative approaches to global issues
- Importance of teaching and recognizing Indigenous cultures in school systems since they teachings are grounded in sustainability, something that is vital for maintaining a healthy environment.
- In the climate crisis, women and girls are the most vulnerable and impacted therefore educating those populations is really important / equity. Reworking education to prioritize experiential-learning and learning about nature. If anyone else in my group has something to add, please do.

Dr. Marian Diamond, UC Berkeley professor and expert on the brain. (YouTube)
- Education around critical skills
- Access to the following: Finance Education, Finance Tech, Equitable access to Capital/Venture Capital, and Child Care options so they can participate Full-Time in Business Education/Training, Incubators, and Accelerator Programs

9. **Socially Relevant Film Festival**

- *How We See Water directed by Robin Starbuck*

"How We See Water" follows the lives of two young women in San Cristobal de las Casas, Mexico, as they grow from girls to young women and struggle to fulfill their dreams of obtaining an education while also serving a vital role in earning a living for their families. The survival of children in indigenous Chiapian Mexico is both fragile and resonant with community.
Trailer link

- *iMigrant Woman directed by Nora Armani*

Monologues of migrant women juxtaposed to tell the various immigrant experiences of women who find themselves in a foreign country away from their loved ones, and as the sole means of providing for them. They speak out as a way to protest against their fate as women. This was a play presented on Zoom in July 2020 with actors from five cities and three continents, something that was made possible only because of the fact that it was presented on zoom due to the pandemic.
Trailer link

- *Samira's Dream (Ndoto Ya Samira) directed by Nino Tropiano*

A Zanzibari woman, Samira, aspires to have a family like all of her friends, but is also determined to pursue a higher education and a career. Throughout 7 years of her life, society and respect of traditions, constantly pressure her to choose one over the other.
Trailer link

- *Corked directed by Lori Shockley*

Corked is a dramatic short film set in 1970's Northern California wine country. It's based on the true story of one young women's struggle against the status quo. Jane Dunlap is at the crossroads of asserting her independence in the male dominated industry. Which direction will she choose?
Trailer link

- *The House That Built Tsoghik directed by Mariam Ohanyan*

The story of an architect woman, Tsoghik Arabyan, in the Soviet Union, in Armenia, in the 1950s.
www.ratedsrfilms.org, Code : SR21-PAR

- *How We See Water*

Film on Indigenous Women and Education in Southern Mexico https://vimeo.com/405490673
password: water

10. <u>**Vocal Empowerment Curriculum for Young Women's Civil Voices**</u>

- Speak: co-founded in 2009
- Creates programming to support young women and girls using their voices for self and civic advocacy. "vocal empowerment"
- Voice is physical, emotional, & civic
- Work with female leaders.
- Learning from the young + mentors. + training educators.
- rooted in participatory action research and creative improvisation → encouraging youth authorship.
- Work on: preventing sexual violence, disrupting micro-aggressions, supporting the climate. Local to global to local
- Sessions are active, creative, responsive, reflective.

- Website: www.speak.world
- Instagram: @vocal_empowerment
- Free Curriculum: https://speak.world/curricula
- Pay-What-You-Can Trainings: https://speak.world/for-educators
- Email: contact@speak.world
- Sign up for our Newsletter: https://speak.world/contact-us

11. **Future of #GenerationEquality: Empowering young women = empowering girls**

- Participation of women and girls in socio economic issues:
- Inner drive, willingness and determination to take part in all aspects of life.
- Imams, police, judges educated by Dogan regarding domestic violence.

Betul Kacar:
- 50-50 representation in classes.
- When we start going high in structures, reduction of female representation. Issue: keeping girls and women in decision roles.
- Main obstacle = motivation. Grew up watching her mom struggling holding a pen. No women in her family has ever been given an access to education. Motivation: get all the diplomas her female relatives could not get.

Derya Gizem Ust: 24 years old, law student:
- "you can do it too" peer to peer mentorship program / high school girls.
https://aydindoganvakfi.org.tr/iletisim

Melis Alphan:
- "I can! – Inspiring life stories"
- Determined hard working girls' stories told.
- Women issues are not necessarily women's problems.
- Men are part of the solution too.
- Talking about human equality.
- Train girls - & boys.

- Educational systems have to be mandatory for everyone.
- Historical examples of what discrimination did.

12. Women & girls' Human Rights: UN language & Terminology

- Biological sex and gender terminology. Misuse of gender terminology: misinterpretation in practice.
- Gender needs a clear definition: needed for use in international and national laws. Be cautions in the choice of words – terminology differs through languages.
  problem: grammatically speaking - masculine or feminine. Sex and gender are used in ways divergent from their original intent. Used as a synonym for biological sex. Word gender is misused & fashionable. Usage of sex & gender is not defined.

Meaning of gender:
- Gender refers to the socio-cultural construction of roles, behaviors, activities, attributes and relationships between men & women.
- Sex/bio sex refers to biological and physiological characteristics
- Gender roles are learned and can change over time: sex can't be changed.
- Bio sex has been replaced by "gender identity", "gender expression" & "gender characteristics" in numerous international instruments and in domestic laws.

Yogyakarta principles (YP):
- Yogyakarta principles (YP): created by 23 people – not requested by any state party or UN entity. Not subject to the usual checks and balances of negotiated language
- YP 2006: non-binding document, consolidated into 29 principles based on interpretation human rights laws as it applies to peoples of diverse sexual orientations and gender identifies
- YP 2017 (YP+10): gender expression is included in gender identity and in sex characteristics: art. 31: abolish all legal records of sex from legal documents including birth certificate and passports"
- YP defines 3 concepts: gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics. Main lobby document to replace "sex" with "gender identity" (ex. Parent 1 and parent 2 instead of mother and father)
- UN official language policy: department of global communication provides resources to help un staff to communicate in a gender inclusive way in the 6 official languages.
- UN conventions do no provide definitions for gender or gender identity.

- CEDAW: art. 1; GR 28(2010), only 2 GR out of 64 mention gender identity.
- CRC: GC 20 – 2016: par 33-34
- UNESCO refers to gender.
- The concept of gender is vital because it applies to social analysis, reveals how women's subordination (or men's domination) is socially constructed. As such, the subordination can be changed or ended. https://ngocsw-geneva.ch/

13. **Mobilizing for Impact: Strategies to Mobilize Toward Positive Change**

- *Dre Stephanie Mullen*: https://uniweb.uottawa.ca/members/1131/profile
- Strategies for influencing governments & the political process:
- Extensive nature of NGOs registered: 5451 NGOs in 2020.
- Develop clear messages.
- Who are you engaging? who /why/what do you want from them. Next step: determine how you are going to engage "them".
- Team: opportunities for everyone. Serve on a board, hold an event, financially sponsor activities. Tips: use presence on social media – help build the team, networks etc.
- Schedule & budget: one step at a time + fundraising strategy.
- Partnerships & alliances.
- Find a policy champion that will help get your voice heard. They provide profile to you cause by just being associated with you. They can communicate you message to others in power that they interact with. They know the insider lay of the land that the policy is operating in.

Jackie Neapole: https://www.criaw-icref.ca/en/

- Beijing platform for action: Participation and contribution of all citizens, particularly women and organizations in its effective implementation
- Government funding has significantly increased – since liberalization / individualism.

Shelagh Day:
- World of international human rights is part of Canadian culture. They still have to be implemented in Canadian law.
- Canada is a big signer of treaties – but not so good at implementing these treaties.

- In Canada: specific problem: federalism – overlapping responsibilities. Health, social services, education, etc.
- We need a national action plan. Canada took no responsibility, just gave money to organization to hold meetings. Non biding recommendations, thus useless.
- Need of a robust monitoring instruments to track government accountability

Ashwini Selvakumaran:
- Building opportunities for youth to learn about data and advocacy – inspire them to speak up about social inequities and introduce them to new careers. Partnering youth programs.
- Storytelling for youth.
- Build an international conversation. Interviews with girls around the world leading to a book: "Covid-19 perspectives" (inspiring +++
- COVID19 Perspectives: https://www.covid19perspectives.ca/

14. **Empowering Girls & Women through an Inclusive Cyberspace**

- Facilitates inclusion engagement, civic participation and provide opportunities for education and employment.
- Preventing harm and harnessing technologies:
- Facilitation of virtual violence.
- Campaign for change, advocacy, evidence collection, safety planning, prevention initiative, service provision, information and education.
- Women – minorities: gaming:
- Hyper sexualization + hypermasculinity
- Oppression
- Cyber sextortion: offenders, methods, motives and victims
- They target victims under age of 18, gendered preference. Most attention from law enforcement, policy makers, public, victim/offender often strangers
- Demands were for sexual content
- Manipulation, grooming
- Impersonate other minors