Report on the UN Women flagship CSW62 side-event:

Leaving No One Behind for Planet 50-50 by 2030: every rural woman and girl everywhere
Introduction:

The gathering of Civil Society during the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women during the UN Women Flagship event: “Leaving No One Behind for Planet 50-50 by 2030”, provided a critical space and opportunity for women and girls coming from rural communities to demand accountability for gender equality through the development of a set of recommendations for standards and benchmarks on how the implementation of the SDGs will ensure that no one is left behind.

Together with UN Women, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) co-convened the event, which was chaired by Ms. Nyaradzayi Gumbodzvanda and Ms. Sharon Bagwan Rolls and took on the 15th of March 2018 from 10:00am to 15:00pm at the 630 Second Avenue ballroom, New York, NY 10016.

The event was designed in a fully participatory fashion and the civil society partners that constituted the task force were in complete ownership of any decision-making process.

The task force was constituted of more than 15 organizations and 25 activists spread out throughout the world working on issues of women’s rights, widowhood, refugees/migrants rights, LGBTI rights and indigenous rights and people living with disability’s rights.

Each panel was intergenerational with intentional, deliberate focus on creating the point/counterpoint between generational perspective to ensure that each session is interactive. A balanced regional and geographic representation was also ensured per (formal/informal), gender representation, per panel and per table, with diverse educational backgrounds, sexual orientation, race, caste, faith, ethnic, marital status, socio economic status and age and language use.
**Conversation circles:**

The first conversation circle was an intergenerational dialogue that aimed at setting the context, with six civil society speakers sharing their lived experience, a spoken word from a UN Women representative and the super moderator weaving in their contributions.

Opening the half-day event, Lopa Banerjee, Director of UN Women’s Civil Society Division said:

“This is truly a tipping point. The fact that this Commission [CSW] is shining a light on the condition of women and girls in rural areas is very fitting, because they face some of the most daunting challenges of our time. When governments adopted the Sustainable Development Agenda and pledged that in achieving the Agenda, no one will be left behind, they were talking about these women.”

The second conversation circle was moment of sharing of good practices by eight speakers representing the different intersectional constituencies of women and girls living in rural areas (widows, migrants/refugees, LGBTI, indigenous people and people living with disabilities).

Each panel had the objective to identify and unpack what being a rural woman or girl living at the intersection of multiple forms of discriminations means.

Neish McLean, LGBTI activist from Jamaica, spoke about the need for visibility of LGBTI perspectives:

“Visibility is a sign of resilience and gives people a chance to see others like themselves. We want to tell our own stories.”
The third conversation circle was a discussion with High-level decision-makers in which each table was given the opportunity to present one recommendation to UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, to Her Excellency, Dr. Jean Kalilani from Malawi and to Ms Alette Van Leur, Director of the ILO Sector Policies Department.

The recommendations were gathered by the task force from the work of each table throughout the day and were categorized under four different themes: social marginalization, cultural discrimination, economic deprivation and lack of political voice.

(Click here to access the recommendations.)

UN Women’s Executive Director of, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka who listened to the recommendations presented said:

“Gender inequality is so complex. We actually need policy and action. We know how patriarchy is. We need to be bringing it down, but also putting in interventions at every stage of a rural girl’s life.”

These recommendations will be taken at the highest level of decision-making of the activist’s countries and act as an accountability mechanism that will ensure that the most marginalized women and girls are brought to the forefront of the SDGs gender justice agenda. They will be widely shared by UN Women to policy makers, civil society networks and the event participants.
Lessons learnt:

• Round-table work: The strong participation of the people present in the room was made possible thanks to the format of the event, designed specifically to facilitate civil society participation and ownership of the process, and thanks to the incredible work of the super moderator to allow time for each table to report back to the rest of the room on the work they had achieved throughout the day.

“We have the guidelines, we have the tools, we have good beautiful words on paper that high level people will say in meetings and panels, and yet, less than one percent of humanitarian aid targets gender equality and seeks to address the particular challenges of refugee and displaced women. We need for leadership to come from women and girls themselves at all levels – local, regional and global.”

Said Rose Orwa – Advocate for migrant, refugees and displaced women’s rights

• Diversity: Women, girls, activists from across regions and constituencies were present in the room representing the most marginalized communities, and almost every table was engaged in deep, challenging conversations as soon as they were given the opportunity to –, creating a great sense of inclusion, diversity and enthusiasm towards the creation of those recommendations on how to leave no one behind.

“We as rural women are not only victims, but also development actors. We make important contributions to our families and societies, so our discussions should be brought into the frontline.”

Said Pratima Gurung, an activist for the rights of indigenous peoples and women with disabilities in Nepal and South Asia.

• Strong social media presence, especially on twitter and facebook, following the hashtag #LeaveNo1Behind.

Powerful intergenerational dialogue w/ @vanyaradzayi @parwasisa & @intywarmy on the intersectional issues that affect indigenous women, women & girls living in rural areas & women & girls w/ disabilities. #CSW62

11:09 AM - Mar 15, 2018
15  See United Nations CSWs other Tweets

I have been so grateful for the opportunity to not only listen to and talk with civil society members, but also to be able to celebrate their victories throughout Week 1 of #CSW62.

1:31 PM - Mar 15, 2018
195 71 people are talking about this.
Conclusions:

The UN Women CSW Leaving No One Behind flagship event was a great opportunity for Civil Society actors and rural women and girls around the world to gather and share best practices that can be road signs on the path to a transformative paradigm for the achievement of the rights of women and girls in rural communities. In closing, Lopa Banerjee expressed:

“This is not the end. This is the beginning. This is an ongoing journey. The time is now.”

It was run in an incredibly participatory fashion, so that women and girls activists from around the globe could take ownership of its preparatory process and of its conversations.

The space acknowledged the remarkable gathering of strength of women all over the world, calling for opportunity and justice, building and gathering strength from grassroots movements and networks including coalitions.

It is in this context that the event managed to give access, allowing voices and the leadership of marginalized groups (widows, women living with disability, indigenous women, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex women, gender non-conforming people, refugees/migrants, including women living with HIV) to recommend a set of standards that will ensure that no one is left behind.

Thanks to this vibrant and participatory event, Civil society, women and girl activists/advocates in rural communities were able to generate recommendations for a set of standards and benchmarks on Leaving No One Behind for policy makers to follow as they engage on the road to Agenda 2030, that will take into account the multi-dimensional discriminations that shape the daily lives of rural women and girls.