

Thematic Dialogue
Challenges of Feminist Movements and Grassroots Women Organisations

Concept Note
March 29th, 2021
10:00 – 11:20 (GMT-6 Mexico City Time)
19:00 – 20:20 (GMT-6 Mexico City Time)

Background

In 1995, the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, was called "Seeing the world through the eyes of women." It placed the collective vision of the world's women's movements on the global stage, which was instrumental in enabling the conference to promote more progressive outcomes. The most visionary agenda for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls was created by 189 governments and thousands of activists worldwide: the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. As a defining framework for change, the Platform for Action made comprehensive commitments under 12 critical areas of concern, being the promotion and protection of the human rights of women one of such priorities. In the 26 years since the historic Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, there have been achievements in gender equality, however, delivery for women and girls around the world is lagging far behind. As of 2021, there is not a single country across the world that has achieved gender equality and progress on key gender equality indicators has stalled. The widening socio-economic inequalities have become more pronounced due to covid-19 are disproportionately affecting women and girls, and the human rights of women and girls and LGBTQI continue to be under constant threat.

For decades, feminist and women's organisations, activists and movements have contributed to the promotion and protection of women's rights worldwide. Such efforts have progressively translated into some improvements in conditions for women and girls at a local, national, and international level. In recent years, a series of campaigns, and mobilisations such as the "Me Too" movement, the "Green Wave" tide or "*A Rapist in your Way*" have highlighted the strength and positive impact of the collective actions of feminist and women's organisations, including the young generations.

Despite the significant contributions of feminist grassroots movements and civil society organisations towards achieving social justice and gender equality, over the past years, their constant threats and challenges have increased. The world is perceiving the expansion of repressive measures by state and non-state actors - including organized crime, business groups and religious fundamentalisms – that attack women, people who question gender social norms and stereotypes and women human rights defenders. Hate speeches and public calls for violence against these groups are

increasingly normalized under authoritarian regimes and by fascist actors in different regions.¹

Notwithstanding, there are still some main challenges to overcome for feminist movements:

- **Funding:** Women's organizations receive little global funding. Most flows through organizations in the Global North and are not flexible, responsive, or rapidly deployed to meet feminists' needs (e.g., core)
- **Continuing threats and restriction of civic space:** Feminists cite backlash against feminism as a main challenge and feel threatened by police, yet women's human rights defenders, feminist, and women's organizations as well as frontline activists in dangerous and hard to reach environments often receive the least assistance—in some regions, 50% of young activists feel threatened.
- **Entrenched harmful practices/ negative norms and stereotypes:** Women experience more negative portrayal in the public sphere compared to men, including experiencing double standards, exclusion, and discrimination.
- **Leadership structures are not fit for women's lived experiences:** access to leadership centered on male experiences, particularly expectations of unpaid domestic work, and women are often re-routed to positions which reinforce those expectations.

In this adverse context of both internal and external threats, it is necessary to identify local and international strategies to support feminist groups, organisations and movements that are promoting women's rights and gender equality and that contribute to achieve transformative change in society. Therefore, a holistic and transformative approach to the existing and new feminist movements should be included in the Action Coalition of Feminist Movements and Leadership, to have a targeted set of concrete, ambitious and immediate actions within the period of 2021-2026 to deliver tangible impact on gender equality and girls' and women's human rights.

General Objective

Identify the main challenges that feminist movements, civil society organisations and grassroots groups are currently experiencing, and collectively discuss innovative, creative solutions to overcome those challenges.

Specific Objectives

- To identify the main priorities of feminist groups and organisations in every region.

¹ *Mujeres Transformando radicalmente un mundo en crisis*, Un Marco de referencia para Beijing+25 elaborado durante una reunión estratégica de activistas feministas en la Ciudad de México, del 22 al 24 de agosto de 2019.

- To learn about the differentiated challenges that feminist organisations, groups and movements have encountered in their specific context (locally, nationally, and regionally).
- To share good practices and strategies and recommendations to guarantee the continuity of the work despite the internal and external challenges feminist organisations and groups face.

Participants

- Civil society organisations
- UN Agencies
- Academia
- Private Sector
- Governments

Format

This virtual dialogue will be held on March 29 from 10:00 – 11:30 (MEX time) and in the evening from 19:00 – 20:30 (MEX time). The discussion will be driven by an experienced feminist moderator who will direct the conversation between nine different stakeholders and the audience to ensure a diversity of views. The audience will be able to interact by using the chat on the platform. Simultaneous interpretation will be available.

Suggested time	Proposed activity
10:00 – 10:05 19:00 – 19:05	Welcome and panellists' presentation.
10:05 – 10:05 19:05 – 19:45	<p>Moderated discussion around 4 guiding questions. Participants have between 3-4 minutes to answer each question.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here I would list few issues – and ask specific actions to resolve those—might also want to invite them to add to the already listed issues- What specific actions should the governments, private sector and international funds prioritise to support the work of feminist groups and organisations at a local, national and international level? • How to achieve a more cohesive feminist movement that at the same time considers the diverse demands that women have?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In your experience, what good practices and actions can be shared to build a transformative change in society and propel feminist movements to the construction of a new world?
10:45 – 11:15 19:45 – 20:15	Q&A session. Moderator reads selected questions from the chat.
11:15 – 11:20 20:15 – 20:20	Closing: moderator thanks participants and audience.