Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women
Institut canadien de recherches sur les femmes

SPECIAL EDITION:

CRIAW-ICREF REPORTS BACK FROM THE 63RD SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

ÉDITION SPÉCIALE :

RAPPORT DE CRIAW-ICREF SUR LA 63IÈME SESSION DE LA COMMISSION DE LA CONDITION DE LA FEMME DES N.U.

BACKGROUND: What goes on at CSW?

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The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is part of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. Established in 1946, it is a global intergovernmental policy-making body, devoted exclusively to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, with the mandate of making recommendations about this in the economic, social, civil, political and educational fields. At its annual, two-week meetings in New York, representatives of UN Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited NGOs[1] from all regions of the world discuss topics broadly focused on the year's Priority Theme, and the Review Theme (an earlier year's Priority Theme). CSW works to issue Agreed Conclusions at the end of the meetings**,** the result of negotiations among Member States, presenting a global policy framework for implementation of women's rights by States across the globe during the coming years. The negotiations are closed, although some Member States include civil society representatives among those in attendance. During the open CSW sessions, held mainly within the UN buildings, Member States, sometimes in collaboration with UN entities, such as International Labour Organisation (ILO) or UN Women hold Side Events, related to the theme. These events often include presentations by experts on the theme from all over the world. Because they are often not as politically motivated as a State's official statement, they can be particularly helpful in understanding the issues being discussed. There are also opportunities for States and civil society organizations to make brief public statements related to the theme. Some States arrange to have briefings for the NGOs from their country, but the UN makes no formal provision for this. We are fortunate that Canada arranges these informal briefings, which are, necessarily, held in a corridor.

At the same time as official CSW activities are taking place, the NGO CSW Forum, offers the opportunity for feminist and women's activist organizations to meet, in locations relatively close to the UN without needing ECOSOC accreditation. The NGO CSW sessions are called Parallel Events and are presented by civil society representatives from many parts of the world. In addition, NGO CSW organizes daily civil society briefing meetings, advocacy training sessions, NGO regional orientation sessions, regional caucus meetings, an artisan fair, a rally or march, a reception and a 'consultation' (or orientation) day held just before CSW begins.

[1] CRIAW-ICREF is an accredited NGO.

Parallel Event: NGO Briefing on Beijing+25 (March 14th)

Évènement parallel: briefing des ONG sur Beijing+25 (14 mars)

There are typically well over a dozen concurrent activities among which to choose in each time slot (from 8:30am to 8:00pm) every day. That the Side Events and the Parallel Events operate on different schedules only increases the challenges of deciding where to go at any time. A further challenge is space: it is not always possible to squeeze into the room, although some of the CSW sessions are broadcast into overflow rooms or on the web, in order to address this problem.

The Priority Theme for CSW63 was **'Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls'.** Innovation in fields such as transportation, urban planning, and child care can remove barriers and contribute to progress in gender equality. Women's empowerment through sustainable infrastructure has been a critical area in the Millennium Development Goals and presently in the Sustainable Development Goals. It is a needed model to achieve women's substantive equality, to make women's rights enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) a lived reality**.** The Review theme for CSW63 was **'Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development (Agreed Conclusions of the sixtieth session)'**.

CONTEXTE : Qu'est-ce qui se passe à CSW ?

La Commission de la condition de la femme (CSW) fait partie du Conseil économique et social (ECOSOC) des Nations Unies. Établi en 1946, il s'agit d'un organe intergouvernemental mondial d'élaboration de politiques, consacrées exclusivement à la promotion de l'égalité entre les sexes et à l'autonomisation des femmes, avec le mandat de formuler des recommandations à ce sujet dans les domaines économique, social, civil, politique et éducatif. Lors de ses réunions annuelles de deux semaines à New York, des représentantes des États membres des Nations Unies, des entités des Nations Unies et des ONG[2] accréditées par l'ECOSOC de toutes les régions du monde discutent des sujets largement axés sur le thème prioritaire de l'année et le thème à réviser (le Thème prioritaire de l'année dernière). La CSW fournit des conclusions convenues à la fin des réunions, les résultats des négociations entre les États membres, présentant alors un cadre politique mondial pour la mise en œuvre des droits des femmes par les États du monde entier au cours des prochaines années. Les négociations sont fermées, bien que certains États membres comprennent des représentantes de la société civile parmi celles présentes. Au cours des sessions ouvertes de la CSW, principalement dans les bâtiments de l'ONU, les États membres, parfois en collaboration avec des entités des Nations Unies, telles que l'Organisation internationale du Travail (OIT) ou ONU Femmes, ont des évènements en marge[3] liés au thème. Ces événements incluent souvent des présentations d'expertes provenant du monde entier sur le thème. Parce que les événements sont souvent moins politiquement motivés que les déclarations officielles d'un État, ils peuvent être particulièrement utiles pour comprendre les problèmes abordés. Il existe également des possibilités pour les États et les organisations de la société civile de faire de brèves déclarations publiques liées au thème. Certains États s'engagent à organiser des séances d'information pour les ONG de leur pays, mais l'ONU ne prévoit aucune disposition formelle. Nous sommes heureuses que le Canada organise ces séances d'information informelles, qui se tiennent, nécessairement, dans un couloir.

En même temps que les activités officielles de la CSW, le forum CSW de l'ONG offre l'occasion aux organisations de femmes féministes et militantes de se rencontrer dans des endroits relativement proches de l'ONU sans avoir besoin d'une accréditation ECOSOC. Les sessions d'ONG CSW s'appellent « des évènements parallèles » et sont présentées par des représentantes de la société civile de nombreuses régions du monde. De plus, l'ONG CSW organise des réunions d'information quotidiennes de la société civile, des séances de formation au plaidoyer, des séances d'orientation

[2] CRIAW-ICREF est une ONG accréditée.
[3] Nous avons décidé de faire une distinction entre les « évènements parallèles » tenues par les États membres et « les évènements parallèles » tenues par les ONG à l'extérieur de l'ONU. En anglais une distinction existe entre les deux types d'évènements (side events et parallel events) mais les deux se traduits en évènements parallèles officiellement.

régionale des ONG, des réunions de caucus régionaux, une foire artisanale, un rassemblement ou une marche, une réception et une journée de « consultation » (ou d'orientation) juste avant que la CSW commence.

Il y a généralement plus d'une douzaine d'activités simultanées parmi lesquelles choisir chaque jour. Le fait que les évènements en marge et les évènements parallèles fonctionnent selon des horaires différents ne fait qu'accroître l'obstacle de décider où aller à tout moment. Un autre défi est l'espace : il n'est pas toujours possible de se serrer dans la pièce, bien que certaines des sessions CSW sont diffusées dans des salles de débordement ou sur le Web, afin de résoudre ce problème.

25 Years on the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women Side Event (March 13th)

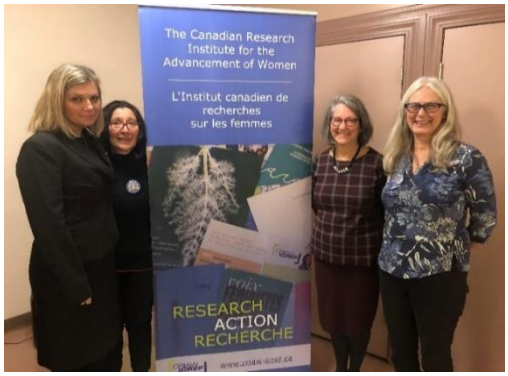
Évènement de marge : Les 25 ans de la Rapporteuse spéciale sur la violence à l'encontre des femmes (13 mai)

Le thème prioritaire de CSW63 était **« Les systèmes de protection sociale, l'accès aux services publics et les infrastructures durables au service de l'égalité des sexes et de l'autonomisation des femmes et des filles »**. L'innovation dans des domaines tels que le transport, la planification urbaine et les services de garde pour enfants peut supprimer les obstacles et contribuer à faire progresser l'égalité entre les sexes. L'autonomisation des femmes par le biais d'une infrastructure durable a été un domaine crucial dans les objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement et à l'heure actuelle dans les objectifs de développement durable. C'est un modèle nécessaire pour réaliser l'égalité réelle des femmes et faire en sorte que leurs droits soient garantis par la Convention sur l'élimination de toutes les formes de discrimination à l'égard des femmes (CEDEF). Le thème à réviser de CSW63 a été intitulé **« Autonomisation des femmes et lien avec le développement durable (conclusions concertées de la soixantième session) »**.

CRIAW-ICREF's Parallel Sessions!

Building Sustainable Infrastructure for Women Globally

The Vartan Hall in the Armenian Convention Center, March 12th at 8:30 AM



Panelists (left to right): Louisa Jones, Verónica Montúfar, Morna Ballantyne, Jane Stinson

The corporate push to privatize infrastructure and the threat it imposes on women's access to sustainable social protection globally was discussed by panelists at this parallel session. Public Private Partnerships reduce state capacity to build gender-responsive infrastructure such as public transit, child care, water, energy, and other public services that empower women in their work and social reproductive roles. The panelists shared stories of the struggle for sustainable public infrastructure as women from different countries continuously work together to propose alternatives to strengthen gender responsive public services.

Impacts of Neoliberalism and Austerity on Women: A North-South Conversation

The Vartan Hall in the Armenian Convention Center, March 13th at 10:30 AM

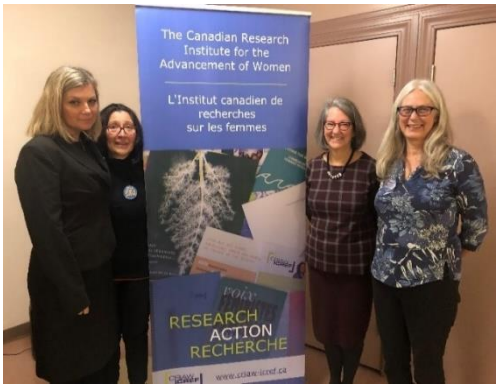
Panelists (left to right): Misun Woo, Jackie Neapole, Prabha Khosla, Susana Chiarotti, Annick Desjardins

How are austerity measures and neo-liberalism undermining the achievement of the SDGs? CRIAW-ICREF and panelists from the global north and south analysed the impact of neo-liberalism on public services, social protection systems and social infrastructure in the lives of women and girls in cities and states. There was also discussion on how individualization is affecting organizing and solidarity within civil society. Recommendations were provided as to how women and girls' rights can be addressed holistically for accountability to urban planning, management and governance.

Les évènements parallèles de CRIAW-ICREF !

Construire une infrastructure durable pour les femmes à l'échelle mondiale

Au Vartan Hall dans le Armenian Convention Center, le 12 mars à 8h30



Les panélistes (de gauche à droite) : Louisa Jones, Verónica Montúfar, Morna Ballantyne, Jane Stinson

Les membres de CRIAW-ICREF ont discuté de l'impulsion des entreprises à la privatisation des infrastructures et de la menace qu'elle fait peser sur l'accès des femmes à une protection sociale durable à l'échelle mondiale. Les partenariats public-privé réduisent la capacité de l'État à mettre en place une infrastructure sexospécifique, telle que le transport en commun, les garderies, l'eau, l'énergie et d'autres services publics qui empower les femmes dans leurs rôles professionnels et sociaux. Les panélistes ont partagé des récits de lutte pour une infrastructure publique durable alors que des femmes de différents pays collaborent sans cesse pour proposer des alternatives visant à renforcer les services publics sexospécifiques.

Les impacts du néolibéralisme et de l'austérité sur les femmes : un dialogue Nord-Sud

Au Vartan Hall dans le Armenian Convention Center, le 13 mars à 10h30

Les panélistes (de gauche à droite) : Misun Woo, Jackie Neapole, Prabha Khosla, Susana Chiarotti, Annick Desjardins

Comment les mesures d'austérité et le néolibéralisme entravent-ils la réalisation des ODD? CRIAW-ICREF et les panélistes du Nord et du Sud global ont analysé l'impact du néolibéralisme sur les services publics, les systèmes de protection sociale et les infrastructures sociales dans la vie des femmes et des filles dans les milieux urbains. Des discussions ont également eu lieu sur l'impact de l'individualisation sur la capacité d'organiser et la solidarité au sein de la société civile. Des recommandations ont été formulées sur la manière dont les droits des femmes et des filles peuvent être traités de manière holistique pour la reddition des comptes au niveau de la planification, de la gestion et de la gouvernance urbaines.

Reflections from Members of CRIAW-ICREF's UN Committee
Réflexions des membres du Comité des N.U. de CRIAW-ICREF

Jackie Neapole, CRIAW-ICREF Executive Director

We held two very successful Parallel Events at this year's NGO CSW Forum, *Building Sustainable Infrastructure for Women Globally* and *Impacts of Neoliberalism and Austerity on Women: A North-South Conversation.* Both parallel events included panelists from organizations from other parts of the world which was great for providing a global perspective of the inequities arising from neo-liberalism, identifying areas of commonality and difference, and importantly, how to strategize.

We had a very solid intergenerational delegation of CRIAW-ICREF women, some very experienced women as well as newbies attending CSW for the first time. I definitely noticed this year how having a strong team of eight women with different interests and knowledge was an asset in maximizing our time and resources while in New York. As mentioned in the introduction to this report, there are many events going on concurrently, from the official Side Events, to civil society's Parallel Events, to CSW NGO and UN Women events. Having a delegation where we can be present at multiple places at the same time greatly increases the knowledge we can then share with each other to inform our next moves. This also strengthens our opportunities and the breadth of a collective analysis.

Despite our best efforts to make use of our time effectively, there are two main things I would like to mention that definitely have an impact on our (women's organizations) ability to effect meaningful change at UN CSW. Women's organizations' capacity to organize, and deliberate actions limiting participation of civil society.

NGOs in Canada, specifically women's NGOs, have been chronically and systematically defunded. We know that many social justice oriented organizations have also suffered from these cuts, but as with every other area, women fare worse and not unsurprisingly so do our organizations. We know that against all odds women's organizations have kept themselves going with few or no staff during other very antagonistic times, likewise in other states globally we see that women's organizations have continued to exist and to advocate for change in very hostile environments. In the Canadian context there have been some modest changes to capacity through some project funding as of late, but by and large we have barely begun rebuilding. The lack of capacity is very obvious for most of us who were present there and also apparent by noting who was not present at all.

Not only have women's organizations experienced (and continue to experience) chronic and systematic defunding, which in effect creates conditions where we are not equally positioned when we do come to the table vis-à-vis other stakeholders and other members of civil society, but also there is a deliberate marginalization of civil society at CSW which further limits our ability to participate in any meaningful way. Anyone who has been there knows that it is like civil society is quarantined at arms length from the actual political work taking place. Most of the engagement feels rather superficial. I think it is important that we as feminists are conscious of the impacts of both of these conditions on our ability to meaningfully engage and advocate for change.

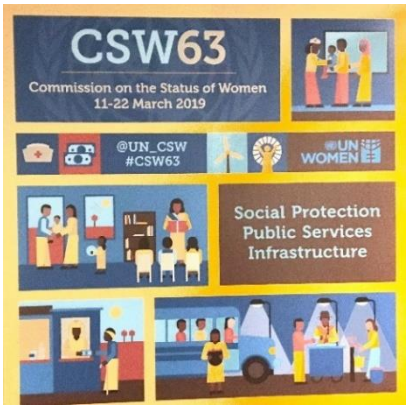
As feminists we need to continue to push back and keep space for critical discussion and analysis of the issues as they matter to us on the ground. It is important, where possible, that we support the participation of other feminists at the table. We risk having our movement co-opted and important gains rolled back if we allow this exclusion to go on unfettered. As we saw during our two Parallel Events and a few others, there is a strong need and desire to get back to the basics and critically analyze neo-liberalism and other structures and systems that reinforce our unequal statuses as diverse women and to move beyond the lip service of empowering ourselves as individuals to succeed in this broken system. This year's theme allowed for some interesting discussions and push back around sustainable infrastructure and public services and who and how these public services are delivered and accessed.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize my CRIAW-ICREF sisters, Nayyar Javed, Marilyn Porter and our late dear Ann Denis who have offered a wealth of knowledge, historical context and rich perspective (and friendly debates) to inform us younger activists of where to keep the bar (a lot higher, by the way). This is one reason why I know that things have been different and can be different.

Special acknowledgement to all the dedicated members of our delegation who were able to attend thanks to their willingness to self-fund and/or find alternative funding to represent CRIAW-ICREF. As a national women's organization that has very precarious funding, almost exclusively project-based, this contribution from our members is invaluable. This dedication is how we have been able to maintain our presence and ECOSOC consultative status. Thank you CRIAW-ICREF women!

Arlene Hache, Chair of CRIAW-ICREF's UN Committee
Arlene Hache, Présidente du Comité des N.U. de CRIAW-ICREF

Several global regional preparatory meetings were held prior to the CSW63 to gather input into a report that reviewed and assessed the extent to which Member States had implemented the Agreed Conclusions from the sixtieth session of the Commission, on



The CSW63 poster

L'affiche de CSW63

"Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development". Forty-nine Member States, absent Canada, made submissions to the report that summarized the progress, gaps and challenges relating to actions taken at the national level in implementing the Agreed Conclusions.

From my perspective as Chair of the United Nations Committee for CRIAW-ICREF, pre-planning for the CSW63 was just as exciting, educational and rewarding as the event itself. I was fortunate to work with a stellar cast of feminist activists who knew the ropes from beginning to end, both in terms of the process and terms of the key players. Committee members were connected to sister and ally groups across sectors and around the globe so were well positioned to collaborate on and spearhead Parallel Events that spoke to issues critical to the Priority Theme.

It was reaffirming to reconnect with Indigenous and grassroots women from Canada who had sustained their dedication and commitment to social justice issues through a neo-liberal era that oversaw the dismantling of women's advocacy groups across the country. The same was true for Indigenous and grassroots women from around the world who shared their somewhat similar, but unique stories of challenges and successes they experienced working on the frontlines of their communities.

Although I could only participate during the first week, I followed the online discussion of women who stayed to the end, lobbying for critical elements of the Agreed Conclusions with Member State representatives. On March 22, 2019, the Commission on the Status of Women adopted Agreed Conclusions on the Priority Theme contained in this link: https://undocs.org/en/E/CN.6/2019/L.3.

Nayyar Javed, CRIAW-ICREF UN Committee Member
Nayyar Javed, membre du Comité des N.U. de CRIAW-ICREF

The three issues constituting the Priority Theme of CSW63 could have offered a possibility of challenging the core strategies of neo-liberalism; dismantling social protection by forcing the nation states to de-invest in public goods; cutting back on public services to open the door to privatization; and having private corporations build infrastructure, which serves big businesses and ignores the needs of other citizens. This

potential to challenge neoliberalism generated optimism in civil society. We went to the 63rd session of CSW expecting that its Agreed Conclusions would consist of a global policy for transforming the systems shaped by neo-liberalism and its lethal intersection with patriarchy. However, given the history of the "intergovernmental negotiations" I have witnessed in the last twenty-four sessions, civil society and I were given reasons to lower our expectations.

The historic lack of serious commitment to take actions for achieving women's equality demonstrated by the UN members, from both developing and developed counties, did not give any reasons to expect a much-needed change in their behaviour. Most developed countries often resist changing the structures that privilege corporations and the rich, which in turn undermines women's equality. Some countries, and the Vatican, oppose women's reproductive rights and demand the supremacy of religious and cultural rights over women's rights. This often drags out the debate, and sometimes the Commission ends its session without reaching a consensus and with no Agreed Conclusions. Nonetheless, after two weeks of gut-wrenching intergovernmental negotiations by the United Nations members, the session ended with an outcome document consisting of the Agreed Conclusions. The following is a brief review of the strengths and weaknesses I have observed in the Agreed Conclusions.

Positive Outcomes

One prominent strength I identified in the text was that access to social protection systems, to public services and sustainable infrastructure is based on the human rights of all women and girls. These are specified and affirmed by the United Nations treaties including CEDAW, International Labour Organization (ILO), the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural rights and its "optional protocol", which are frequently referred to in the text.

The beginning of the text holds a proposal to reaffirm the promotion and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women and girls (including the right to development). Five out of six paragraphs of the "closing remarks" are about reaffirming human rights of women and girls, including reinforcing the need to integrate human rights frameworks into the gender-responsive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda 2030. The emphasis on a rights-based framework for developing policies and programs to implement the Priority Theme and the Agenda 2030 is encouraging. However, mobilization of civil society to lobby for such an implementation is required, otherwise the rhetoric of human rights will not get translated into "deeds". This human rights framework can offer opportunities to civil society to develop strategies to lobby at local, national, and global levels and for implementing the Agreed Conclusions. This is done by investing resources, including "gender-sensitive" budgets, in developing programs that effectively achieve the implementation of the Priority Theme and develop capacity for helping hold the UN and its Member States accountable.

The emphasis on human rights through components of social protection systems, access to public services and infrastructure highlights the fundamental principles of human rights including universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all rights. In other words, the human rights framework ensures universality and thus renders redundant the need to specify a national context, as demanded by some countries, as well as religious and cultural sovereignty. Indivisibility and interdependence of all rights can be and ought to be acknowledged in policy and programs for a comprehensive and therefore effective development of social protection systems.

The Agreed Conclusions strongly affirm the right to social security as included in social protection systems. This includes the right to adequately funded health services, such as reproductive health services, as reaffirmed in the United Nations treaties and outcome documents held in the nineties and by using the reference to the conference on population and development held in 1993 and Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). The reference to the outcome document of the BPfA adds strength to the language.

Social protection systems also include financial safeguard throughout a woman's life cycle. Frequent references to the ILO Convention on the employment opportunities and social protection sections reflect the impact of the labour unions efforts to lobby for the significance of access to decent jobs and workplace safety. The Agreed Conclusions have emphasized the role of access to decent jobs and workplace safety as important requisites of achieving "gender-sensitive" implementation of Agenda 2030. The language of ensuring equal pay for work of equal value (pay equity) is encouraging. It opens up a possibility for Canadian civil society to lobby for pay equality. The text also emphasizes the need for publicly funded child care as an important factor to remove barriers for women to access "jobs" and economic activities. The Agreed Conclusions emphasize on providing financial security to women who do care work and recognize the need to reduce the disproportioned burden of care work carried by women.

The text does offer somewhat of an intersectional framework in the implementation of the Priority Theme. Protection of migrant workers' rights including safety and portability of financial security including pension is effectively emphasized in the text. Two paragraphs related to the needs of a human rights framework for ensuring migrant women's well-being reflect the efforts of the NGO's working for the human rights of migrant women. The needs of Indigenous women highlighted are also a part of the intersectional approach. However, the effects of climate change and the continuation of worldwide colonization of Indigenous populations on the lives of Indigenous women is not mentioned at all in the text.

The reference to the need to take action to protect human rights defenders (HRDs) is indeed laudable language expressing the concern of the CSW over a widespread persecution of the human rights defenders. Urging the UN Member States to take action

to protect HRDs gives hope for the development of an international action plan to stop this persecution and protect them from the aggression directed at them both by nation states and non-state agents including corporate aggression. Similarly, the recommendation that financial and other support be given to the institutional mechanisms including civil society to monitor the implementation of human right treaties at the national level significantly adds to the strength of the Agreed Conclusions.

There are many other noteworthy recommendations including the recognition of unpaid work and ensuring old age security and other benefits for women who are carrying on the burden of this work. The shift from “microeconomic credit” to women’s access to credit for a broader spectrum of economic opportunities in the Agreed Conclusions is refreshing. In other past CSW’s session, the focus on micro-credit as a solution for the economic inequality of women was a frustrating experience for many of the representatives of civil society.

Problem Areas

The text of the Agreed Conclusions is reassuring in many ways but also gives reasons for disappointment. In discussing the generation of resources, the text alludes to the need for progressive taxation and tax collection. The issue of tax collection, however, does not get acknowledged as a global phenomenon. It is reduced to national contexts. It does recommend progressive taxation of the corporations but does not say much about tax loopholes. Similarly, it refers to the “illicit flow” of money as an obstacle for generating finances for social protection but is represented as isolated cases. A close look at the text suggests that the illicit flow of finances is seen only as it connects with trafficking and it fails to capture the fact that it goes on worldwide and is practiced by many powerful people including the Head of States and private sector actors.

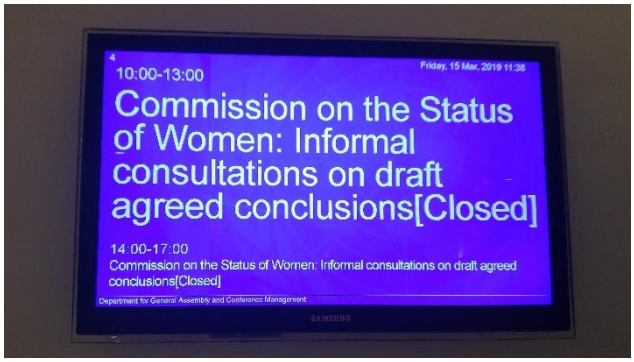
Noticing a reference to “austerity”, as a barrier to social protection at the onset of the text was a pleasant surprise—for a moment it seemed a step towards challenging the neo-liberal strategy for disempowering people and deepening women’s inequality. The text does recommend caution in making cutbacks in times of crisis including national disasters but makes no mention to redress the ongoing financial crisis caused by macroeconomic policies. As I went through the text, I noticed it was only referred to at the onset and was reduced to be a problem only in “some” national contexts.

There are also some limitations which may raise concern about the universality of implementing women’s human rights, in building “social protection systems” and in creating access to public services and sustainable infrastructure. For example, referencing a national context for implementing human rights erodes the universality by allowing some countries to get away with ignoring their international commitments. Similarly, including or prioritizing family rights in the recommendations hampers the development of a human rights framework. Making families responsible for the social protection of women has many devastating consequences for women and girls, it

fosters dependence on the family and places women and girls in a vulnerable position to endure oppression, and in many instances, violence. It also shifts the responsibility to treat women and girls as autonomous citizens and to ensure access to social protection, from the state to the family. Families can offer social protection but with a condition of conformity to their expectations.

Conclusion

In general, the Agreed Conclusions of the 63rd session of the CSW are relatively better than what we have observed in the past. Some of the Conclusions reflect a lobby by members of civil society who manage to influence the official delegates. Alas, the access to lobby for many of us was not available. The intergovernmental negotiations took place behind closed doors. Despite raising our concern about it to UN Women over the past few sessions, the Commission has not changed its position. The Commission's resistance in allowing NGO's to observe negotiations and to influence the document starkly contradicts with the Commissions' rhetoric about the value of civil society's contribution.



CSW consultations between Member States were closed

Les consultations entre les États membres étaient fermées

Even though we face barriers in influencing the outcome document, we can take concrete actions to do the follow up work at the national level. Since the Agreed Conclusions of the 63rd session encompass a broad spectrum, including women's human rights, we must construct strategies for monitoring the implementation process. The Priority Theme of this session encompasses all twelve "critical areas" identified as necessary for women's equality from the BPfA, many of CEDAW's articles and the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural rights and its "optional protocol". Despite the shortcomings, the Agreed Conclusions provide us with an opportunity to lobby our government to make a national action plan for the implementation of the Priority Theme and help civil society build capacity for monitoring progress.

2020 is the year of many milestones. It marks the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference of Women, 75th anniversary of the United Nations and the 20th anniversary of the Security Council Resolution 1325. Moreover, the special session of the General Assembly and the regional meeting of the North American and the European regional caucus as preparation for the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference is taking place this fall. These events offer possibilities for us to organize and to lobby for the implementation of the UN treaties as well as the outcome document of the UN

conferences and the CSW session. It is also an opportunity to remind the world that the formation of the UN itself is an outcome of a persistent women's lobby. All the conferences, treaties and resolutions ensuring human rights not only of women but of all human beings were possible because of the work women activists have done throughout history.

Jane Stinson, CRIAW-ICREF Research Associate
Jane Stinson, Associée de recherche de CRIAW-ICREF

Participants at the 63rd UN Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW63) learned about Building Sustainable Infrastructure for Women Globally at a Parallel Event organized by CRIAW-ICREF.

Speakers shared developments in their home countries of New Zealand, Ecuador, and Canada. This included Louisa Jones, Assistant General Secretary of First Union in New Zealand, part of the International Transport Workers' Federation; Verónica Montúfar, Gender Equality Officer for the Public Service International; and Morna Ballantyne, Executive Director of Child Care Now in Ottawa, Canada. The speakers called attention to how women's human rights, access to public services and sustainable social protection infrastructure are being threatened by a corporate push to privatize public service infrastructure globally.

Public transport is vital to provide women with safe, equal access to public services including education, childcare and healthcare, and to their place of work. Decent and secure jobs in the public transport sector are needed to attract and retain women, with training for career progression which challenges occupational segregation in transport. Louisa emphasized the need for free, clean sanitation facilities and water for both transit drivers and riders and spoke of the campaign her union has launched to establish this.

Louisa noted that transport can only be gender-responsive if women are present, consulted with and their needs as workers and users are considered in planning public transport infrastructure. Privatization of transport infrastructure erodes workers' rights and wages, user access, and disproportionately threatens to automate women's driving jobs, as profit is favoured over other social aims. She called attention to the international union's actions to strengthen public transport based on: public ownership, public investment, secure jobs, and union rights for workers in public and private employers through its 'Our Public Transport' programme. You can find out more on their website: www.ourpublictransport.org.

Verónica Montufár emphasized that all forms of infrastructure are public services. Water, sanitation, electricity, transport are public services and are essential public services for human beings, and are essential public services for women and girls.

Verónica speaking during a CRIAW-ICREF Parallel Event

Verónica nous parle lors d'un évènement parallèle de CRIAW-ICREF

Her remarks focussed on a struggle around the privatization of water in Ecuador that started with the state taking control of the water sources from Indigenous people in order to give it to major industrial users like Coca Cola, rose growers and mining operations by 2010. More recently the French multinational, Veolia, tried to reconstruct water services in Manta, Ecuador after a devastating earthquake there in 2016. The local trade union movement, with women's organizations and students' organizations there, organized a campaign against Veolia and are trying to get local candidates to commit to revise the strategic agreement with Veolia, prior to local elections in March.

Verónica emphasized the importance of having alternatives to privatization, like Public-Public Partnerships; public enterprises that can help other public enterprises reorganize to have better management and better service. And she emphasized the importance of having a big movement with all sectors involved to be successful in preventing privatization and making services public again.

Morna Ballantyne noted that while no economy can work without child care, child care work is undervalued and unrecognized and it's as private as private can get. Outside of the province of Quebec, there is almost no government planning of child care services in Canada; there is no public management and very little public financial support for the supply of services – either for the creation of spaces through capital funding, or for ongoing maintenance through operational funding. Most government funding for child care in Canada takes the form of fee subsidies or tax credits. These subsidies are directed mainly to low-income parents—in other words, child care support is essentially viewed as welfare—not as a right of all residents.

Morna noted that child care must be organized as a universal public service—available and accessible to all families, and inclusive of all children. Child care services must be affordable for parents. Funds must be allocated to improve the quality of care—primarily by improving the wages and working conditions of child care workers. Access to licensed child care must be improved through gradual capital funding and expansion. The big gaps in availability must be filled, and proper local planning processes must be put in place to make sure that new gaps don't arise. She called attention to Child Care

Now's Affordable Child Care For All Plan and encouraged individuals and organizations to endorse it at: https://timeforchildcare.ca/the-affordable-child-care-for-all-plan/.

A full report on this Parallel Event is available on the CRIAW-ICREF web site: https://www.criaw-icref.ca/en/product/building-sustainable-infrastructure-for-women-globally.

Mélissa Alig, CRIAW-ICREF Member
Mélissa Alig, membre de CRIAW-ICREF

C'était ma première participation à la Commission de la condition de la femme (CSW) à New York. On m'avait prévenu que la multitude d'événements, de caucus et de réunions de CSW serait très imposante et que je me sentirais un peu dépassée. Heureusement, j'étais accompagnée d'une équipe de femmes qui me soutenaient et me guidaient en partageant leur expérience des sessions précédentes de la CSW. Grâce à elles, j'ai pu tirer le meilleur parti de mon temps à la CSW. En tant que jeune femme débutante dans le mouvement féministe, cet échange de connaissances intergénérationnel a été très précieux et me guidera dans mon travail futur pour l'égalité des femmes.

J'ai essayé d'assister à autant d'événements que possible pendant ma semaine à New York, mais j'ai préféré les événements parallèles organisés par des ONG du monde entier. J'ai trouvé ces échanges de connaissances transnationaux très constructifs, car j'ai appris de l'expérience de diverses femmes dans leur lutte pour l'égalité et des stratégies qu'elles utilisent pour naviguer les politiques et les institutions de leur pays. J'ai constaté que de nombreuses organisations féministes se heurtent à des obstacles semblables aux nôtres au Canada. Parmi eux, nous pouvons compter le besoin d'un financement de base. Les femmes de l'organisation Aligi, qui forme et fournit des *doulas* culturellement diverses aux femmes immigrantes du comté de Halland, en Suède, ont abordé ce besoin dans leur événement parallèle *Doula & Cultural Interpreters: Women Empowerment, Access to Healthcare and Peacebuilding*. Cette organisation offre d'importants services et possibilités d'emploi à diverses femmes afin de combler l'écart entre les femmes nées en Suède et les femmes immigrantes concernant l'accès aux services de santé. Aligi comptait sur le financement du gouvernement municipal de Halland pour rester opérationnel, mais suite à une cessation récente du financement, l'une des directrices d'Aligi consacre la majeure partie de son temps et de son énergie à trouver d'autres sources de financement ailleurs. De nombreuses organisations de femmes dans le monde reçoivent encore peu ou pas de financement de la part du gouvernement de leur pays, comme c'est le cas chez Aligi, et dans de nombreux cas, les organisations de femmes sont également aux prises à des pertes de fonds.

Certains des événements parallèles ont montré la dynamique qui existe entre les représentantes de l'État et les membres de la société civile dans différents pays. *Leaving No One Behind, Except Women?* était un événement parallèle présenté conjointement par l'Association norvégienne pour la santé publique des femmes (NKS) et par le gouvernement norvégien pour discuter du budget norvégien 2019. Les représentantes de l'État ont décrit leur action visant à renforcer la société civile et à favoriser la communication entre la société civile et les politiciennes. Cependant, une femme du NKS nous a rappelé que même dans un pays à la réputation progressiste comme le Danemark, il y a encore des groupes de femmes en marge de la société qui sont laissées pour compte par les politiques et les pratiques du gouvernement. Ses paroles nous rappellent que les mouvements féministes et la société civile doivent continuer à s'organiser et à recevoir du soutien de la part de nos gouvernements, car il reste beaucoup de travail à faire pour atteindre l'égalité des femmes.

Mélissa Alig and Cyndia Mondésir at the UN Headquarters

Mélissa Alig et Cyndia Mondésir au siège de l'ONU.

Des femmes de plusieurs pays d'Amérique latine ont décrit la société civile organisée et résiliente de leur pays dans un événement parallèle appelé *Judicial Misogyny: A Reproduction of Gender Discrimination Structures*. Elles ont parlé de leurs actions pour éradiquer la misogynie systémique dans les systèmes judiciaires de leurs pays respectifs en luttant pour l'application de la justice pour les femmes lors de la détermination des peines. Elles appliquent des stratégies de surveillance du système judiciaire et de partenariats avec les médias pour dénoncer la discrimination sexuelle. L'une des présentatrices est venue du Venezuela en pleine crise politique et a évoqué les émeutes, les pannes d'électricité, les disparitions et les violences de l'État auxquelles les militantes étaient confrontées dans son pays. Je leur suis reconnaissante d'avoir partagé leurs connaissances et la résilience qu'elles démontrent dans leur lutte constante pour les droits des femmes et pour leur sécurité.

Ces échanges ont été instructifs et importants, mais il manquait beaucoup de voix lors de ces événements. Tel que l'indique le rapport *Building Sustainable Infrastructure for Women Globally*, Samira Hasanain du Syndicat des services publics de Palestine n'a pas pu partager ses connaissances et son expérience à la CSW, car elle n'a pas reçu de visa pour les États-Unis. De fait, ce fut le cas de nombreuses autres femmes. Il s'agit d'une violation directe du Traité no 147, qui interdit explicitement aux autorités des États-Unis d'entraver le transit des personnes se rendant au siège des Nations Unies à New York. Beaucoup de voix manquaient également en raison de contraintes financières, car les logements à New York sont très couteux, et bon nombre de femmes ont dû voyager avec leur propre argent. De plus, les femmes vivant des situations

d’handicap se heurtaient à d’autres obstacles, puisque les bâtiments où se tenaient les événements parallèles étaient éloignés les uns des autres et la majorité d’entre eux ne permettaient pas l’accès facile aux personnes à mobilité réduite. Les Nations Unies doit améliorer l’accès de toutes les femmes en allouant davantage de fonds à la Commission de la condition de la femme et CSW NGO afin que des ressources financières soient allouées aux femmes qui voyagent de l’étranger et que les réunions soient organisées dans des lieux accessibles à tous. Les Nations Unies ne peut pas être un forum mondial d’échange de connaissances si ces obstacles importants persistent.

J’espère poursuivre cet élan et ce dialogue en dehors de la CSW, car je crois que nous pouvons créer des alliances durables et apprendre continuellement les unes des autres. Je suis reconnaissante de cette opportunité et j’espère que davantage de femmes continueront à avoir la même opportunité à l’avenir.

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This report was produced by Mélissa Alig, CRIAW-ICREF Administrative Officer.

Translation by Mélissa Alig, Élodie Delas and Cindy Delorme.

Please note: Due to a limitation in resources, members' reports are presented in the language they were submitted in.

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S'il vous plaît noter qu'en raison de ressources limitées, les rapports des membres sont présentés dans la langue dans laquelle ils ont été soumis.

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