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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

Gender-sensitive parliaments: Advancing gender equality to end poverty

A parliamentary event organized by the Inter-Parliamentary Union and UN-Women
at the 68th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

12 March 2024, UN Headquarters, ECOSOC Chamber, New York

CONCEPT NOTE AND AGENDA

Introduction

Poverty remains an enduring challenge, affecting millions worldwide and perpetuating cycles of inequality across generations with women and girls being disproportionately affected. As global statistics show, one in every 10 women lives in extreme poverty (10.3%).¹ If current trends continue, by 2030, an estimated 8% of the world's female population – 342.4 million women and girls will live below the poverty line.²

The persistence of discriminatory norms and harmful gender stereotypes affecting women and girls in all their diversity across every area of life contribute to a vicious cycle of exclusion and discrimination. In turn, women and girls face substantive barriers to accessing resources, education and sustainable economic opportunities.

Meanwhile, institutions, including national parliaments, may inadvertently perpetuate gender disparities if their work processes, policy and legal outcomes are not intentionally designed to be gender-inclusive and gender-responsive. Parliaments must be gender-sensitive institutions, composed equally of men and women, must run in a gender-responsive way, and be able to detect and redress existing inequalities in law and policy-making.

With this in mind, the IPU and UN-Women are organizing their annual Parliamentary Meeting on the occasion of the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 68) on the theme *Gender-sensitive parliaments: Advancing gender equality to end poverty*.

Background

The importance of addressing women's poverty has been long recognized in the international normative framework. "Women and Poverty" is the first critical area of concern of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Convention) recognizes that poverty limits women's access to food, health, education, training, and opportunities for employment and other needs, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the eradication of poverty as the greatest global challenge, indispensable for the achievement of sustainable development.

Women's experiences of poverty are shaped by, among other, discriminatory laws, lack of economic opportunities, pervasiveness of biased social norms and gender stereotypes. The most recent data points to an estimated 3.7 billion women and girls currently living in countries where discriminatory laws are in place or key protections are lacking.³ The effects can be seen in women's unequal access to land and assets, finance

¹ UN-Women and UN-DESA, *The Gender Snapshot 2023* (US, 2023): bit.ly/gender-snapshot-2023.

² Ibid.

³ Jeni Klugman and Beatrice Duncan, *Shaping the law for women and girls: Experiences and lessons from UN Women's interventions (2015-2020)* (UN-Women, US 2022): www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/shaping-the-law-for-women-and-girls#:~:text=The%20most%20recent%20data%20available,and%20laws%2C%20yet%20gaps%20remain.



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and decision-making. As a result, in 2022, less than 61% of women aged 25 to 54 were in the labour force compared to 91% of men.⁴

Such experiences of poverty and socioeconomic exclusion that are related to gender intersect with race, ethnicity, migratory status, age, disability, religion, geographical location, sexual orientation and gender identity, and result in forms of discrimination and inequality that may vary over time and from place to place.

Moreover, women's poverty is intensifying in the context of multiple crises. Global shocks in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic have shed light on the care economy and placed the invisible cost of unpaid care work, primarily borne by women, at the centre of the debate. Research revealed that women perform on average 2.8 more hours of unpaid care and domestic work per day,⁵ pushing women to live in poverty not only in terms of income but also of availability of time. This crucial evidence shows that women are not tacitly "left behind", but rather deliberately being "pushed behind" into poverty by structural inequities in the economy and society.

To reach the no-poverty goal by 2030, progress on eradicating poverty needs to be 26 times faster.⁶ In this context, parliaments have a crucial role to play in tackling poverty while addressing the gendered nature of inequalities. This would include utilizing gender-responsive budgeting, promoting the development of effective gender-responsive pro-poor policies and supporting the design of services helping women living in poverty through investments in social infrastructure and tax reforms to ensure a more inclusive redistribution of resources and growth.

Parliaments are also central institutions in shifting paradigms and effectively ensuring women's leadership, including that of women in poverty and of rural and indigenous women, at all levels and across sectors. Parliaments are called upon to foster informed public debate and adopt policies that enable inclusive economies that are gender equitable and that ensure no one is left behind. In this respect, parliaments must ensure policies regulate gender-sensitive and inclusive structures that represent society equally in all its diversity.

Objective

The Parliamentary Meeting on *Gender-sensitive parliaments: Advancing gender equality to end poverty* will provide an opportunity to bring a parliamentary perspective into the CSW68 discussions by showcasing parliamentary engagement in formulating legislation and policies that specifically address poverty and ensure public financing advances the empowerment of women and girls. Members of parliament from around the world will share observations and practices in the areas of poverty alleviation through gender responsive budgeting and taxation, access to credit and resources for women, as well as targeted interventions that enable the creation of caring and green economies. It will also aim to underline the imperative of having gender-sensitive parliaments and of sharing good practices in fostering law-making environments that proactively address and rectify gender disparities.

Date and time

The parliamentary meeting will be held in person on United Nations Headquarters' premises, in the ECOSOC Chamber on Tuesday, 12 March 2024.

Interpretation will be provided in English, French, Arabic and Spanish.

⁴ UN-Women and UN-DESA, *The Gender Snapshot 2023* (US, 2023): bit.ly/gender-snapshot-2023.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.



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Agenda

Chair: President of the IPU Bureau of Women Parliamentarians [TBC]

09:45 – 10:00 Arrival of delegates

10:00 – 10:15 Opening remarks

- Chair of the Parliamentary Meeting – introduction (5 minutes)
- IPU opening remarks (5 minutes)
- UN-Women opening remarks (5 minutes)

10:15–12:00 Session 1: Prioritizing poverty reduction to achieve gender equality

This session will explore how parliaments can drive change and reinvigorate policymaking to address the needs of women and girls living in poverty, and ensure that legislation and policies in the economy and finance sectors are equitable and inclusive, and do not maintain, perpetuate or exacerbate poverty. It will look at the underlying gendered root causes of women's poverty, such as discriminatory norms and practices.

Following introductory presentations, a moderated debate will invite participants to discuss the following guiding questions:

- What are the good practices in reversing discriminatory laws and addressing gender inequalities that lead to poverty?
- What legislation and policies should parliaments prioritize to reduce poverty? How can parliamentary committees or groups support these efforts?
- What are the good practices in using tax systems to help eliminate inequalities?
- What measures can be introduced to encourage public-private sector partnerships that enable more sustainable approaches for women to access finance and credit?

12:00–13:00 Special segment: Gender responsive budgeting: A tool for poverty reduction

This session will offer members of parliament a platform for sharing information, practices and lessons learned in designing and implementing gender-responsive budgeting in their respective countries. The floor will be open for a series of 3-minute interventions by MPs followed by a Q and A among participants.

13:00–15:00 Lunch break

15:00–16:30 Session 2: Gender-sensitive institutions breaking the poverty cycle

This session will explore how parliaments can address women's poverty by placing gender equality at the centre of their composition, and organizational and functional structures. The session will also serve to identify ways to ensure inclusive decision-making as a key to prioritizing the needs and interests of everyone, leaving no one behind. Following the presentation of the IPU-UN-Women Handbook [Gender-responsive law-making](#), special focus will be placed on the needs that parliamentary institutions may have to be able to deliver more gender-responsive legislation and policies.



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Following introductory presentations, a moderated debate will invite participants to respond to the following guiding questions:

- How can parliaments develop a gender-sensitive policy framework, mandate and mechanisms to advance gender-responsive policymaking within parliaments?
- As parliaments have committed to putting vulnerable populations at the centre of parliamentary functions of legislation, oversight, resource allocation and representation, what concrete measures can they take to ensure that the perspectives and experiences of underrepresented groups of women and girls, including poor, rural and indigenous groups are actively incorporated in these functions?
- What capacities and resources are parliaments missing to be able to deliver more gender-responsive legislation and policies?
- How can parliaments forge partnerships with external organizations, including civil society and grassroots movements, to enhance their effectiveness in addressing gender inequalities and poverty?

16:30–17:00 Wrap up and concluding remarks