

Minutes of the Round Table Meeting On CSW 55 Priority Theme  
Held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2011 At Northlawn Building, UN

**Opening Remarks**

The participants were welcomed to the round table discussion by Vivian Pender. The participants were informed that the meeting was in preparation for the upcoming CSW 55 on *“Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women’s equal access to full employment and decent work”*. The invited speakers at upcoming CSW 55 were from Israel, Nigeria, Bangladesh, and with Michelle Bachelet as the guest speaker.

Participants were also informed about the upcoming NGO CSW parallel event scheduled for February 2011. The meeting was in preparation for CSW 55, holding over 250 events from the Church centre over a period of two weeks. The conclusions from the meeting are to be formulated into recommendations for consideration at the CSW 55. Other available avenues for advocacy at NGO CSW include external advertisement space in the NGO CSW booklet that will be handed out free of charge at the meeting, the artisan fair, and morning briefings that will take place during the CSW 55.

In conclusion before inviting the moderator Sylvia Hordosch, she thanked the organizers of the Round table discussion.

**Moderator, Sylvia Hordosch, chief of the Gender analysis section, UN Women.**

Introduced participants to this year’s CSW 55 priority theme for the benefit of women and girls. The theme was a culmination of research work available in two reports accessible at the UN CSW website in preparation for the upcoming meeting. The reports address various issues relating to science and technology, access to training in science for girls education, and contains policy recommendations for adoption to address the problems. The proposed recommendations from CSW 55 to be adopted aimed at analyzing existing frameworks to enforce recommendations in member countries. The draft conclusions will be made available to the UN women website for review.

Introduced the invited panelists to lead the table discussion with presentations based on home country experiences in advancing women and girls rights in education.

**1<sup>st</sup> Speaker: Dr Jerobeam Shaanika**

The Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Namibia to the UN.

Introduced participants to Namibia’s effort to improve women and girls access to education for the time Namibia obtained independence in 1990 to date. Before independence girls and women had limited access to education and career choices. The pre-independence education system was aimed at making women and girls dependent on men and families for life.

The first step taken after independence was the recognition in the constitution of the gap in the education system availing access to education for girls. The ministry of gender and equality was established to address the problems faced by women and girls in education. The first recognized objective was to educate both girls and boys in the importance of education for girls and the implications for life responsibilities. Two components of education were advanced, character building and education. Provisions for educating parents too of the value and rights for girls were incorporated.

The ministry adopted the National Development plan as a guide roadmap for achieving access to education for girls. The objective included empowering women through policies, institutionalizing women and girls rights in adopted government frameworks to enable sustainable governance. The second step was the Government's adoption of affirmative action to empower disadvantaged communities with incentives especially for women and girls.

The government formulated curriculums for adoption in education that meet the needs of girls and needs of the country. They were also aimed at teaching girls to understand the needs of the country and resources available for utilizing.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Speaker, Stacey Roberts – Ohr**

Expanding Your Horizon Network, California.

Expanding your horizon was established in 1976 working with girls and teenagers in middle and high schools. The mission is to encourage young women to pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics. EYHN provides young girls with the opportunity to meet female role models working in the scientific field with the aim of motivating students to become creative thinkers ready to meet the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The work is carried out through conferences organized all over the United States and Asia, with support from volunteers. The participants in conferences include key speakers in science and technology, workshop leaders, and volunteers with an incorporated conference for parents. The conferences have served over 8,000 girls with positive results manifested through the young professionals, also serving as volunteers, meetings.

She recognized the importance of influencing girls' perspectives in science and math subjects while in middle school. The indoctrination of girls and impact of conventional beliefs that girls are not as smart as boys need changing through hands on experience and interaction with women in science and mathematics.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Speaker: Major General Shavendra Silva**

Deputy Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations

Introduced the experience of girls in Sri Lanka by recognizing women as having greater visibility in different public sectors, including state bureaucracy, the corporate sector, professional sectors, and academia, including policy and art.

After the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of a Child, the government adopted measures aimed at implementing the convention. The transformation was in the social development policies, legal and institutional measures with schooling as a main priority of action. Gender equality measures were also adopted, free education in 1945 and the Universal franchise introduced in 1931 allowing men and woman to participate in the political system. Successive investments have been made since independence, such as in 1948 with education recognized as a basic right for all in the country.

The education in Sri Lanka is state funded from kindergarten to University with government providing portions of school uniform, books and a mid day meal. The literacy rate between children aged 15 – 24 years is 95%, the ratio of girls to boys in primary education reached 99% in 2007. Sri Lank in 2006 was

rated the country with the highest literacy in South Asia, with women having 89.9% rate, the lowest being among girls and women working in plantations in Sri Lanka.

The healthcare is also majorly funded by the government, providing women free health care from birth to death. The child mortality rate is at 11.3 per 1000 births and maternal mortality rate at 39.3 per 100.000 births with 96% attended to by trained professionals. The government adopted the National plan of action for children 2010-2015 to address geographical disparities in conflict affected areas.

The judicial system advocates against violence against women and the girl child. The judges institute provides training programs for judges on abuse of women and children with emphasis on implementation and enforcement of the Domestic Violence Act.

**Emphasized steps by Representative from Namibia during discussions:** Steps adopted by Namibia to address the education problem of girls in Namibia. The government adopted affirmative action, enacted laws to address the problems like the marriage and equal opportunities act. Though free education is limited to primary school, the government adopted a safeguard against sending students out of school for nonpayment of school dues in situations where proof is shown at institutions for failure to secure the fees.

Understanding the need for girl's and women's right to education should be taught among parents, girls, boys and men to create awareness for the need to support women's education.

The meeting was closed at 3PM.