



Women's Federation for World
Peace International (WFWPI)
UN Office Geneva



June -December 2024 UN Office Geneva Report

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13TH OF SEPTEMBER, 2024

Women in Conflict

Venue: UN Headquarters Geneva & WFWPI UN Office Geneva

On the 13th of September, a seminar on "Women in Conflict" was organized by IMWU, with IHRAAM, WFWPI UN, and NGOCSWGE at the Human Rights Council 57 in Geneva. The discussion focused on the urgent need for awareness and action regarding widows' rights globally, as they are often overlooked. The lack of data on widows, due to many not having marriage certificates, makes it difficult to quantify their numbers. Additionally, the challenges faced by widows, such as severe abuse and discrimination compounded by traditional harmful practices, were highlighted.

The speakers stressed the need to stop these abuses and recognize widows as a powerful group of survivors who can achieve significant change when supported. Organizations like Widows Rights International have made strides in supporting widows.

This is being done through various initiatives, including microcredit projects and social development efforts. These initiatives have led to reduced violence against women and improved education for girls. It was pointed out that the term "widow" often conjures images of older women, but there is a growing number of young widows, including those as young as 16 years old. This demographic shift is linked to increased conflict and early enforced marriages, necessitating targeted protections for these vulnerable individuals.

Ms. Carolyn Hadschin emphasized the need for human values, human rights dialogue, and the importance of listening attentively to the voices of victims. She highlighted that violence cannot be tolerated and that women, especially as mothers and heads of families, play a crucial role in understanding this instinctively.



7TH, 8TH, AND 9TH OF JUNE, 2024

Youth Peace Advocacy and Negotiation Training

Venue: Beirut, Lebanon

The 4th edition of the Youth Peace Conference and Peace Accords was hosted on the 7th, 8th, and 9th of June, 2024 in Beirut, Lebanon. The Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) UN Office Geneva organized the conference in partnership with the Youth and Student's Association for Peace, Lebanon. Several higher educational Institutions in Beirut also joined. It had been advised that one cannot speak about war and peace now in Lebanon, but the Geneva team found something very different. The youth are passionate to speak about their engagement for peace and problem solving in their communities and among ethnicities. There was an in-depth discussion of the nation's development, women's rights, and peace. The event included a one-day training followed by two days of youth-led debates on various topics related to the "role of women's development as a necessity for peace in the MENA region." The ideas and insights shared on these vital topics were outstanding, and very real, and after engaging in meaningful discussions, recommendations were adopted that will be reported at our side event during the 56th Human Rights Council Sessions in Geneva.



12TH JUNE, 2024

Ambassadors Breakfast Briefing, and B+30 update

Venue: Vieux Bois Restaurant, Geneva

On June 12, the 5th NGO CSW Geneva Ambassador's Breakfast Briefing was held at the Vieux Bois Restaurant under the leadership of WFWPI President Carolyn Handschin, the UN NGO Committee on the Status of Women Geneva. The event focused on "Women and Men Working Together for Gender Equality," with informal discussions on preparations for the Beijing +30 recommendations on the Education and Training of Women.



Ideas such as financing innovation within educational institutions to identify and encourage future teachers, and providing grants and scholarships and raising the teaching profession to a more dignified prominence were addressed as Ambassadors, UN leaders and committee members sat together around breakfast tables to listen to one another's concerns. Recommendations were gleaned that can be included in the documents being prepared by civil society for the intergovernmental meeting in October, that will then become part of the Beijing + 30 Report, eventually voted at the CSW69 in 2025.



17TH TO 22ND JUNE, 2024

Professional Academy Training

Venue: UN Headquarters Geneva & WFWPI UN Office Geneva

WFWPI UN Office Geneva aims to provide young people with the opportunity to enhance their skills and knowledge in the area of development and women's rights, while being immersed in the ongoing 56th Human Rights Council. Its many events, meetings and opportunities to interact with governments and United Nations entities provide a perfect backdrop to the theme of international cooperation.



The Professional Academy on Human Rights and International Cooperation occurred in Geneva from June 17th to 22nd, 2024, part of a series of advocacy and knowledge-building programs on prevalent human rights issues. As part of our agenda was to include understanding mechanisms of international cooperation, reflection on human rights and development, the role of international development organizations, and collaborating projects for development.



Participants: We had young professional leaders from nine countries, representing different regions.

17TH TO 22ND JUNE, 2024

Internship During HRC56

Venue: UN Headquarters Geneva

In the second week of HRC56, we welcomed three new interns: Jessie from South Africa, Sophia who is Swiss-Canadian, and Haiqah, a Pakistani-American. They were given tasks which included writing daily notes on significant events they attend and producing a journalistic article on one of the issues discussed at these events, with references to HRC56 plenary discussions.

They attended several events, such as a special event by UN Women commemorating the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, titled “Women Walking for Peace: Leveraging Human Rights Mechanisms for the Prevention and Response to Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.” This event featured participation from the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, CEDAW, Justice Rapid Response, the Global Survivors Fund, and UN Women, and was supported by the Catalan Agency for International Development Cooperation (ACCD) and co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Guatemala

to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva. The interns also had the opportunity to debrief their experiences with WFWPI President Carolyn Handschin, the UN NGO Committee on the Status of Women Geneva.



18TH JUNE, 2024

Side Event on Fulfilling the Right to Education through International Cooperation

Venue: UN Headquarters Geneva

June 18 was an important moment at our HRC56 panel on "Fulfilling the Right to Education through International Cooperation, especially in Conflict Zones". In the presence of many government representatives, UN entities and fellow NGO's speakers highlighted collaboration among UN entities, governments and civil society, tapping into the broad matrix of human rights mechanisms so as to fight injustices like violence against women and conflict with greater effectiveness. The WFWPI UN Geneva's Beirut Youth Peace Accord was presented as a best practice in intergenerational partnership for conflict resolution and social transformation. The panel included a comment from the former Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. The side event was hosted by WFWPI, Soroptimist, and NGO CSW Geneva.



21ST JUNE, 2024

Challenges And Prospects For Women, Peace And Human Rights In Afghanistan

Venue: UN Headquarters Geneva
UPF and WFWPI collaboration

The event featured distinguished speakers addressing various aspects of governance and peace in Afghanistan, emphasizing the role of women. The program was introduced by Carolyn Handschin, Director of WFWPI Office for UN Relations, who referred to the decades of educational and development programs of WFWPI Afghanistan, continuing outside the country since the Taliban takeover. Shah Gul Rezai, a former Afghan parliament member, and Doha peace negotiations participant, shared on the crucial role of women in Afghan governance and lessons from the peace talks. Rahmatullah Nabil, former Chief of Security of Afghanistan, presented strategies for sustainable governance and peace through inter-Afghan solutions. Mohammad Alam Izdyar, former Vice-President of the Afghan Senate, emphasized the strengthening the rule of law and human rights protection. Shukria Barakzai, former Deputy and Afghan Ambassador to Norway, addressed gender apartheid in Afghanistan. Finally, Dr. Rahela Kaveer, representing the "Afghan Peace Dialogue Movement," highlighted the role of women in diplomacy, education, and women's rights for peace in Afghanistan.

During an interview Ms. Handschin, stated that, as an outcome, it has been decided to reconvene at the UN later in the year, for a full-day session. This meeting will bring together government representatives, experts, and NGO leaders for an in-depth discussion on collaborative efforts to improve the situation in Afghanistan.



21ST JUNE, 2024

Women and Children in Conflict

Venue: UN Headquarters Geneva

On June 21st, during the 56th Human Rights Council meeting our WFWPI President Carolyn Handschin, the UN NGO Committee on the Status of Women Geneva was invited by Peace Through Dialogue to speak at a side event. She spoke about the urgent issues faced by women and children in conflict and colonialism-affected areas. The event aimed to promote dialogue, improve understanding, and mobilize action to protect and empower women and children in conflict zones.

The speakers included representatives from Pakistan, Kashmir, Afghanistan, Zimbabwe. Voices of international advocates from WFWP UK, the EU Parliament and Widows for Peace contributed to the discussions. While some described heart-wrenching stories of failure to protect and violations of women and children in conflict, there were also commitments to solidarity among women and mothers. Proposals for a next event at the September session of the HRC were acknowledged.




21ST JUNE, 2024

WFWPI written statements submitted to 56 HRC

Venue: UN Headquarters Geneva

United Nations A/HRC/56/NGO/109

 **General Assembly** Distr.: General
XX May 2024
English only

Human Rights Council
Fifty-sixth session
18 July–12 July 2024
Agenda item 3
Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development

Written statement submitted by Women's Federation for World Peace International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[24 May 2024]

A/HRC/56/NGO/109

Protecting women and girls from sexual and gender based violence

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and femicide are pervasive issues that transcend cultural, economic, and geographical boundaries, constituting a global pandemic that affects millions of lives. The statistics are alarming: from January 1st to 31st, 2024, there were 240 recorded femicide cases across 26 different countries, highlighting the urgent need for action. Regions such as Africa, particularly Southern Africa, and Latin America (LATAM) are disproportionately affected, often leading global lists of rape rates. Countries like South Africa, Lesotho, Botswana, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua are frequently cited for their high levels of SGBV.

The gravity of the situation is underscored by the estimated 20,000 women killed by their partners or ex-partners in 2022 on the African continent, and the at least 4,050 women who fell victim to femicide in LATAM and the Caribbean during the same period. These figures are a stark reminder of the devastating impact of SGBV and femicide on individuals, families, and communities.

In response to this crisis, various international, regional, and national frameworks have been established to recognize SGBV as a violation of human rights and to affirm the state's obligation to protect victims and end gendered violence. Key among these are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the Beijing Platform for Action, and United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS).

At a regional level, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has implemented its 2015 Gender Protocol and its 2018-2022 Regional Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security. In LATAM, the Convention of Belém do Pará, or the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence Against Women, has been in place since 1994.

Despite these frameworks, addressing SGBV and femicide requires a holistic and identity-sensitive approach that challenges harmful, patriarchal social norms. This is evident in the data from both Southern Africa and LATAM, where stigma and fear of retribution often prevent survivors from seeking help. For instance, in Namibia, 42% of the population believes a woman will face criticism, harassment, or shame if she reports a crime, leading to only 14.9% of intimate partner violence survivors seeking police assistance. In South Africa, 43% of citizens hold similar beliefs, with only 66% of those without formal education trusting the police to take SGBV cases seriously.

In Costa Rica, 'machismo' culture stigmatizes SGBV survivors, while in Nicaragua, fear of

source:<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g24/069/76/pdf/g2406976.pdf?token=V70mqMDVnQmbKDNbHc&fe=true>

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A/HRC/56/NGO/110

1325 and the rights of women in conflict and post conflict situations.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, established in 1995, marked a significant milestone in the global commitment to gender equality. It laid the groundwork for the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000, which revolutionized the approach to peace and security by emphasizing the importance of women's participation and the need to address gender-based violence in conflict settings. UNSCR 1325 introduced four key pillars: enhancing women's participation in decision-making, protecting women from gender-based violence, and ensuring gender sensitivity in relief and recovery efforts. This resolution was a turning point, leading to the adoption of subsequent resolutions, such as UNSCR 1889 in 2009, which further emphasized women's roles in peace processes and their socio-economic rights.

The integration of gender perspectives in peacebuilding is essential for achieving social justice, legitimacy, inclusion, and accountability. Women's associations play a crucial role in monitoring these processes, ensuring that gender-sensitive approaches are adopted in post-conflict interventions. Such approaches are vital for sustainable peace and equality, offering opportunities to improve women's rights and reshape gender dynamics. They also help in identifying the root causes of conflict, including societal norms around masculinity and violence, and in assessing the gendered impact of conflict, such as increased violence against women and their changing roles in society.

Despite the significant progress made by UNSCR 1325 in recognizing women's vulnerabilities in conflict, its effectiveness is limited by the need for substantial changes in social structures, which hampers the empowerment process for women and the recovery of livelihoods. Post-conflict scenarios present a unique opportunity for social transformation and the advancement of gender equality. However, programs often fail to adequately address the changes in gender roles during and after conflicts. Major challenges in enhancing women's economic empowerment include facilitating access to resources and enabling control over income for strategic life decisions. Gender-sensitive approaches in post-conflict interventions need to comprehensively assess women's skills, vulnerabilities, and responsibilities, aiming to dismantle gender discrimination and ensure equitable access to resources.

Moreover, the presence of women in decision-making and political spheres remains insufficient. Economic empowerment is essential for ensuring their effective participation

source:<https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g24/069/76/pdf/g2406976.pdf?token=V70mqMDVnQmbKDNbHc&fe=true>

Accomplishments

June 2024 has been an exceptionally full month. The Women's Federation for World Peace International (WFWPI) UN Office Geneva organized the 4th edition of the Youth Peace Conference in Beirut, Lebanon. The conference focused on discussions about the nation's development, women's rights, and peace, with a one-day training session followed by two days of youth-led debates on the role of women's development for peace in the MENA region. Recommendations that were made during the conference will be reported at the ongoing 56th Human Rights Council Sessions in Geneva.

The NGO CSW Ambassadors Breakfast Briefing discussions in June brought governments and civil society together to prepare for the Beijing + 30 Review and Civil Society Forum in October, which we are hosting. Intensive discussions are bringing together hundreds of women and their organizations across our broad ECE region to formulate our recommendations that we hope will define policies for decades to come.

Additionally, we hosted the Professional Academy Training on Human Rights and International Cooperation, giving the young leaders the platform to express their views and assisting them in starting their initiatives.

The side events on the Right to Education, Challenges And Prospects For Women, Peace And Human Rights In Afghanistan and Women and Children in Conflict were held to promote dialogue, understanding, and focused government / civil society collaboration in these important areas. Two statements, cosigned by other NGO's, were submitted to the HRC56, coming out of the work of the 7th WFWPI Human Rights Internship Program (February to May).



15 OCTOBER, 2024

World Council of Churches

Venue: Geneva

The World Council of Churches (WCC) invited WFWPI UN OFFice Director, UN Women and others to speak on B+30 outcomes. Ms. Carolyn Handschin participated in the opening session of their Women's Human Rights Advocacy training on October 15, 2024, in Geneva.



This annual training, which coincides with CEDAW sessions, aimed to enhance the capacity and skills of faith-based organizations in conducting gender justice and women's human rights advocacy from local to global levels. The opening panel focused on Beijing+30, followed by breakout groups for further informal engagement. Ms. Carolyn's participation was highly valued due to her vast experience in global advocacy.



21ST JUNE, 2024

Beijing + 30 Civil Society Forum Geneva

A clarion call for partnership

Venue: Geneva



From October 19th to 20th, the Beijing+30 Review for Civil Society in the UNECE region was held in Geneva, organized by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women-Geneva. The invitation to join forces has been sent to the ECE region, using a variety of tools and networks. Major global and local organizations, including the Women's Major Group, the NGO Committees on the Status of Women Geneva, Vienna and New York, the Europe and North America Caucus, were invited. All 56 countries of the UNECE were represented in the Working Groups (WG).

WG were established for each of the 12 Critical Areas of concern, and each engaged virtually dozens of times throughout. WFWPI led two groups; "Education for Women and Girls" and "Women and the Environment". Each group approached the task slightly differently, depending on the expertise and in some cases, even sub-groups were created.

A 1000-word statement, from each of the Working Groups, signposting key civil society concerns though acknowledging achievements in addition to gaps and challenges was created as well as a paper with three recommendations, short-, medium- and long-term actions submitted to the Government Review on October 21-22. The recommendations all included civil society commitment to partnership.

19-20 OCTOBER ,2024

Intergovernmental Meeting

Venue: UN Headquarters Geneva

Following the impactful Civil Society Consultations and Forum hosted by the NGO CSW Geneva on October 19-20, the President and two Vice Presidents were invited to deliver statements with recommendations to the ECE Beijing +30 Intergovernmental Review on October 21-22.



This culminated in a year's work of gathering input, assessing gaps, and success related to the promises made by governments across the 52 countries of the entire ECE Region in 1995 in the 12 Critical Areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Over 300 women representing 65 plus NGOs participated in the many hundreds of virtual Working Group meetings that culminated in the statements, summaries and reports that can be found here: From October 19th to 20th, the Beijing +30 Review for Civil Society in the UNECE region was held in Geneva, organized by the NGO Committee on the Status of Women-Geneva.



Additionally, 7 selectively prepared civil society written statements were submitted to the ECE and UNWomen, hosts for the governmental forum, to be included in their report to the global gathering at the 69th Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March 2025 .

11 DECEMBER ,2024

7th Ambassadors Briefing / Government-Civil Society Roundtable

Venue: Geneva

NGOCSW Geneva hosted its Ambassador's Breakfast Briefing Series, "Women and Men Working Together for Gender Equality" at the Vieuxbois Restaurant on December 11. Discussions at this 7th event followed up on the recommendations of both governments and civil society at the Beijing +30 ECE Intergovernmental Review October 21-22 and identified the challenges, gaps and strengths in civil society cooperation. The participants included eleven governments, the UN Economic Commission for Europe, UN Women Geneva, and UNESCO Geneva.

Significant outcomes include a tripartite partnership with several young democracies (after 1990) and two UN Agencies to provide training to local NGOs in their nations throughout 2025. NGOCSW Geneva will be host, with WFWPI as lead coordinator, providing educational elements.

