



Inter-Parliamentary Union

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Workshop on the role of parliaments in implementing CEDAW

Ensuring women's economic empowerment in law and in practice

Friday, 19 October 2018, 9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
IPU Headquarters

Concept note

Ensuring gender equality and full respect for women's human rights is a key commitment of the international community. It is recognized as essential to making democracies strong, as well as to achieving sustainable development and peace.

The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which has been ratified by nearly all countries (189 of 197 countries), provides valuable guidance to achieve gender equality. The Convention looks at all areas of life, ranging from family and education to economic and political life.

By knowing and using the Convention, men and women parliamentarians have a powerful tool to enhance their law-making and oversight work in the area of gender equality.

Most recently, the IPU adopted two resolutions that call for addressing persistent obstacles to women's economic empowerment in law and in practice. In October 2016, the IPU Member Parliaments adopted a resolution¹ urging parliaments "to amend or repeal existing legislation that directly or indirectly discriminates against women (...) as well as to enact legislation that encourages gender equality" and "to facilitate the reconciliation and strengthening of personal, family, professional and political life for both women and men". In April 2017, a resolution on women's financial inclusion² invited parliaments "to promote the development of (...) policies and strategies that focus on eliminating the legal, cultural and logistical barriers that discriminate against women and prevent their full inclusion in the financial systems" and in particular "to remove legal provisions that discriminate against women in areas such as work, family, property and inheritance".

According to the World Bank, out of the 189 countries covered in its recent study [Women, Business and the Law 2018](#), 36 confer widows with less inheritance rights than widowers and 39 prevent daughters from inheriting in the same way as sons. Also, in 31 countries the husband is legally considered head of household, which can have implications ranging from government land allocation to who receives government benefits within a household. In addition, the study indicates that in some countries married women still need permission to open a bank account or to sign a contract.

¹ *The freedom of women to participate in political processes fully, safely and without interference: Building partnerships between men and women to achieve this objective*, Resolution adopted unanimously at the 135th IPU Assembly (Geneva, Switzerland, 23-27 October 2016).

² *Promoting enhanced international cooperation on the SDGs, in particular on the financial inclusion of women as a driver of development*, Resolution adopted unanimously at the 136th IPU Assembly (Dhaka, Bangladesh, 1-5 April 2017).

Beyond legal frameworks, women's economic empowerment is also impacted by the lack of opportunities for girls in the area of education and for women—especially young women—in the area of employment. Such opportunities must be afforded not only by the State but also by the community and the family. Existing barriers include lack of infrastructure, persisting gender stereotypes and harmful practices such as child marriage and the employment of young girls in domestic work. Such obstacles to girls and women's economic empowerment must be addressed at the legal and policy-making levels as well as at the cultural and social levels.

In order to support IPU's Member Parliaments in achieving progress in these areas, it is suggested to hold a workshop on how CEDAW can help parliaments address existing barriers to women's economic empowerment in law and in practice. The workshop will be open to all members of parliament, men and women. Parliaments whose countries have been recently reviewed or are about to be reviewed by the UN CEDAW Committee, the UN treaty body in charge of monitoring CEDAW's implementation are strongly encouraged to participate in order to ensure adequate follow-up to the Committee's concluding observations (see list in annex).

Tentative programme

Opening session: The role of parliaments in implementing CEDAW—an overview

Working session 1: Lifting legal barriers to women's economic empowerment

This session will focus on the role of parliaments in legislating and promoting policies to ensure women's access to resources, including their right and legal capacity to inherit, own and manage property and land, contract loans and invest. Participants will be invited to share their experiences in this area and identify strategies to address this issue at the national level.

Presentations will be followed by case studies and discussion.

Working session 2: Addressing obstacles that hinder girls and women's economic empowerment

The session will focus on the factors that hinder girls and women's economic empowerment in practice and on sharing experiences on how best to tackle these obstacles, such as among other, targeted measures to be implemented at state, community and family levels. Particular focus will be placed on guaranteeing equal access to education and employment, including by combatting discriminatory practices such as child marriage and girls' domestic work, and ensuring women and men can reconcile work and family life.

Presentations will be followed by case studies and discussion.

Annex

List of countries recently reviewed by the UN CEDAW Committee

70th Session (2 – 20 July 2018): Australia, Cook Islands, Cyprus, Liechtenstein, Mexico, New Zealand, State of Palestine, Turkmenistan

69th Session (19 February – 9 March 2018): Chile, Fiji, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, Suriname

68th Session (23 October – 17 November 2017): Burkina Faso, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Guatemala, Israel, Kenya, Kuwait, Monaco, Nauru, Norway, Oman, Paraguay, Singapore

List of countries soon to be reviewed by the UN CEDAW Committee

71st Session (22 October – 9 November 2018): Bahamas, Congo, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mauritius, Nepal, Samoa, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

72nd Session (18 February - 8 March 2019): Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Botswana, Bulgaria, Colombia, Ethiopia, Serbia, United Kingdom

73rd Session (1-19 July 2019): Austria, Bahrain, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guyana, Mozambique, Qatar