

# FEMNET AT CSW63

REPORT  
MARCH 2019







## **The African Women's Development and Communication Network**

### **FEMNET – African Women's Development & Communication Network**

Upper Hill-Kilimanjaro Road, off Mara Road

P.O. Box 54562, 00200 Nairobi, Kenya

Tel: +254 20 2712971/2

Cell: +254 725 766932

Fax: +254 20 2712974

E-mail: [admin@femnet.or.ke](mailto:admin@femnet.or.ke)

Website: [www.femnet.org](http://www.femnet.org)

#CSW63Africa

**Illustration and Design:** Laughing Gas Design, [wedesign.lg@gmail.com](mailto:wedesign.lg@gmail.com)

**Report drafted** by Agazit Abate, [agazit.guramayle@gmail.com](mailto:agazit.guramayle@gmail.com)

**Edited** by Nebila Abdulmelik, [nebila.abdulmelik@gmail.com](mailto:nebila.abdulmelik@gmail.com)

FEMNET appreciates the support from our partners, including the Government of Sweden, who make it possible for African women to engage in the CSW and in so many other global spaces.

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# ACRONYMS

<b>APWLD</b>	Asian Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development
<b>AWID</b>	Association of Women in Development
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>CSW</b>	Commission on the Status of Women
<b>DAWN</b>	Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
<b>FEMNET</b>	African Women's Development and Communication Network
<b>FIDA</b>	International Federation of Women Lawyers
<b>IFFs</b>	Illicit Financial Flows
<b>ILO</b>	International Labor Organization
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>PALU</b>	Pan-African Lawyers Union
<b>PPPs</b>	Public-Private Partnerships
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Health
<b>YWCA</b>	Young Women's Christian Association



# INTRODUCTION





FEMNET has been engaging with the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) over the last 23 years since 1996, serving as an information hub, mobilizing African women to participate, submitting written and oral statements, organizing side events and advocating for a progressive CSW outcome document.

The 63rd session of CSW deals primarily with social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It also addresses women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development, reviewing the theme from the 60th session of CSW. CSW63 took place from March 11-22, 2019 in New York City and brought together thousands of government delegates, representative of UN agencies, women's rights organizations, activists, practitioners, private sector, donor institutions and other non-state actors.

This year, 14 FEMNET members were present from 11 Countries and 10 Member organizations. In its delegation, FEMNET ensured inclusion and intersectionality and supported

young women as well as representatives from the LGBTQI community. In partnership with AWID, FEMNET submitted a written statement on [Privatization of Public Services](#) and another on [Multiple Discrimination, Intersecting Inequalities and Social Protection for Older Women](#) in partnership with Help Age International. In collaboration with Gender and Development Network, FEMNET also prepared a briefing paper [on how social protection, public services and infrastructure impact women's rights](#) in line with the theme of this year's CSW.

The FEMNET Secretariat organized eight side events around varied topics including public-private partnerships (PPPs), illicit financial flows (IFFs), tax justice and unpaid care work. In addition to the FEMNET Secretariat organized events, there were events organized by FEMNET member/partner organizations as well as NGO CSW/Africa in line with the theme of this year's CSW.

This report gives an overview of some of these events and of FEMNET's overall engagement at CSW63.

# > FEMNET EVENTS







## **WILTING IN BLOOM:** Lived Experiences of Women Workers

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○ **EUNICE WAWERU**  
Workers Rights Watch

○ **MARY KAMBO**  
Kenya Human Rights  
Commission

○ **MARY BALIKUNGERI**  
Rwanda Women's  
Network

○ **MODERATED  
BY NYAMBURA  
GATHUMBI AND  
RACHEL KAGOIYA**  
(HIVOS) and (FEMNET)

### **“Labor is not a commodity.”**

Mary Kambo began her talk with the basic principle about the 1944 International Labor Organization (ILO) Declaration of Philadelphia, “labor is not a commodity.” The focus of this panel discussion was on women workers in the flower industry. The varying levels of oppression experienced by women in this work sector include the inability to earn a living wage, unhealthy and unsafe work environments, lack of healthcare and maternity leave, and physical and sexual violence. As 70% of flower workers in East Africa are women, the panelists discussed a need to provide a feminist analysis of the challenges in this industry and a way forward.

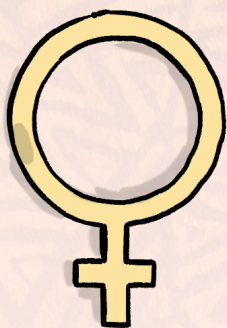
In particular, the panelists discussed the [HIVOS Women@Work campaign](#) which aims to improve the labor conditions of women who work in the global supply chain of flowers and vegetables that are grown in East and Southern Africa for the export market. The Women@Work campaign trains women on their rights, provides them with information on the laws that should protect them, organizes campaigns and lobbying efforts to ensure that women are able to speak for themselves and advocates for their right to decent work as defined by the ILO.

The panelists highlighted that while in many cases laws are in place to protect the rights of workers, those laws are not properly implemented. Mary Kambo explained that while Kenya has a robust constitution and frameworks around labor rights, those laws and rights are not enforced. Eunice, shared that in many cases, labor officers are fearful of inspecting flower farms as they are owned by people in or close to power. The speakers agreed that unionizing is a powerful force in attaining decent work, but that those unions must make sure that they take a gendered and feminist analysis approach to the issues and that women are in leadership positions within the unions. Mary Balikungeri underscored this imperative when she said, **“Yes, trade unions are important, but we must ask ourselves, what kind of trade unions do we have? Are they talking about women’s rights or are they in the interest of governments and corporations?”**



A focus of the discussion was on the intersection of issues that create this reality for women in the flower industry. Panelists spoke about corporate capture. Mary Kambo said, **“Companies in the name of corporate responsibility are doing the job of governments. They build the roads, they build institutions, they create jobs that give us poverty wages and governments lose power. Governments are desperate for foreign investment and women suffer.”** And with the intersection of issues, the speakers also emphasized the need for a variety of resistances including ethical consumerism and using the power of consumer dollars to ensure corporate accountability.

Two women workers in the flower industry were supposed to come to CSW63 and speak on this panel, but they did not get visas (an issue that is discussed later in this report). Rachel Kagoiya expressed the significance of speaking about these issues without the women present when she said, **“We really wanted to have women leaders working in the flower sector here, but we have discriminating systems that blocked them out. I spoke to one of them before I came here and she told me to tell you all, ‘our dignity as women working in the flower sector matters!’”**



## SOCIAL PROTECTION IN A PRIVATIZED WORLD

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- **CRYSTAL SIMEONI**  
FEMNET
- **FELOGENE ANUMO**  
AWID
- **SANAM AMIN**  
APWLD
- **MODERATED BY**  
**MARIA GRACIELA**  
**CUERVO**  
DAWN

**“Women’s labor is subsidizing the system that is making the very few very rich.” – Sanam Amin.**

**When talking about the privatization of public services from the sex workers perspective, we should focus on availability, affordability and accessibility. We are talking here about a criminalized community. The stigma attached to the community means facing violence when trying to access public services. We can advocate and push our governments; even though it’s challenging, we have the tools to do that. It becomes much harder to do so when these services are outsourced to private companies. It hurts our advocacy capacities because private companies don’t care about the needs or rights of our community.**

**– Phelister Abdallah**

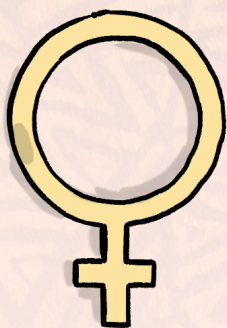


Again, like so many of the panel discussions, women who were supposed to come were not permitted visas. In their place, their colleagues stood and documentaries were shown in order to make present their voices. This panel discussion began with three documentaries: One from Tonga about the challenges facing social workers with victims of sexual abuse, the second from El Salvador about women home based textile industry workers and the third from Uganda on women workers in the flower industry. The discussion in this panel revolved around the impact of privatization on women's work and social protection. Women are paid poverty wages, they have no work security, are not paid overtime, the labor is intense and without safety measures, and they are subject to sexual and physical abuse.

It was emphasized that private companies, while touting job creation, are registered outside of the countries where they work and contribute to the over 60 billion dollars annually that Africa loses through illicit financial flows (IFFs). The panelists spoke about the need to **"build feminist economies"** based on the lived realities of women. Crystal Simeoni spoke about FEMNET's

pan African Feminist Macroeconomic Academy (AFMA), which trains fellows around a pan African feminist lens on mainstream economic analysis. Felogene Anumo, referring to the approach of private companies and international financial institutions, said, **"The neo liberal world tries to mask the terrible things that it does to people with soft language. We need to ask ourselves, how are we taking back the power of language? What are the alternatives to this? How can we engage with broader issues around tax justice as opposed to advancing the privatization of public services?"**

Crystal Simeoni speaking about alternatives reiterated, **"There are little pockets of hope. Women are organizing and leading movements to create alternative models that say no to neo-liberal, capitalistic systems of oppression."** The panel was closed with the appeal for women to use the tools that they have always used when fighting for their rights: organizing, standing in solidarity, and striking.



## MAKING THE ECONOMY WORK FOR WOMEN:

Rights & Realities

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- **MEENA PAUDEL**  
Nepal Disabled Women  
Association

- **IRENE KHUMALO**  
Public Services  
International

- **CRYSTAL SIMEONI**  
FEMNET

- **CORINA RODRIGUEZ  
ENRIQUEZ**  
DAWN

- **MODERATED BY  
ROOSJE SAALBRINK**  
Womankind Worldwide

**“Too many a time, our macroeconomic policies are too male, too pale, and too stale.” - Felogene Anumo**

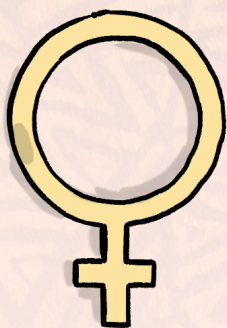
The panelists in this session addressed the question: what would it take to make the economy work for women? As is, women contribute more than their fair share in the economy; they provide unpaid and paid work yet they are deprived of access to above poverty wages, economic assets, career opportunities, sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR), and a life without violence.



Crystal Simeoni spoke about the language of economics that focuses on women's economic empowerment even in activist circles. She suggested that an economy that works for women means, **“not just women's ability to compete in existing markets, but women's access to and control over economic resources – their time, their bodies, their land and their participation in policy making decisions.”** Irene Khumalo focused on the role that quality public services play in the realization of women's rights. She stressed that public services should be funded by the state and accountable to its citizens and stated that while governments do not admit this, **“there is enough wealth to fund gender responsive public services.”** The barriers in accessing public services are exponentially compounded in regards to women with disabilities. Meena Paudel focused her talk on the physical, institutional and educational barriers facing women with disabilities when it comes to education, health care, livelihood opportunities, transportation and participation in decision-making processes.

Corina Rodriguez Enriquez spoke about corporate capture and corporate influence on policy making. She stated that the current global economic order makes it possible for corporations to sue governments if government decisions affect their profits or interests. She gave the example of Uruguay where Phillip Morris Tobacco Company sued the Uruguayan government because the government affected their profits by trying to protect the health of their citizens.

In terms of how to challenge corporate power and create economic transformation and justice for women, the panelists discussed producing research and analysis on the effects of corporate controlled macroeconomic policies, creating intersectional feminist analysis of macroeconomics, reducing the burden of unpaid care work, resisting privatization, ensuring tax justice for public service delivery, empowerment of women with disabilities, fair and just distribution of resources, organizing, and unionizing.



## DEVELOPMENT FOR WHO?

PPPs, Debt, and their Impact on the Lives of African Women and Girls

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○ **JESSICA WOODROW**

Gender and Development  
Network

○ **MICHELLE MAZIWISA**

FEMNET Member  
(Zimbabwe)

○ **CHANTAL UMUHOZA**

Spectra: Young Feminists  
Activism

○ **MODERATED BY  
CRYSTAL SIMEONI**

FEMNET

**“What is private? When are we public?  
And where is the partnership?” - Jane  
Anyango, Kenya**

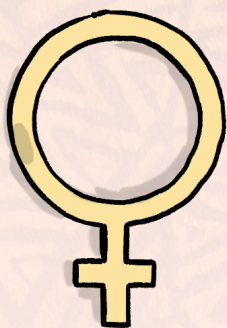
On March 14, 2019, the day of this talk, news broke about a pregnant twenty-year-old Kenyan woman who was forced to give birth under a tree in Uhuru Park after being denied entry into the bathroom because she didn't have the ten shilling bathroom entrance fee. She was fired from her job for being 'too slow' in her third trimester and was kicked out of her home by her landlord the night before for not making rent. It is in telling this story, that NAME asked the questions above. **“What is private, when are we public and where is the partnership?” - Jane Anyango**



This talk focused on PPPs which stands for **“public private partnerships”** or as Jessica Woodrow suggested, **“private companies profiting from public services.”** The speakers in this panel discussion went over general descriptions of PPPs – myths and facts – and why governments and international institutions have adopted them. All of the panelists agreed that while PPPs are touted as more efficient and cheaper in providing social services, the opposite is true. According to the panelists and audience members, PPPs, while often times cheaper in the short term, are more expensive in the long term, the contracts and provided work lack transparency which means many times these companies do not pay taxes (taxes that if paid would enable governments to provide public services), they diminish national sovereignty, and contribute to the narrative that African governments cannot provide for their citizens. Most importantly, panelists emphasized the underlining truth that the interests of private companies, by virtue, do not lay in providing social services, but in making profit. As Chantal Umuhoza emphasized, **“They are profit guided and they will not protect us.”** The panelists explained that women are disproportionately affected by PPPs as they generally have lower incomes and less access to resources

and are therefore more in need of the public services traditionally provided by government. With the division of household labor and unpaid care work falling on women, there is a need, not for PPPs, but for gender transformative public services provided by government.

The panelists and audience members suggested a way forward in combatting the prevalence and perpetuation of PPPs by producing research on the negative effects and high costs of PPPs, demanding governments play their role in being the provider of social services for their people, strengthening the role of trade unions and creating alliances with unions and women’s rights organizations. There is a social contract between governments and citizens that is being denied in the structure of private public partnerships, as one audience member explained, the conversation is so far removed from rights based discourse that **“private companies are saying openly that they will increase jobs so that people can pay for healthcare.”** Crystal Simeoni suggested alternatives in process and outcome when she said, **“It sounds technical, but it isn’t. It is about power and justice. We are not trying to be a part of a process that doesn’t work for us. We want to burn it down and start anew.”**



## PLANET 50/50:

Achieving #VoiceandChoice through Social Protection

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- **HON GRACE CHIUMIA (MP)** Minister of Labor, Youth Sports and Manpower Development

- **HON CECILIA CHAZAMA** Minister of Gender, People with Disabilities and Social Welfare

- **HON ESTHER MICHEKA CHILENGA** First Deputy Speaker of Parliament of Malawi

- **MEMORY KACHAMBA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** FEMNET

- **EMMA KALIYA** Chair of SADC Gender Protocol Alliance, Chair of FEMNET

- **MODERATED BY CRYSTAL SIMEONI** Head of Advocacy, FEMNET

**“We must implement commitments we’ve made, we must reduce inequalities (between the rich and the poor, between women and men) by dismantling power dynamics. To have a voice, we must have dignity.” – Memory Kachamba, FEMNET**

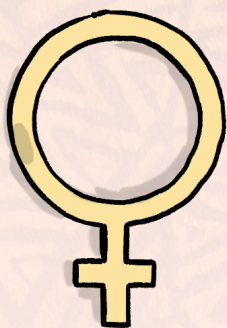
Panelists emphasized that well-functioning social protection systems give rise to a sense of dignity which gives rise to voice and choice. Gender biases however limit women’s voices and choices, also impacting greatly on their right to social security, adequate health, water, sanitation and infrastructure amongst other rights. While availability of these, ie health, water, sanitation and infrastructure, is essential – it is not sufficient. The accessibility, affordability, quality and universality of coverage are equally important and have a bearing on the quality of life for women and girls across Africa. Gaps in social protection must take these into account – and require a multi-sectoral and inclusive approach to understand varying needs.



Social protection systems are often not a priority for governments and when spending needs to be cut due to limited budgets, they are amongst the first to be impacted. Allocations to these critical sectors are often not substantial and are financed by external donors which is concerning. Additionally, the money lost through illicit financial flows greatly limits government budgets and thus impacts social services. The importance of curbing IFFs to strengthen social services and social protection systems was underscored by panelists.

Crystal Simeoni reminded us that **“Infrastructure is long-lasting. If this infrastructure excludes women, the impact on women is equally long-lasting.”**





## PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY & WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH INCLUSIVE WASH SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

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- **MME IMMACULATA RAPHAEL** Head,  
National Water Sanitation  
Sector Development  
Program, Tanzania

- **SALAMATOU TRAORE**  
Chair – ONG SRMSR  
DIMOL (FEMNET Member)  
Niger

- **HON. JACQUILINE AMONGIN** Chair, WASH  
Parliamentary Forum,  
Uganda, PAP Member

- **MANUELA PINILA**  
Country Director,  
WaterAid Colombia

- **KANGWA CHINKUTELE** Program  
Officer, WaterAid Zambia

- **MODERATED BY NICOLE HURTUBISE**  
CEO, WaterAid Canada

**“When WASH is prioritized, it reduces the burden of unpaid care on women”  
– Hon Amongin**

This diverse panel shared case studies and good practices from Tanzania, Niger, Uganda, Zambia and Colombia. Panelists were able to demonstrate, through their specific examples, the ways in which clean water, adequate sanitation and health services can greatly impact a woman’s realization of her sexual and reproductive health and rights – which goes a long way in cementing one’s dignity.

In Tanzania, the development of WASH guidelines set necessary standards in health care facilities and resulted in increased budgetary allocation to WASH. Immaculata stressed the necessity of embedding WASH in maternal, newborn and child health as well as nutrition programs and interventions. She concluded by asserting that **“access to WASH leads to increased access to SRHR, better health outcomes for women and girls and more opportunities for them to invest in income generation.”**



FEMNET member Salamatou shared her experience of addressing fistula and reintegrating women into their communities. As they await surgery, she helps to provide the women with skills and in doing so, has invested in a community that has masons who can build latrines and help bring an end to open defecation, build hand-washing facilities as well as nutritional centers. Salamatou advocates for more women in decision-making, including within the household, so that they may shape the solutions and have a greater say in management of precious resources – including water.

The Uganda Parliamentary Forum on WASH is a unique model that has the potential to be replicated – mobilizing Members of Parliament to think more consciously of WASH when making policy and become advocates for its consideration across the board – including in construction for example.

Manuela demonstrated the ways in which disparities among marginalized populations, such as indigenous people and afro-descendants can be masked by averages in Colombia. The model adopted by Manuela and her team was to create markets around WASH,

recognizing that there was income to be generated within the value chain and ensuring that women were part and parcel of this value chain. Thus, women were trained as plumbers and sanitation workers allowing them to acquire new roles within the communities and provide much needed services. Manuela concluded by advising that **“We must change our imagination about what WASH is”**.

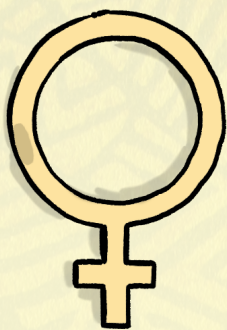
Kangwa followed with a discussion on menstrual health management in Zambia and then necessity of increased investment in the sector by government - providing subsidies and tax breaks for example to bring down the cost of pads. She stressed, **“condoms are free – and yet it’s a choice for people to engage in sex. However, we don’t provide free pads – even though it’s not a choice of a girl or a woman to go through her periods.”**

The importance of WASH in improving gender equality indicators, in pushing forward SRHR and general health and development outcomes, and in allowing women and girls to lead dignified lives was underscored in this session.

# FEMNET PARTNER EVENTS







## **WOMEN@WORK:**

Promoting Women's Empowerment in the Workplace

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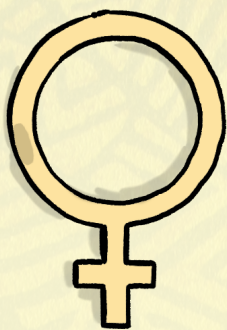
- **PATRICIA NOVEL**  
Young Women's Christian  
Association, Zambia  
(YWCA)
- **ANTONI DOMENGO**  
Ministry of Labor, Zambia
- **WILLIE KAPUTO**  
Ministry of Gender,  
Zambia

The Women@Work campaign aims to “improve labor conditions for women working in global horticulture supply chains (flowers, fresh vegetables, beans, avocados and chilies) through fair wages, security in the workplace and good working conditions,” and works in Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. The speakers in this panel discussed the challenges facing women farmworkers including unequal pay, low percentage in management positions, GBV in the workplace, sexual harassment, lack of safety measures on the job, violations in maternity rights, and the like.

A point of topic that came up quite often in this panel and in some others during CSW63 was the importance of and challenges facing the implementation of laws protecting women's rights in the workplace. Speakers noted the existence of workers and women's rights laws, including maternity leave, minimum wage and a newly amended constitution, which includes acts for gender equity and equality in Zambia. It is the implementation and enforcement of laws that are lacking due to low legal literacy on the part of citizens/employees, inadequate labor inspections and serious consequences for companies who do not follow labor policies.

The Zambian government, along with HIVOS, has taken an integrated multi-ministries approach to confront the challenges facing women in the workforce. They center gender mainstreaming in their work and have made strides including creating health information services, creating support structures for reporting GBV, mobilizing men as change agents, and creating mobile clinics for women farm workers. The panelists agreed that more has to be done to ensure women farmworkers' know their rights and are empowered, respected and safe in the work place.





## SHIFTING THE NARRATIVE:

Financing Women's Rights Through Tax Justice

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○ **ELAINE ZUCKERMAN**

Gender Action

○ **CORINA RODRIQUEZ ENRIQUEZ**

DAWN

○ **AIDA JEAN NACPIL MANIPON**

Tax and Fiscal Justice Asia

○ **JUNEIA BATISTA**

Central UNICA Dos  
Trabalhadores

○ **WANGARI KINOTI**

Action Aid International

○ **MODERATED BY  
CAROLINE OTHIM**

Global Alliance for Tax  
Justice

**“The biggest social responsibility that corporations can perform is paying their fair share of taxes.” – Corina Rodriguez Enriquez**

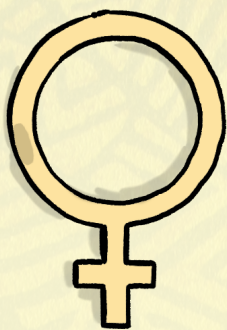
Elaine Zuckerman began this panel discussion by giving a short historical introduction to international financial institutions and the structural adjustment programs, which she said were the precursor to the PPPs and the extreme privatization of public services that we are witnessing today. The speakers followed that line of thought by speaking to the impulse of capitalism to privatize, the narrative being that markets are the best way to organize the economy.

Juneia Batista referenced a recent report on Peru stating that it would have been possible to double the budget allocated to social services with the amount lost to tax evasion and avoidance in Peru between 2006 and 2016. This is money that could have been used to improve the quality of life and ensure the rights of women and girls. The speakers spoke about tax justice being a women's rights question. Corina Rodriguez

Enriquez asked, **“How can we reclaim public policies for human rights and how can we do it through tax justice?”**

She suggested that an evidence based feminist approach to the issues was critical, and that movements needed to organize and produce strong communication strategies to combat misinformation that suggests that privatization is more efficient and cost effective in delivering public services.





## IMPACT ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND AUTONOMY:

Reflections from the South

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○ **MARIA NOEL VAEZA**

UN Women

○ **TERESA AMABELLE BOUE**

Federation of Cuban Women

○ **JULIO BANGO**

National Secretary of Care Uruguay

○ **CRYSTAL SIMEONI**

FEMNET

○ **MODERATED BY MARIELLA MAZZOTTI**

National Women's Institute

I am the son of a textile factory worker. When I was growing up, there was a law called madre law (mother law), where women could retire to be mothers. It was seen as progressive, but of course it consecrated inequality and ensured a gendered distribution of labor. It is up to me, as the son of a textile worker, to break through so that my granddaughters don't have to retire to take care of their children. – Julio Bango

“We need to diversify who we depend on for knowledge. Uruguay as a case study is important, a global south country instituting progressive policies around care. We need to look at them as a model for how things can be done.” – Crystal Simeoni

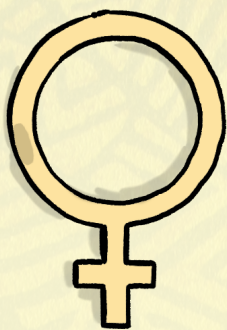
Reflecting on care systems, economic empowerment and women's rights, this panel session was especially significant as it centered the discussion on achievements and social protection models from the global south. The panelists spoke about the redistribution of labor, women's rights as economic sovereignty, just and progressive care systems as feminist policy, progressive tax laws to ensure social services, and the need for gender disaggregated data. In their talks, they referenced in one way or another, the three R's of unpaid care work: Recognize, Reduce and Redistribute

All of the panelists emphasized the importance of putting justice at the center of care systems and of using a human rights framework when modeling social protection services. Julio Bango described Uruguay's integrated care system as, **"a care system that goes beyond providing care for children, the elderly and disabled, but one that favors gender equality."** The ILO has called Uruguay's care system, "a model for care work in the future," as it guarantees citizens the right to quality care services and ensures care givers are given training and fair pay for their work.

Teresa Amabelle Boue spoke about Cuba's successes in sexual and reproductive rights, labor rights, equal pay for equal work, high percentage of women in universities and professional workforce, social security laws, paid parental leave, same standard of rights for informal and formal sectors, education focused day care centers, housing subsidies, etc. Cuba has a strong record of progressive policies for women's rights, she said, **"because gender equality has been centered in the country's development."**

The panelists emphasized the need for South-South cooperation, dialogue between governments and civil society, and a universal declaration on social protection and care system services. Mariella Mazzotti concluded the session by highlighting that **"Uruguay's national care system of is a culmination of 10 years of debates from different actors,"** reminding the audience that outcomes are the product of processes and that perhaps this discussion would contribute to the development of just care systems in the global south and beyond.





## ADDRESSING ILLICIT FINANCIAL FLOWS AND IMPROVING PUBLIC SERVICES FOR WOMEN

---

○ **LYDIA NAMULI**

The Uganda Association  
of Women Lawyers (FIDA-  
Uganda)

○ **GRACE MBOGO**

Pan African Lawyers Union  
(PALU)

○ **IRENE OVONJI**

Odida – The Uganda  
Association of Women  
Lawyers (FIDA-Uganda)

○ **MERCY MUNDURU**

The Uganda Association  
of Women Lawyers (FIDA-  
Uganda)

○ **MODERATED BY  
CRYSTAL SIMEONI**

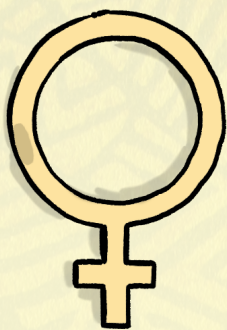
FEMNET

With Africa losing over 60 billion dollars annually to illicit financial flows, the panelists focused on IFFs as a driver of inequality and a potential means, if addressed, to finance public services for women. Irene Ovonji-Odida described IFFs as **“part of an enabling environment in a skewed global architecture that fails to ensure a fair global tax system and is driven by power inequalities between those who benefit from it and the rest of the population.”**

The panelists discussed the negative affects of IFFs on healthcare, education, and economic justice and explained the connections between IFFs and human trafficking, a crime that disproportionately affects women. Drivers of IFFs were categorized into three: commercial, criminal and corruption. The majority loss comes from commercial sector (trade misinvoicing, tax evasion) followed by criminal and then, a much lower percentage from corruption. While all of the panelists work in law associations, they made it a point to affirm that lawyers, accountants, bankers, and auditors can all be enablers of IFFs through failure of inspection.

Panelists agreed that a multi-sectoral and intersectional approach to combatting IFFs is necessary. As Irene Ovonji-Odida said, **“IFFs are technical, but also highly political. This is not an issue for governments alone, this is an issue primarily for citizens and citizens need to be in the conversations taking place around solutions to IFFs.”**





## FEMINIST PEACE AND SOCIAL PROTECTION:

Gender-Responsive Social Protection in Conflict Affected Settings

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- **HELEN KEZIE-NWOHA**  
ISIS-WICCE
- **SUSAN NKINZI**  
ISIS-WICCE
- **DR. RENU ADHIKARI RAJBHANDARI**  
National Alliance of Women Human Rights Defenders
- **DEDDEH KWEKWE**  
My Voice, My Safety
- **MODERATED BY PROSCOVIA NAKAYE**  
ISIS-WICCE

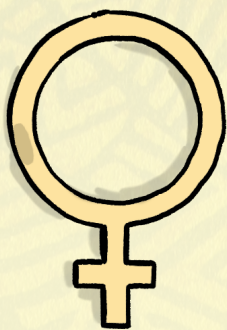
**“Social protection should be about transformation. For transformation to happen, we need to create models for wellness.” – Dr. Renu Adhikari Rajbhandari**

This panel discussion focused on the need for and rights of communities in conflict-affected areas to have access to trauma counseling and spaces of healing. The panelists spoke about the affects of conflict and trauma on psychological well-being, economic power, and quality of life, this is particularly expounded when looking at the different and intersecting levels of violence experienced by women in conflict situations.

Susan Nkinzi addressed the situation in Uganda where research was done on women who received either: 1) cash transfer, 2) trauma relief, or 3) cash transfer and trauma relief services. The ones who received both had much larger success in economic resilience and transformation. Deddeh Kwekwe re-framed notions of trauma by speaking about the situation in Liberia in which she includes not only the war as a source of trauma, but also the Ebola crisis as a time and space where women experienced varied levels of trauma.

The panelists also spoke about the need for safe spaces of movement building for women human rights defenders (on and offline) and the practical needs of human rights defenders in conflict and post-conflict situations including safe housing, on call counselors, hotline support and the like. They addressed the importance of research and knowledge exchange between women in different communities who have dealt with conflict in their regions and emphasized the responsibility of governments to include trauma care as a key component of social protection in conflict and post-conflict zones.





## ZANELE MBEKI DEVELOPMENT TRUST PANEL DISCUSSION:

Gender-Responsive Social Protection in  
Conflict Affected Settings

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○ **DEVAKI JAIN**

Feminist Economist and  
Academic

○ **NYARADZAYI  
GUMBONZVANDA**

Rozaria Memorial Trust &  
African Union Goodwill  
Ambassador

○ **MAJA AHRMAN**

ROKS

○ **LEBOHANG  
MASANGO**

Zanele Mbeki  
Development Trust Fellow

○ **ELLEN CHESLER**

Roosevelt Institute

○ **MODERATED BY  
LINDA VILAKAZI**

Zanele Mbeki  
Development Trust

**My memory lane includes being pregnant at 15, joining a liberation movement in South Africa, and struggling with our comrades for recognition. Memory lane is remembering that the ANC wouldn't allow women to be members; they could only cook for the men. Memory lane is about being here at the UN and saying we will occupy this space until the day we die.**

**"If we don't look at global economic programs, we will be fighting against an earth or a sky that is falling on us." – Devaki Jain**

In her opening talk, Devaki Jain asked the audience, "Can you, the young, upturn the world's current hierarchy?" The following discussion that took place revolved around the trajectory of the global feminist movement, the history of UN Women, and the most pressing issues around women's rights.

While Devaki Jain urged, “Don’t look to the UN for policies that will help us,” Ellen Chesler spoke about the strides made in the fight for women’s rights, suggesting that, “we are at a watershed moment.” Both of them agreed that the women rights agenda was moved forward by the leadership of feminists in the global south. Devaki Jain said,

**“At the birth of the UN... women in our countries had already participated in politics. They were leading struggles, whether in South Africa or Ghana or in Tanzania or Uganda... they were the freedom fighters along with the men in attempts to overthrow the white colonizers. Whereas, in the white countries, women had not yet participated in political campaigns and politics. Despite that, foolishly, we allowed the white people to lead us and one of the reasons was because these white countries had wealth and we did not... They had deprived us of all our wealth. Isn’t it an irony that we should be in that kind of predicament, where we are robbed and then we have to be enslaved to the robbers?”**

Panelists spoke about the need to put macroeconomic issues on the agenda for women’s rights, providing social

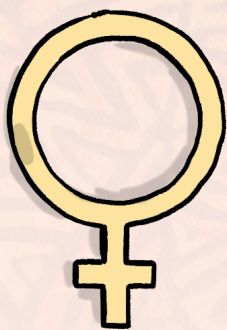
protection for women facing GBV, the need for international solidarity, justice and rights based discourse, and supporting women’s intellectual scholarship. Lebohang Masango provided very interesting reflections around new digital feminisms, young peoples sexuality, and the intimacies, love, joy and community created in online spaces.

During the Q&A, the audience was asked to begin with their memories of activism and their lives in the feminist struggles. Women spoke about independence movements, exclusion, successes and failures in the women’s movements in their communities and beyond. A lively discussion took place around intergenerational conflicts within the feminist community with some of the younger generation addressing what they called “older generational sabotage.” The theory being that the leaders don’t want to move to eldership positions, making it impossible for the apprentices to move to the leadership positions. It was a discussion that was not settled, but provoked honest debates around the internal challenges facing feminist movements on the continent.



# > NGO CSW / AFRICA





## AFRICA REGIONAL ADVOCACY TRAINING SESSION FOR CSW63

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- **SOON-YOUNG YOON**  
UN/International Alliance  
of Women

- **ELEANOR  
BLOMSTROM**  
UN/International Alliance  
of Women

- **RACHEL KAGOIYA**  
FEMNET

- **CRYSTAL SIMEONI**  
FEMNET

- **MEMORY  
KACHAMBWA**  
FEMNET

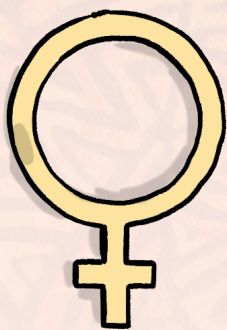
FEMNET, along with NGO CSW, organized an advocacy training session for the African CSO representatives present at CSW63. During the training, they spoke about the objectives of CSW63, the CSO role in meeting those objectives, the structure of CSW63 and practical tools that can be used to push for progressive language in the final outcomes document.





Soon-Young explained that CSW is committed to strengthening the ties between the UN and feminist movements. She further noted that the goals of CSW, with the help of the Beijing Platform for Action, are to transform the culture of inequality, unsustainable development and violence in the world. She emphasized that while the Beijing Platform for Action is a standards setting document, it is not a legally binding one, which means, the advocacy work of women's rights movements is vital in ensuring that the outcomes of CSW are implemented on the ground. Additionally, she mentioned plans for commemorating and documenting for Beijing +25 including online books on memories and work done in the last 25 years, which women around the world can contribute to.

The group spoke about the importance of mapping in terms of the positions of different government delegations around the various issues regarding women's rights. When going through the process of creating the outcomes document, Eleanor spoke to the power of language. Governments will, many times, create softer language in documents so as to not be accountable. The role of CSOs is thus to make sure the language is clear and direct. At the end of the advocacy training, the group provided an example of an elevator pitch to demonstrate how CSOs can approach the government delegates and advocate for specific issues related to their work.



## AFRICAN WOMEN'S REGIONAL CAUCUS

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- **CO-FACILITATED  
BY MEMORY  
KACHAMBWA AND  
KAFUI KUWONU**  
(FEMNET) and (WILDAF)

**‘Don’t discount your presence. It is invaluable.’ –  
Kwardua Vanderpuye**

The Caucus was also updated participants on the timeframe for events concerning the Beijing+25 review process.

The issues of numerous colleagues, particularly young women, being denied visas as a result of them being unmarried was also brought up and addressed. The case of women’s rights organizations working with the government of Malawi to intervene on behalf of the applicants, resulting in visas being issued, was shared by Emma Kaliya as a progressive response and outcome. “Many people haven’t traveled because they were denied visas. Let us speak to these issues – we can’t pretend that our colleagues have not been left behind. In Malawi, the government intervened – a letter was written to the embassy, visas were paid for and colleagues were allowed to travel.”





## UNPAID WORK AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

### A Path to Gender Equality

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- **DR. CHARITY BINKA**  
Member of FEMNET Board  
(Representing Western  
Africa)

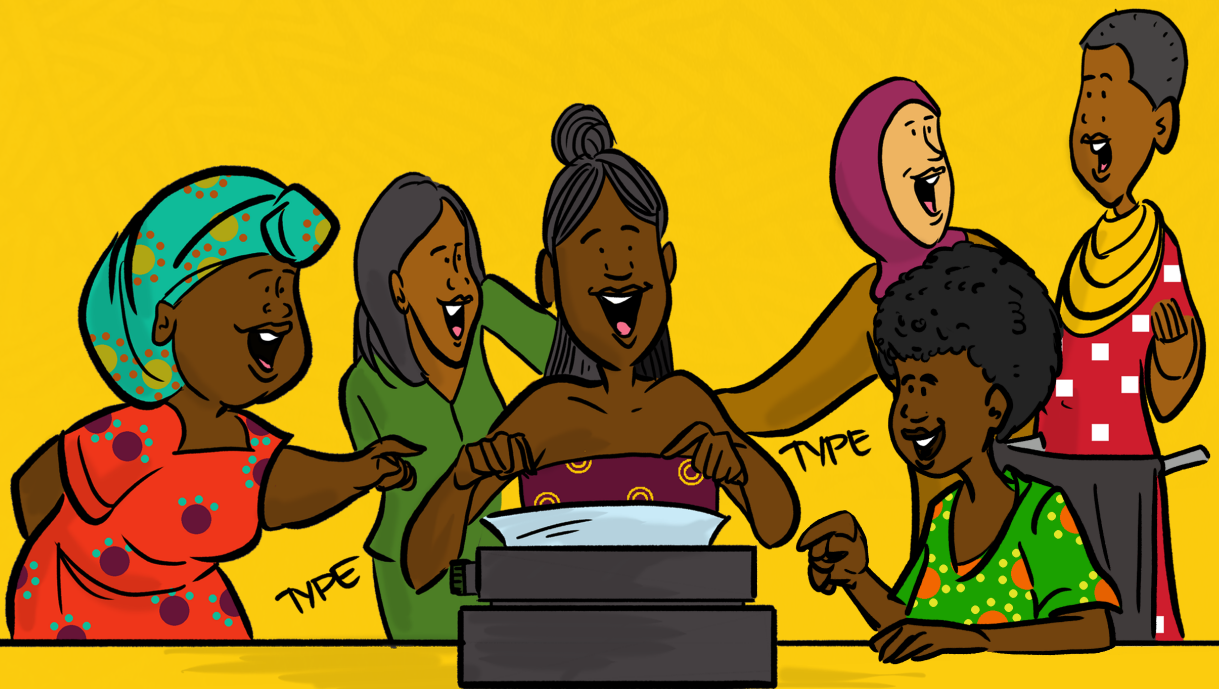
- **NANCY GITONGA**  
FEMNET Board Treasurer

- **MODERATED BY  
KAFUI KUWONU**  
Women in Law and  
Development Africa, West  
Africa

This panel discussion was focused on unpaid care work and its effect on women's equality and economic empowerment. The panelists discussed the time and labor that women put into care work. They also discussed the serious ramifications that unpaid care work and the lack of social protection and social services has on women's economic power.

They suggested a societal change in the redistribution of care work, economic and social protection mechanisms that monetize care work, infrastructure changes that make it easier for women to do this work, and unionizing. The panelists also discussed the role of the private sector in providing infrastructure for women. Nancy Gitonga said, "The private sector make money from us, we pay them and we can make demands from them." She emphasized the importance of mobilizing and organizing: **"If you do not belong to a women's association, a regional association, a network of women, please sign up immediately. Associations are safe and they are power, it gives you power because you are working with the masses. And then, learn how to negotiate. Whether it is government or the private sector, you must learn how to negotiate."**

# > NEGOTIATION ROOMS





**“I am shocked. It is my first time at CSW and I thought that when we came here, we would be on a panel speaking to the head of the United Nations. We are here in this room, sitting amongst ourselves. What can we do so that we are not just talking with each other?”**

**– Eunice Waweru, Workers Rights Watch**

The structure of CSW – the exclusion of people who were not given visas (more about that in the “Conversations around CSW” section below) and the exclusion of the people who made it to New York, but were not let into the private meetings where the negotiations were taking place – was a frequent point of discussion during CSW among FEMNET members and their colleagues from around the globe. Few CSO representatives were given D badges from their government delegations, which gave them access to the negotiation rooms, but for most, their participation was relegated to the side events.

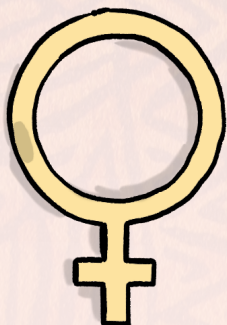
Return participants were not surprised by this structure, as they have experienced it in previous years, while

first timers were disappointed at the level of participation of CSOs in the meetings where decisions were made. Discussions around this issue took place during the African Women’s Caucus sessions, the various side events, outside meetings, over lunch, on the walk to the hotel, rushing to a side event, and in so many other informal spaces. With the negotiation room closed off to most CSO representatives, like other years, they created other spaces to engage and participate. Aside from the side events and other informal spaces, the corridors of the UN and the couches outside of the negotiation room were where CSO representatives congregated, waiting for updates from inside and influencing the discussions and outcomes from outside as much as the space allowed.

# CONVERSATIONS > AROUND CSW:







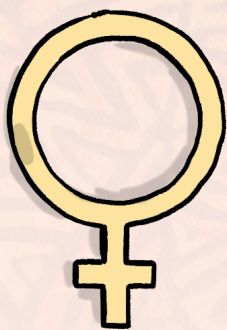
Outside of the themes and topic areas discussed during the side events, there were a couple of reoccurring conversations that took place at CSW63. Below are some of them:

## EXCLUSION

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The exclusion of CSOs at CSW63 was significant and has been an issue in the prior years that FEMNET has been engaged in CSW. Again, the exclusion includes those who did not get visas\* and therefore were unable to come as well as those who made it to New York, but were not granted access to the negotiation rooms and were instead only present and active in the side events. For those who were denied visas or were not granted visas in time, the women present remembered their colleagues by leaving empty seats at the panel table to acknowledge their absence. In more than one of the side events, colleagues showed documentaries with the voices of the women affected by and working on the issues being discussed, in lieu of having them physically present.

Participants responded to the exclusion in various ways including, demanding that the UN ensure the entry of representatives in New York and in the negotiation rooms, suggesting that CSW be moved outside of the United States, and boycotting the institution as a whole to focus on creating new ones that favor inclusion. A petition was also submitted to UN Women requesting that they facilitate the visa process for participants and Harlem's Queen Mother organized a bus from New York to the state department in Washington DC to demand the same from Members of Congress.



## INTERGENERATIONAL EXCHANGE AND CONFLICT

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When Devaki Jain asked in one of the side events, **“Can you, the young, upturn the world’s current hierarchy,”** a young woman responded, **“Yes, we can, but you [to the elders in general] have to acknowledge that you don’t want that, you don’t like it.”** And, so began an interesting debate around the struggles of space among elders and youth in the women’s rights movements on the continent. Some argued that many elders do not create space for young women to move into leadership positions and they do not facilitate productive communication and intergenerational knowledge exchange, with one woman saying, **“We cannot fight our mothers at home and at the office.”** Other voices commented that there should be room for everybody considering that everyone has the potential to be a leader. The discussion ended in this event, but continued in informal spaces.





# CONCLUSION



**“We can come to NY, but if we can’t have influence in our countries, it means nothing. We need to go back and engage properly in our countries. Not working for, but working with government. Let us make sure that we are working with them, we are a resource, we can share with them. Let us be relevant in our own spaces.” - Emma Kaliya**

At the end of the two weeks of CSW63, there were conversations, deliberations and debates around a plethora of issues including tax justice, the privatization of public services, the rights of women farm workers, care work, the significance and insignificance of the UN, the trajectory of the women’s movement, and so much more. People networked, debated, and planned for future work and collaborations. [The outcomes document](#), as always, fell short of the aspirations of what FEMNET would like to see as a rights, justice and evidence based progressive standards setting document. Still FEMNET was present and made its presence known. Selam Tesfaye of Plan International said of FEMNET’s presence, **“For the most part, African women’s voices are absent in global spaces. With CSW, FEMNET fills that space. We expect to see FEMNET here every year, in the side events, on the couches, in the halls, with representation in the negotiation rooms. FEMNET is needed here.”**

CSW goes beyond New York City. FEMNET and its partners hold feedback sessions on CSW and continue the work to push for women’s rights standard setting documents and policies.





# POSTSCRIPT - HOW RELEVANT IS THE UN REALLY?



It begins at home. Three trips to the US embassy. An official form, a letter of invitation, her passport, and a list of all of the places that she has visited in the past five years. At one point, she is asked for proof of her marital status. She provides it, begrudgingly. Almost a month later, she is told by email that her application is “undergoing administrative review.” They cannot, they say, provide her with a timeline of when she might expect a response.

“As I noted in the form, I’m going for a United Nations meeting in New York called the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Here is the website and again, the letter of invitation from the organization that is paying for my flight and stay there. Also attached is my flight itinerary which notes that I will be staying for thirteen days, the duration of the meeting,” she writes on email. She wants to add that the meeting is supposed to be representative of international government delegations and civil society organizations from around the globe and that US embassies should already have this information to ease the visa process, but instead she ends the email with, “I hope to hear back from you soon.” Two days before the start of the meeting, she is told that her passport is ready for pickup. When she goes to the embassy, she finds a US visa stamp on the second to last page of her passport.

When she gets to New York, she realizes that she is one of the fortunate ones, if you can call it that, to have gotten her visa in time. “We leave a seat empty on the panel for our colleague who was denied a visa,” said the moderator of a panel discussion that she attended. The woman who was missing works in the flower industry and was meant to come to CSW63 to discuss the issues facing women workers, their organizing and mobilizing efforts and the threat of corporate capture on their rights. It turns out that many people were missing due to visa issues, many seats left empty.



It is her first time at CSW. The events are interesting and she meets a lot of inspiring women doing important work, fighting the privatization of public services, demanding that corporations pay their fair share of taxes and that governments do their work to provide social services to its citizens, and creating alliances and movements around women's rights and the control of economic resources. She looks around the different rooms of the various events and sees many women and some men like her, advocates, activists, researchers, and people working in civil society organizations, alliances and movement networks. What she does not see is government delegates or UN officials, nobody in decision-making positions around the CSW63 outcomes document.

She was told, "the negotiation rooms are for people who have D badges. We don't have those." She is also told, when she complains about the weather, that it's better this year than it was last year, that she is lucky that it's over zero degrees Celsius. She wonders about the relevance of being in New York and agreed with one of the participants who said, "I am shocked. I thought we would be on a panel speaking to the head of the UN. Yet, we are here in this room, sitting amongst ourselves."

During the African Women's Caucus, she hears that the Queen Mother of Harlem is circulating a petition and organizing a bus ride to the State Department to demand that visa restrictions be removed for participants of future CSWs. She wonders how many fights a person can fight and which fights are worth the energy it takes to fight them. Over lunch, she exchanges her contact information with a woman working with a sex workers alliance in Kenya hoping to learn more about the administration of social protection services to a criminalized community and how that intersects with her work around unionizing women workers. They speak about CSW and at some point she says, "I think this whole thing may be irrelevant."

For two weeks, in between and during panel discussions were interventions around exclusion and questions on the relevance of the UN to the work of women's rights activism and the lives of women around the globe. While people like feminist economist Devaki Jain urged people to "abandon this world of the old institutions, abandon the UN and other international agencies mostly set up in the USA. Create new ones," others suggested pushing for inclusion. She goes back and forth feeling different things at different times, questioning her space in such an institution. She leaves New York without knowing what the outcomes document will look like and whether it will have any impact on her work or the work of any of the women she met during CSW63.

On the plane ride home, she thinks about all of the women she met, all of the women she has ever known who work so hard to keep the world on its axis, to make it just and kind and joyful. She thinks about all of the work it takes to push through the doors of institutions that don't want you and don't work for you. She remembers though what her mother used to say, "women are always doing more than one thing at once, even if it doesn't look like it." She wonders if perhaps the question is not whether the United Nations is relevant, but how to be present in those spaces while at the same time doing the work to put it out of business as it currently exists. Perhaps it is everything all at once. Demanding entry, burning it down and creating anew all at once.







# A LUTA CONTINUA

