

Key Messages at #CSW68 on #TheRoad2Equality

ACT Alliance is a global faith and rights-based coalition with over 145 members working in 120 countries. We promote a locally-led and coordinated approach to advocacy, humanitarian and sustainable development, which includes advancing gender justice at every level. We have over 30 members collectively engaging in #CSW68. **Read our CSW68 statement:** bit.ly/CSWstatement

1 Faith Actors and Networks as Transformative Change-makers

- Worldwide, more than eight-in-ten people identify with a faith-based group.
- Our commitment to gender equality and justice is based on our shared belief in human dignity and that every individual has the same inalienable value and human rights.
- Faith actors are deeply rooted in the communities they serve and as such they are often the first responders to humanitarian crises, gender-based violence and climate emergencies,
- Strategic partnerships with faith actors can accelerate action for gender justice, for example, we are holding duty-bearers accountable, transforming social norms, and reforming laws for gender justice.
- Religious leaders and faith actors can be catalytic partners in both preventive and responsive measures to counter rising fundamentalisms and backlashes on gender equality.
- Across our networks, we are implementing context specific education, movements and social awareness programmes, which transform social norms that deny the fulfilment of human rights.
- Working through our faith-based structures and movements, we engage men and boys in all their diversity, who are critical for advancing equal rights, shifting power relations, and address gender-based violence in society, community, and in our homes.

2 Transforming Economic Models, Institutions and Finance for Gender Justice

- We call for transformative change, which will ensure women's leadership, access and agency in finance decision-making, and economic opportunities. Economic models and institutions must affirm human rights, value care work and address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.
- As faith-based actors, we acknowledge that religious discourses have been used to justify gender inequalities, economic violence, and promote patriarchal systems and social norms.
- Transforming mainstream economic models, which create an inclusive, green and rights-based path towards gender equality, absolute poverty eradication, and women and girls' economic empowerment, is vital.
- Focus on continual growth and putting profit before people is damaging communities, livelihoods, and the environment. Neoliberal policies and extractive practices have resulted in political and financial power being in the hands of a few well-connected individuals, predominantly men, corporations, and already wealthy countries.
- For women and girls to claim their rights, global economic institutions. Global rules on debt and tax reproduce colonial-era gender and racial hierarchies that frustrate the achievement of human rights for the vast majority of the world's people.
- A binding international treaty on business and human rights has the potential to improve governance of the private sector by reinforcing national legislation and frameworks to maximise its contributions to human rights and gender equality.

More key messages on the next page.

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More info: www.actalliance.org/csw



CSW68

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

3 Addressing Unpaid Care Work and Social Protection

- Failure to ensure the equality of women and girls within the family undermines attempts to ensure equality in all areas of society. Women and girls continue to conduct the majority of unpaid care work (three times more than men), which increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Investing in public social protection and other public services is crucial for relieving women and girls of unpaid care work.
- Investing in social protection also contributes to enabling women access to formal employment outside the home, and the ability to move from the margins to the mainstream economy. This improves financial autonomy, and the ability to further invest in activities that generate income. For example, through collective solidarity economies or community micro-credit schemes.
- Civil society, not least faith-based actors, are critical partners, often complementing the state by providing social services, such as education, social care, and healthcare.
- Education systems are a critical tool for breaking the cycle of poverty and improving youth, especially young girls, access to quality employment opportunities by promoting hybrid educational services, enhancing teacher qualifications, supporting skills training programmes, and establishing gender-transformative education systems that challenge and counteract gender stereotypes.

4 Transforming Social Norms and Reforming Discriminatory Laws

- Discriminatory legislation, including religious family laws – those which address the rights of people entering marriage, divorce, custody, guardianship of children, the right of a spouse to choose their profession and occupation independent of the other – have severe economic impacts on women, girls and their families.
- Discrimination in economic status laws restricts women from being economically independent – limiting their access to inheritance and property ownership, as well as employment opportunities – thereby reinforcing gender stereotypes and roles. Egalitarian reform of family law may be the most crucial precondition to empower women economically.
- Religious leaders are critical agents of change, as trusted voices rooted in communities, who can transform social norms, harmful gender stereotypes and prevent gender-based violence with normative and real-life influence.
- Ensuring money flows into the hands of women is not enough. Patriarchal gender norms shape powerful social relations, which restrict the agency and aspirations of women and girls in all their diversity. Financial support to strengthen regional, national and local programming and partnerships, including with faith-based actors, can be transformative.

5 Investing in Collective and Locally-led Gender Transformative Approaches

- For gender equality finance to be effective an intersectional and gender-transformative approach that addresses interconnected inequalities is critical for combatting structural inequalities and investing in locally led solutions. Targeted processes of empowerment should incorporate identity-building activities for visibility and recognition of socially marginalised groups, to ensure their access to entitlements and finance.
- A lack of data has rendered invisible the needs and priorities of women and girls in all their diversity. This results in making targeted programmes and accountability near-impossible. When financing projects, gender equality indicators and gender-disaggregated data should be reported.
- Women of faith and feminist theology is often rooted in local communities, with the ability to contextualise and popularise transformative approaches and practices of solidarity.
- To further decolonise development cooperation, there is a need to invest in localisation policies and practices, for example, higher targets for flexible and core funding. When communities are resourced to set their own agendas, which derive from local needs, they can achieve long-term sustainable change.