

2016 COMMISSION OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW 60) AND IFHE

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The CSW 60 brought together approximately 5,000 individuals to discuss the impact of the Sustainable Development Goals on the lives of women and girls around the world. Broadly, the conference addressed multiple, intersecting themes which stem from the need to end all violence against women and girls. Exclusion from healthcare, lack of human rights/autonomy, and structural economic dependency were among concerns addressed throughout the CSW 60. Sessions addressed the importance of 1) securing women's rights to land/property, education, reproduction, and freedom from non-communicable diseases (NCDs); 2) access to the market, finances/banking, education, and healthcare; and 3) elimination of violence, human trafficking, and discrimination of women/privileging of sons. These themes reflect much of the theoretical and practical perspectives central to the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE), and which are acknowledged through the prepared joint statement of IFHE and the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW), which I delivered to the General Discussion Session on the afternoon of Friday, March 18th, 2016. Like many peer institutions, this statement called for the need for disaggregated data, to more concretely determine the status of women around the world.

As a first-time attendee of the CSW, I attended those sessions that I believed would have the most immediate impact on the work of Home Economists around the world - those related to economic inclusion, land rights, and elimination of the threat of non-communicable diseases suffered disproportionately among women, when compared to men.

Surfacing for me throughout the 10-day conference were a myriad of interrelated questions that I think are relevant to the IFHE Membership:

1. What is the role of Home Economics in working to ensure the end to all violence against women and girls? How through Home Economics, might concerns for the quality of women's lives be promoted, addressed, improved? How is violence defined?

2. What is the role of Home Economics in working to ensure women's full inclusion in the global economy? How through Home Economics, might concerns for the economic well-being of women, children, and families be promoted, addressed, improved?
3. What is the role of Home Economics in vocational training for women to participate more fully in the economy?

Multiple sessions shared synopses of, or the need for, data related to non-communicable diseases (NCDs), directly calling for a woman's right to freedom from NCDs. Mirroring this concern is the need for reproductive health rights. This brought to the forefront the tensions among the multiple, complex understandings of families driven by cultural, religious, and political perspectives (among others), and certainly the challenges for Home Economists to work across organisations as a means to bring these rights to fruition for all women.

Of particular interest was a session sponsored by the International Labor Organisation and the International Trade Union Confederation, **"Realising Women's Access to Full Productive Employment and Decent Work through Social Dialogue and Collective Bargaining"**. The most recent data demonstrates that there has been a very limited decline in the gender gap related to employment and wages over the last 20 years (**ILO "Trends", 2016**). Presenters delineated between the black labour market (trafficking) and grey labour (a person is paid for less than hours worked), holding that grey labour impacts women frequently and is becoming the new "slave labour". Through this and other presentations, the unpaid labour of care was discussed as well, in terms of its value to any nation's economy.

This and other presentations led to reflections about how Home Economists might collaborate with other organisations to address pay and labour equality between women and men. Specifically connecting to career and technical education might be one possibility to address job opportunities and gender equality. The UNESCO-UNEVOC International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training share goals similar to IFHE, especially related to poverty elimination, social cohesion, and justice. More broadly, Home Economists can advocate and engage citizens and communities in multiple UN Women programs. **"He For She"** aims to address gender equality among platforms related to work, education, health, politics, identity, and violence.



Another opportunity for advocacy can be realised through “**Step it Up for Gender Equality 50-50 by 2030**”, which challenges governments to realise gender equality through policy, programs, and practices.

Perhaps most importantly, is that Home Economists must make the commitment to address the status of women in our daily work. How can each of us address the shortcomings related to economic inclusion, fair labour practices, health, education (among others) confronted by women in our respective regions?

Who might we collaborate with to maximise resources to make the greatest differences for women’s lives? How might we alter our approaches to education (primary, secondary, post-secondary) to shape a culture that embraces gender equity? How might the SDGs be utilised as a lens for directing our work, bringing global perspectives to bear on our local work? It is these and other questions that might challenge us to engage with others as a means for affecting positive changes for women, children, and families. Leveraging community interests and commitments, accompanied by education and leadership development are strategies regularly employed by Home Economists to improve the quality of life for individuals and families - the time to address gender equity is now - deliberately and inclusively.

Please see also the CSW 60 report “**Driving the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**” under <http://www.wunrn.org/pdf/clinching.pdf>.