

Intervention CPD briefing – April 7, 2022

We'd like to thank the co-facilitators, and the bureau for hosting this briefing and giving us the opportunity to speak. I'm Bette Levy speaking for Soroptimist International & as a member of ISRRRC. I will address the overarching theme of sustainable and inclusive economic growth but first would like to add our support to the statements given by our ISRRRC colleagues in respect to the time.

Every day, in real time, we experience the challenges facing inclusive and sustainable economic growth. To solve these problems countries, businesses, and development agencies must act now. We need system-wide change to ensure all women and girls participate in the world of work as empowered equals.

For economies and workplaces to support sustainable development they must be rooted in human rights and equality. Work patterns and environments must adjust to ensure that women & girls in all their multiple & intersecting forms of discrimination are equal participants and leaders in the world of work.

Economic measures, programmes, and outcomes should only be considered successful if they contribute to improving the well-being of all people. Economies cannot be considered separately from sustainable development. Successful economies need to address the interconnections between all three pillars of sustainable development.

Women and girls are consistently and economically disadvantaged compared to their male counterparts. Economic impacts during COVID-19 has regressed gender equality and perpetuates the cycle of poverty.

Post-covid, it will take 267 years to close the economic gender pay gap. In many countries the gap has widened. Women left work in significant numbers because of caring responsibilities or working in informal sectors — in low-income countries 92% of women work in the informal sector.

Many women and girls have experienced violence, harassment, or abuse in the workplace, at home and in communities. Ultimately, women and girls face higher risks of multidimensional and intergenerational poverty, increased barriers to re-entering education, training, and work.

To address economic inequality faced by all women and girls, we must acknowledge and confront the multifaceted causes for that inequality. States must introduce better policies and protections that enable women to be equal participants, leaders and decision makers in sustainable economies. Over the past forty years States have promised to do this, but implementation and action has been severely lacking. With widening gender gaps states must act now.

Workplaces are changing, and the expectations of women and girls are changing too. Workplaces must become more inclusive by hiring diverse employees, addressing implicit and explicit biases including gender biases, improving accessibility, eradicating workplace violence and harassment, facilitating flexible working practices, making work environments safer, address the sexual division of labor by paying a living wage, equal pay for work of equal value, and offering opportunities and support for advancement, including training opportunities.

Women earning less throughout their career creates a gender pension gap, leaving older women at increased risks of poverty. With women living longer, they lack the financial resources to last their

lifetime and cannot retire at a time of their choosing. Immediate steps must be taken to rectify these issues.

Education and training at all levels remain transformative tools that enable and empower girls and women throughout their life. Education and training opportunities must be expanded, and additional support given to girls to return to school, and women to return to work and/or education to learn new skills. This is critical after COVID-19, as during the pandemic, financial pressures and caring responsibilities meant that many girls and women left education, training, and work.

Today, many people shape their lives around careers and the demands and needs of employers. Women must be free to make their own choices on careers, having children, work-life balance, or getting involved as leaders in their communities. Workplace policies must be flexible, adaptable, and accessible to maximise options for women. As sustainable development is founded on equality and human rights, women's choices must be respected and facilitated.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak.