

68th Session
**of the Commission on the Status
of Women – New York**

NGO CSW68 Forum

**Solidarity of Women:
Mitigating Gender
Inequality through Peace**
Event Book



IWPG
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S PEACE GROUP

Concept Note

NGO CSW68 Forum

Solidarity of Women: Mitigating Gender Inequality through Peace

18 March 2024,

10:30AM-12:00PM(EST)

CCUN 10th fl. (777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017)

Organized by

International Women's Peace Group (IWPG)

I. Background and Context

Since the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the world has been striving to realize gender equality in all realms of society, including politics, economy, society, and culture. UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security has reaffirmed the role of women in decision making regarding conflict prevention and resolution and urges all actors to incorporate gender perspectives in all matters related to peace, linking women's rights and female empowerment as a vital element of peace and security issues. Thereafter, numerous policies and measures have been implemented at national, regional, and local level, but nevertheless many issues still remain unresolved.

Peace is a vital element in achieving true gender equality. Poverty, disease, human rights violations, and discrimination are exacerbated during conflict. States, NGOs, and civil society need to bring about peace and security to not only take measures against poverty, disease, and human rights issues, but also to make sure those measures can be sustained. Therefore, it is necessary for countries, NGOs, and civil society to achieve and sustain peace and security, not only to address current challenges such as poverty, disease, human rights abuses, and discrimination but also to ensure that the solutions achieved are sustained and developed. When a safe environment without war or conflict is provided, women can continuously ensure the opportunities for education, labor, and economic independence, ultimately eradicating poverty, eliminating gender discrimination, and allowing women to raise a stronger voice in society. In addition, the active participation of women in peace processes enables decision making with gender perspectives in all realms of society such as politics, economy, and society, contributing to policies and programs dedicated to gender equality and protecting the rights of women.

The solidarity of women is key to accelerating the establishment of sustainable peace and security and expanding female participation in peace processes. When women share their experiences and resources and come together to achieve a common goal, they will be able to contribute to international peace and security, empower women and girls, and mitigate gender inequalities.

In this context, IWPG has been uniting with women around the world to bring peace and encourage the involvement of women in peace processes. Currently 660 organizations from 60 countries are supporting IWPG's cause, building a strong network in the local communities and providing IWPG Peace Education to bring an end to war and spread a culture of peace.

This forum, under the theme of "Solidarity of Women: Mitigating Gender Inequality through Peace," will be an opportunity to discuss the relationship between peace and gender equality and the vital role women can play to achieve world peace. We look forward to your active participation and commitment to build a better future.

2. Key Points

This forum will cover the topics below:

- The relationship between sustainable peace, poverty, and gender equality
- Strengthening female participation in peace processes
- The power of the unity and solidarity of women from various cultures and backgrounds
- Peace and gender equality through education

3. Program

*MC: Florence Susana, Branch Manager of IWPG San Francisco

Time	Min	Program	Speaker
10:45~11:00	15	Doors Open	
11:00~11:03	3	Greetings	MC
11:03~11:05	2	Video	
11:05~11:10	5	Speaker 1	Aruna Naik CEO, Indian Development Foundation (IDF)
11:10~11:15	5	Speaker 2	Hnin Shwe Zin Hlaing Head of Policy Advocacy, Gender Equality Network
11:15~11:20	5	Speaker 3	Yinka Oyelowo Peace National Board Member, VOW (Canadian Voice of Women for Peace)
11:20~11:25	5	Speaker 4	Katie Choi Director of International Affairs, IWPG Global Region 7
11:25~11:30	5	Speaker 5	Femy Orianne RADJI Branch Manager, IWPG Paris Branch
11:30~11:40	10	Q&A	All Speakers
11:40~11:45	5	Closing	MC



Aruna Naik

CEO, Indian Development Foundation (IDF)

"Peace is not merely a distant goal, but a journey we travel with each step." - Bob Marley
Namaste and a warm welcome to this meaningful gathering where we discuss the crucial theme of women's solidarity and the role it plays in mitigating gender inequality through peace.

In my experience, beginning the day especially in the morning meetings with just 30 sec focus on integrating internally before beginning any task has yielded amazing results.

The practice of acknowledging other fellow beings as a part of the same universe and saying Namaste, which also means "the divinity in me is bowing to the divinity in you" infuses tremendous sense of respect and supersedes previous conflicts and unpleasant exchanges giving one more opportunity for peace.

For years the Japanese have been using the traditional craft of Sashimono, the technique for assembling furniture and other wooden items without nails and glue. To me Sashimono reflects a philosophy rooted in precision in binding the people in such a way that the bond remains forever. It embodies a commitment to excellence in team bonding and the pursuit of aesthetic harmony and peace.

The concept of "Shakti" or feminine energy is deeply ingrained in the Indian philosophy. It is a force that shapes creation, nurtures life, and symbolizes resilience. Energy with Purpose adds unconditional value and helps achieve the true state of peace. It is more often in conditional actions/ thoughts that peace is disturbed.

It is essential to Recognise and Align at energy level there by nullifying the gender discrimination and an important step in achieving solidarity & peace especially at workplace.

As we navigate the complexities of gender inequality, let us draw inspiration from the inherent strength of our cultural narratives, embracing the notion that true progress can only be achieved when women are active participants in every sphere of life.

The quest for peace involves not only external conflicts but also the internal battles waged by every human being. The journey towards gender equality is intertwined with the pursuit of peace. We cannot achieve one without the other. Peace, not only as the absence of conflict but as a state of harmony and justice, provides the fertile ground on which the seeds of equality can flourish. It is a canvas upon which we can paint the vision of a world where every woman, irrespective of her background, enjoys the same rights and opportunities as her male counterparts.

The Challenger Deep serves as a metaphor for the pursuit of inner peace and tranquility. Just as the explorers navigate the depths of the ocean, individuals navigate the complexities of their own minds. Finding peace involves delving into the depths of one's thoughts and emotions, confronting challenges, and discovering a sense of calm amidst life's uncertainties. The journey to inner peace, like exploring the Challenger Deep, requires introspection, resilience, and a willingness to navigate the profound depths within oneself.

Our pursuit of peace must address these intricacies, ensuring that the essence of justice permeates every corner of our society.

Solidarity among women is not merely a concept; it is a force that can reshape societies and foster enduring change. It is a call for unity, understanding, and mutual support in the face of gender disparities. As we stand here, let us acknowledge the strength that arises when women come together to amplify their voices and advocate for equality.

Mitigating gender inequality demands more than rhetoric; it requires a commitment to dismantling the barriers that hinder the progress of women. We must address systemic issues,

challenge stereotypes, and champion policies that empower women economically, socially, and politically. Education, healthcare, and employment opportunities should be accessible to all, regardless of gender.

The significance of solidarity among women cannot be overstated. Women from diverse backgrounds share common dreams and aspirations. By standing together, transcending linguistic, regional, and cultural boundaries, we can build a formidable force against inequality. While progress has been made, gender disparities persist, underscoring the urgency for collective action and solidarity among women. Our journey towards gender equality is intricately linked with the principles of peace, justice, and inclusivity.

Complete integration in Oneness gives rise peace and harmony. Oneness brings about the value system and integrity from within and is therefore not an act, but an inseparable and integral part of system.

True confidence, **peace** of mind, and true joy comes from realizing that the ultimate power is within you.

Thank you!



Hnin Shwe Zin Hlaing

Head of Policy Advocacy, Gender Equality Network

First, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's event "Mitigating Gender Inequality through Peace." Given my country's context, it is hard for me to directly address it. Some of you may know my country as Myanmar but some as Burma. Throughout my life, I have never experienced the essence of peace in my country. I do believe my situation is true for many people in the country because before 1948, Myanmar was under colonial rule and people fought for independence leading to armed conflicts all over the country. After independence, its political landscape has been characterized by the struggle for federal democracy and self-determination by ethnic nationalities. However, the repeated military coup worsens the situation highlighting human rights abuses, discrimination, violence, repression, terror, and brutal attacks.

I regard that the relationship between peace and gender equality is profoundly intertwined. So, today my highlight is how the coup attempt in February 2021 aggravates existing gender inequality in my country. In Myanmar, patriarchy is deeply entrenched in the community and discriminatory social and cultural norms and traditions are widespread and strongly internalized. Even before this coup attempt, despite the lack of quantitative data, women and other socially marginalized people faced various forms of discrimination and violence in both private and public lives. Additionally, their representation and participation in decision-making processes including politics, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding are alarmingly low.

Allow me to go back to the current situation. As I mentioned before, built on years and years of long-standing impunity, the Myanmar military attempted a coup three years ago. This results in undermining all the efforts and progress made towards conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and gender equality within the short-lived quasi-civilian rule over the last decade. The military has instigated a terror campaign against everyone who dares to challenge their power and control and has responded with disproportionate force to crack down on all efforts to restore democracy and peace in a continuing operation of violence and violations of human rights, for instance, extrajudicial killings, burning down the villages and forced displacement, arbitrary arrest, humanitarian aid blockades, and torture in detentions. The junta and its forces specifically targeted women human rights defenders, women peacebuilders, women in general, LGBTQI+ political activists, and labor activists for their outspoken advocacy. They issued arrest warrants, conducted raids on residences, seized property, and held family members hostage. Some of my friends and fellows are now in imprisonment and a few months ago, one of our friends was murdered in detention. Yeah, she was shot to death.

As of the first quarter of 2024, more than 2.7 million internally displaced people nationwide are the outcome of atrocities committed by the junta and 18.6 million require urgent humanitarian assistance. More than half of these people are women and children. The subsequent collapse in the country's economy, the loss of livelihood, and the lack of rule of law make women and girls more vulnerable to violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, and human and sex trafficking. Currently, there is, let's say, no proper system to prosecute the perpetrators and the active conflict and insecurity amplify the challenges and barriers for survivors to access support services and the service providers to deliver such services.

The absence of peace and security in the country creates food insecurity as well leading to stripping away of fundamental rights, the right to health, and the inherent dignity of women and girls. This is devastating to see or hear many women and children die of preventable

illnesses. The very recent malevolent act of the junta is the “Conscription Law.” You know, because of their infamous record of forcing civilians to work at the front lines, this law is believed as an attempt to hide their heinous crimes like forcing the civilians to serve as porters or human shields and to instill another reign of fear among people. These are some instances of to what extent and how gender inequalities can be exacerbated by instability and insecurity in society.

To conclude, these inequalities shall be mitigated by peacebuilding. During the peacebuilding efforts, gender perspectives must be integrated. Otherwise, we may do more harm by creating a vicious cycle. To fight patriarchy and militarism, we do need broader support and solidarity from every one of you. Together, we can forge a stronger, united front in the fight for justice, equality, democratic freedoms, and a peaceful society. For us, we need concrete actions. You can show your solidarity by advocating for Myanmar, ensuring that our concerns remain visible on the global stage and not giving any sort of legitimacy to the junta. For sisters and brothers from Southeast Asia, please advocate for your government to highlight the inadequacies of the current ASEAN humanitarian effort's modality to your capitals, pointing out its plan to perpetuate the root causes of the conflict by encouraging the junta, while marginalizing local, independent, community-trusted humanitarian actors, and, even more critically, sidelining the vital contributions of women's rights organizations.

Thank you.



Yinka Oyelowo

Peace National Board Member, VOW (Canadian Voice of Women for Peace)

This presentation documents the power of women's leadership to improve the lives of women, their families, their communities and most importantly for all of humanity. It shows the evolution of women's roles in society, and how notions of justice and human rights have been expanded as women bring their experiences into the public realm, legitimizing issues that had been previously brushed aside. Women's orientation towards equality and egalitarianism can profoundly shape public policy and our common ethical framework to secure and maintain peace.

A pressing need to design tailored interventions that address long term human needs during a humanitarian crisis such as: health, education, socioeconomic development and leadership skills, may greatly benefit from landscape analysis research. Prioritizing needs of women to deal with a crisis and advance their roles as peace negotiators and activists on the individual, organizational and global levels will help inform future interventions and policies. This will thus require a long-term vision and plan for formative empirical research.

The policy department of EU Women, in its analysis of the UN World Survey on the Role of Women, finds proven synergies between women's empowerment and economic, social and environmental sustainability including the maintenance of peace.

CONCLUSION: EMPOWERING WOMEN AND PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT TO SECURE AND MAINTAIN PEACE IS ESSENTIAL

The presence of women at all levels of governance tends to have a stabilizing effect on communities and countries throughout peacemaking processes. Increasing the participation of women in leadership is always a worthy goal of research, but it is especially important in conflict zones. This report proposes further research to improve the leadership skills and activities of women waging peace particularly in the Middle East, with a focus on ensuring the mental and general health of the women, supporting social networks and building women's capacities in peace-negotiation, leadership and civic engagement skills, as well as expanding their income-generating opportunities through occupational training to improve socioeconomic status. The overarching theme of this research is to examine how peacebuilding initiatives and policies are designed and implemented, outcomes can be used to measure the potential impact of the intervention in the proposed areas, with the goal of refining policy recommendations for securing peace for global outreach.

The burgeoning global economy, fueled by advancements in science and technology along with ever-greater globalization, has brought prosperity to much of the world. In many regions, however, these material improvements have proven to be divisive, as their benefits are unevenly distributed and economic inequality has grown. These disparities contribute to conflicts that destabilize socio-economic, political, and environmental conditions in many countries. It is therefore essential that we find a way to build bridges across political, economic and cultural divides, to help these societies adjust to these changes and resolve emerging conflicts. Diplomacy in the 20th century was focused primarily on "power sharing," but the 21st century paradigm must address emerging human and environmental challenges, and requires us to create policies and actions that center on "responsibility sharing" (Anderlini,

2015). In response to the need for a new paradigm for global transformation, the fourth Annual Ministerial Review (AMR), was convened by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2010. At this conference, Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, declared that “empowering women is an economic and social imperative” (ECOSOC, 2010, p. 14). This sentiment is echoed by Amartya Sen, Nobel laureate and founder of UNDP’s Human Development Index, where he asserted that empowering women and girls with more choices and more freedoms is crucial for enhancing inclusive and sustainable development, and that, “focusing on women’s agency may be precisely the role that such an agency can play in removing the iniquities that depress the well-being of women” (Sen, 1999, p. 191). A closer look of the implementation of Millennium Development Goal (MDG 3), promote gender equality and empower women, and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG Goal 5) achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, reveal that while some progress has been made in this area, women continue to face discrimination, be disadvantaged in the labor market and have limited access to economic assets and participation in private and public decision-making (UN, 2015). To transform the state of our world with a much more inclusive and sustainable framework of development, the United Nations mandate makes this clear: Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large (UN Sustainable Development Goals, para. 1).



Katie Choi

Director of International Affairs, IWPG Global Region 7

Good morning, esteemed guests,

I stand before you as a proud representative of the International Women's Peace Group. I am Katie Choi, Manager of Global Region 7 International Affairs Department.

I'm deeply thankful for everyone here for your unwavering commitment to advancing women's rights and addressing the roots of conflict.

IWPG actively engages in global initiatives to foster peace alongside women worldwide, particularly in IWPG Global Region 7, we work with 25 countries and as the Manager, I am deeply involved in the on-the-groundwork in Europe, Africa, and Asia. Today, I want to share our journey toward women's empowerment and peace work, filled with obstacles and moments of inspiration, especially while collaborating with the remarkable women of Europe.

Europe, where my home England is located, is known for its prosperity, excellent education standards, and significant progress in gender equality, making it a highly developed continent. Working with European women enables us to leverage these advancements, showing that improvement is achievable and provides inspiration worldwide.

In Europe, we face unique challenges. The lack of awareness of women's and peace issues poses a significant challenge, limiting public and institutional support. Cultural diversity in some countries lead to varied perspectives on women's issues. In other countries, women are not used to associating or supporting each other. It's been crucial to grab attention and build interest, a process that is ongoing. And I do admit, when I sit in the office table and see the other side table full of women participants in the African continent working for peace, it always surprises me. However, it gives me hope that it will be the same in Europe one day.

These challenges emphasize the need to help women share good practices and information, raise awareness of women and peace issues, thus the need of education, and expand support networks. Particularly, European women have experienced progress in women's rights, and it's essential to keep exchanging the progress with the rest of the world for the advancement of women globally.

In the midst of shared struggles, the Czech Republic serves as evidence of the transformative power of peace education. Ukrainian women, recovering from the difficulties of war and migration, found solace and strength through IWPG peace education and workshops. These sessions helped to gain realization and crucial change in perspectives. Highlighting successes of recognizing self-value, value of others, overcoming a five-year depression, embracing optimism, envisioning the future, and taking action to speak out against injustice. They understood the importance of teaching such lessons to children early on to instill a culture of peace in society. These voices represent the powerful impact of Peace Education for Women.

Despite conflict challenges, a powerful force of hope emerged, with participants expressing a collective aspiration for a future where humanity unites to create unprecedented good, rooted in the belief that justice begins with each individual.

Reflecting on this, my parents' homeland, South Korea, shaped by the rapid post-war progress due to education, draws a parallel. Historically, even during the Korean War, the presence of schools exemplified how education accelerates recovery, as seen in the Czech Republic.

IWPG is confident in spreading the success of peace education, which has a universal impact on emotional stability and personal growth. Additionally, it emphasizes the role of individual women in society.

In conclusion, as we navigate peace and women's empowerment in Europe, we persist in raising awareness through education, fostering inclusivity, breaking down social barriers, and engaging in meaningful conversations. Despite initial doubts, the transformative power of peace education, evident in the inspiring stories from the Czech Republic and the resilience of Ukrainian women, underscores its profound impact.

The call to action resounds, urging us to unite for a common goal—a world where peace education for women drives positive transformation.

Thank you for your commitment. Let us continue this transformative journey together.



Femi Orianne RADJI

Branch Manager, IWPG Paris Branch

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this historic day as we convene for the 68th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York, I extend my warm greetings to each one of you. Today, we unite to address a crucial issue that transcends borders and cultures: the solidarity of women in mitigating gender inequality through peace, particularly in Africa. It's an honour and privilege to share this platform with committed minds from around the world, all dedicated to shaping a more equitable future.

Our theme, "Solidarity of Women: Mitigating Gender Inequality through Peace," resonates deeply with those striving for a world where men and women walk side by side towards peace and equality. Within this momentum, we must recognize the unique challenges faced by women, especially in Africa, as they strive to contribute to peacebuilding and the establishment of equitable societies.

Africa, the cradle of ancient civilizations, faces unprecedented challenges that require increased global solidarity. African women exhibit exceptional resilience in the face of armed conflicts, insecurity, and unstable social systems. Their heroic efforts to promote peace in challenging conditions should not go unnoticed. However, it's imperative for the global community to intensify efforts to support these courageous women and create conducive conditions for their prosperity.

Today, we must closely examine the situation in Africa, where women encounter unique difficulties in the pursuit of peace and equality. Indeed, women's peace efforts in Africa are hindered by considerable challenges, including gender-based violence, economic barriers, and persistent patriarchal systems.

This continent, comprising 54 nations with over 2000 ethnic groups, stands out for its richness in cultural diversity, creating a space where multiple complexities manifest.

To build peace in Africa, we must understand and address the deep-rooted causes of conflicts. This requires a holistic approach that incorporates women's perspectives in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. African women are often at the heart of communities, and their engagement is crucial for establishing peaceful and egalitarian environments.

As a global community, it's our duty to create an environment conducive to the empowerment of women and the promotion of equality, drawing profound inspiration from the resilience of African women who, despite challenges, continue to work tirelessly for a better future.

In discussing the solidarity of women and the need to mitigate gender inequalities through peace, it is essential to highlight the crucial role of peace education. Education serves as the key unlocking doors to mutual understanding, tolerance, and cooperation—essential elements for the construction of a sustainable and equitable Africa.

However, despite its significance, the implementation of peace education in Africa faces significant challenges. Financial obstacles and inadequate educational infrastructure often impede the dissemination of this essential education. Therefore, we must redouble our efforts to ensure that peace education becomes an accessible reality for all women in Africa.

By investing in peace education, we invest in the future of Africa. We empower entire communities, giving women the tools to become change agents who actively promote cooperation within their societies. This investment offers a perspective of emancipation and

sustainable development, empowering women to become peaceful leaders within their communities.

In the years to come, we must place peace education at the forefront of our efforts to build a sustainable future in Africa. This requires strong partnerships between governments, international organisations, NGOs, and local communities.

Reflecting on our field experience with IWPG initiatives, whether in France or in French-speaking African countries, I'm deeply moved by the moments shared with our collaborators. Despite challenges like attempts to initiate peace actions with civil society, power outages in Mali, and resource constraints for sustainable activities, our determination for peace remains steadfast.

We've witnessed complex realities in many regions, hearing heart-breaking stories of those affected by violence and injustice. Yet, we've also been inspired by the resilience of those fighting for a better future.

Our work has been a concerted effort to promote peace, education, and empowerment for women and girls. Together, we've organized workshops and campaigns, sowing seeds of change in every community.

We've seen tangible results, with communities resolving conflicts peacefully and women gaining access to Peace education. But our mission continues. We must redouble efforts to realize our ideals, advocating for women and children in every action we take.

Ladies and Gentlemen, to address persistent challenges in peace and gender equality in Africa and beyond, it is imperative that women's associations play a proactive role. They must closely collaborate with governments, international institutions, NGOs, and local communities to formulate inclusive policies, ensuring meaningful participation of women at all levels of decision-making.

In conclusion, I urge you to strengthen our collective commitment to the solidarity of women in mitigating gender inequalities through peace. Together, we can create a world where every woman has the opportunity to contribute fully to building an equitable and peaceful society. African women, like their sisters worldwide, deserve a future imbued with justice, dignity, and peace. Thank you.





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