

29 March 2012

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-sixth session

27 February-9 March 2012

Agenda item 3 (b)

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men: engaging young women and men, and girls and boys, to advance gender equality

Engaging young women and men, girls and boys, to advance gender equality

Moderator’s summary

1. On 6 March 2012, the Commission on the Status of Women convened an interactive panel to examine the emerging issue “Engaging young women and men, girls and boys, to advance gender equality”. Mr. Filippo Cinti, Vice-Chair of the Commission, moderated the discussion. The panellists were: Ms. Edna Akullq, founder of Self Help Foundation Uganda (Uganda); Mr. Roberto Cárcamo Tapia, member of Colectivo de Jóvenes por la Igualdad de Género (Chile); Mr. Shishir Chandra, member of Men’s Action for Stopping Violence against Women (India); and Ms. Rozaina Adam, Member of Parliament (Maldives).

2. Global normative and policy frameworks such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995 and the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly of 2000 underline the importance of engaging every member of society in promoting gender equality.

3. The engagement of youth is especially important as the population under the age of 24 comprises a sizeable share of the total population in many parts of the world. The current generation of youth is better positioned and has more opportunities than previous ones to help shape development, with greater access to information, technology, education and employment opportunities. (A/HRC/17/6(e)2(h) for the Commission on the Status of Women, 2012, para. 10)



4. Many participants identified gender stereotypes as a major obstacle to the advancement of gender equality because they perpetuate stereotypic perceptions of masculinity and femininity, which limit the potential of both women and men. Stereotypes are embedded in cultural, traditional and religious values and belief systems and are conveyed to youth through many channels, including their families, religious leaders, peers, education systems and the media.

5. Changing gender stereotypes not only benefits women and girls but also men and boys. Men and boys can take on jobs and opportunities that are often considered feminine such as in the nursing and carehome (parent of parent)-6tms and (family)-7(e)-5()TJ0.0165 Tc 0.8684

11. To address gender stereotypes and create a culture of non-discrimination and gender equality, young people have formed groups and movements that endeavour to sensitize communities and peer groups to work for social change. They use different tools and approaches such as capacity-building and training, networking, advocating

17. Engaging youth in public life and in decision-making processes is another important way to promote gender equality. While cultural and structural bottlenecks exist to enhance the participation of young men and women in political life, including misperceptions about their lack of interest or preparedness to engage in decision-making, it is crucial to provide platforms so that young people can take ownership and responsibility in political life.

18. Several participants reported on the establishment of children and youth parliaments, where young women and men take leadership roles and familiarize themselves with parliamentary processes. Youth organizations can be effective in raising awareness of gender equality at the grass-roots level, including by targeting communities and villages. Student movements in universities have also been successful in conveying youth perspectives to political decision-makers, with many young women taking leadership positions in such movements.

19. Nevertheless, the lack of systematic efforts and volunteer opportunities in political processes prevents youth from becoming more involved. Young people face challenges in being elected as parliamentarians and in incorporating their views and priorities into laws and policies once they are in parliament. Lowering the voting age, creating youth and women's wings in political parties and allowing youth parliaments to deliberate on laws and policies that may affect young people can further improve their participation in advocating for gender equality. Young women and men may have specific issues that are better addressed within their own spaces, such as separate youth or women's wings in political parties. Quota systems can support efforts to increase youth and women's political participation in parliaments and local councils. Gender equality training programmes can be organized for government officials and parliamentarians.

20. Some participants also suggested engaging male members of parliament in youth parliaments or youth and women's wings of political parties as a means of fostering partnerships across generations, as well as between women and men. Such suggestions, however, should take into account the particular cultural and social characteristics of the society. Caution must be exercised so as not to replicate in youth and/or women's wings traditional group dynamics, with male adults gaining control over the organization and exerting their influence.

21. Ample room for improvement exists with regard to youth participation in global forums, including United Nations bodies such as the Commission on the Status of Women. Given the current underrepresentation of youth in global efforts to enhance gender equality, Member States should include a youth representative in their delegations to the Commission. Participants also called on the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to make efforts to involve youth in a more substantial manner in different aspects of its work.

22. Many delegations noted the critical ro

23. Participants stressed the need for financing government and civil society initiatives for youth engagement. They expressed the need for financial support from the public and private sectors for the activities of youth organizations and networks, and noted the importance of investments in youth education and employment, including social entrepreneurship.

24. Participants also pointed to the need for collecting and analysing sex- and age-disaggregated data so that the effectiveness of measures and practices can be monitored and evaluated.

Recommendations

25. Participants recommended a range of actions to engage young women and men, girls and boys to advance gender equality, including:

- Taking a comprehensive and integrated approach to the engagement of youth for gender equality that includes families, schools, political parties, youth organizations and other civil society organizations and the media.
- Instituting mechanisms to combat gender stereotypes, including through organizing broad and sustained awareness-raising campaigns and mobilizing youth in effecting social and attitudinal changes through traditional and social media and technology.
- Organizing gender equality campaigns through different types of organizations, including sports clubs, student unions and youth organizations.
- Establishing legal mechanisms and involving men and boys to address and prevent violence committed by youth.
- Promoting equal employment opportunities for youth by providing training and information on the labour market and career choices.
- Ensuring youth representation and participation in the political sphere, including by instituting quotas for young women and men in parliaments.
- Ensuring the representation of youth in international processes, including in United Nations bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women.
- Increasing funding for youth initiatives and activities to advance gender equality and encourage the donor community to invest in youth education and entrepreneurship, including through public-private partnerships.
- Strengthening the role of UN-Women in engaging young women and men to advance gender equality.