

## Additional Issues for Advocacy

### **Elimination of the use of traditional, historical, religious or cultural attitudes to justify violations of women's human rights and equality before the law in the CSW65 Outcome Document**

*"A reservation by which a State or an international organization purports to exclude or to modify the legal effect of certain provisions of a treaty or of the treaty as a whole in order to preserve the integrity of specific rules of the internal law of that State or of specific rules of that organization in force at the time of the formulation of the reservation may be formulated only insofar as it does not affect an essential element of the treaty nor its general tenor."* (UN [A/RES/68/111](#) 3.1.5.5 Reservations relating to internal law)

*"Article 5 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,<sup>13</sup> which provides that States parties shall take all appropriate measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices that are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women, as reiterated in the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action,"* (UN [A/RES/52/99](#) Traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls, paragraph (h))

*"Urges States to condemn violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, and reaffirms that they should not invoke any custom, tradition or religious consideration to avoid their obligations with respect to its elimination and should pursue, by all appropriate means and without delay, a policy of eliminating violence against women as set out in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women"* (UN [A/RES/71/170](#), Intensification of efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: domestic violence paragraph 7)

### **The inclusion of Education in the CSW65 Outcome Document**

*"Women and girls must enjoy equal access to quality education, economic resources and political participation as well as equal opportunities with men and boys for employment, leadership and decision-making at all levels. We will work for a significant increase in investments to close the gender gap and strengthen support for institutions in relation to gender equality and the empowerment of women at the global, regional and national levels. "* (UN [A/RES/70/1](#), Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, paragraph 20)

Recognition must be given that education is *"a multiplier right that empowers women and girls to make choices to claim their human rights, including the right to participate in public affairs and to participate fully in the making of decisions that shape society."* (Citing OHCHR Resolution 32/20, OHCHR Report [Realisation of the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl](#), paragraph 1)

## **Be vigilant about the use of the term ‘family’ in CSW65 Outcome Document**

*“Encourages States to recognize shared work and parental responsibilities between women and men in order to promote women’s increased participation in public life, and take appropriate measures to achieve this, including measures to reconcile family, private and professional life;”* ([CSW 60 Agreed Conclusions](#), 2016, Women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development, Paragraph 23(ii))

Excerpts from the UN Women discussion paper [“A Contemporary View of Family in International Human Rights Law” in Progress of the World’s Women 2018](#):

*“The work of human rights monitoring bodies has confirmed the need to interpret the concept of family in line with present day conditions (e.g., by incorporating changes in perceptions and reality) and taking due account of the evolution of other norms and principles. These bodies have not only responded to changes in the concept of family, they have also actively promoted them.”* (On page 20 of the UN Women discussion paper, citing Joint statement adopted by the three treaty bodies at the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, E/1999/22 Chapter VI, decisions adopted by the Committee at its ninth session, para. 6)

*“The UN CRC Committee has urged that, “references to ‘family’ [...] not be understood as narrowly defined. The references to ‘family’ (or to ‘parents’) must be understood within the local context and may mean not only the ‘nuclear’ family, but also the extended family or even broader communal definitions including grandparents, siblings, other relatives, guardians or care providers, neighbours, etc.”* (On page 20 of the UN Women discussion paper, citing UN CRC Committee 2001, para. 701)

## **The Inclusion of Widows in the CSWS65 Outcome Document**

A major cause of poverty among women is unaddressed widowhood, particularly in the Global South. At least 38 million widows live in extreme poverty globally ([World Widows Report](#)).

Widowhood is one of the most neglected of all gender and human rights issues. It is also a key driver of taking girls out of school, thus increasing poverty and inequality across the generations. Denial of rights to widows increases their and their children’s economic and social insecurity. Unless the poverty of widows is paid attention to, the Sustainable Development Goals will not be achieved by 2030 and widows will be left behind.

Accurate data on the number of widows globally, disaggregated for age, marital status and documentation is needed to educate people about this problem and to help shape policy. Data from 2015 states that there are **258 million widows** with 585 million children (both under 18 and adult children) globally (IBID). This number has greatly increased due to the COVID-19 epidemic (twice as many men as women die from COVID-19), migration, the proliferation of armed conflicts, natural disasters, HIV-AIDS, women outliving their husbands, fundamentalist extremism, child marriage to older men who outlive their husbands and sectarian violence. The

poverty of widows also affects their children who are often unable to attend school because of lack of money for school fees or the need to do domestic chores and care for younger children at home while their mothers are working. Girl children of widows are often subject to child marriage because of poverty and their sons to extremist indoctrination.

Click [here](#) to see the interventions to Rev1 of the CSW65 Agreed Conclusions on widows by the Ambassador of Sierra Leone to use in your advocacy on widows.