



Turning the Tide on Women's Inequality:

Transforming challenges and opportunities for sustainable economic solutions for all

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE HIGH-LEVEL ONLINE MEETING

KAICIID's Women's Voices Webinar Series

Gender inequality not only impacts women and girls, but also growth and development. We must act now to reverse the trend of growing vulnerability.¹ According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2023, it will take over 135 years to achieve gender equality. Thus, the key priority of the 2024 Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) 68 was "Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective".

1 UN 2023 *Gender Snapshot Report*

One of the key objectives of the International Dialogue Centre – KAICIID is to promote and engage in interreligious and intercultural dialogue towards peaceful coexistence. In 2022, KAICIID dedicated online space to advance dialogue on SDG 5 gender equality and women empowerment through interfaith, intergenerational and intersectional dialogue. The Women's Voices webinar series brings together experts, faith leaders and grassroots activists from diverse backgrounds and regions to identify gaps and challenges in the implementation of local, regional and global commitments and to discuss innovative and collaborative approaches to these issues.



WOMEN'S VOICES WEBINAR SERIES

- » [*Women's Voices for a Sustainable Future*](#)
- » [*Women's Voices: Preserving the Past to Empower the Future*](#)
- » [*Women's Voices: As a Key to Peace*](#)
- » [*Women's Voices for a Future without Violence*](#)
- » [*Women of Faith in Science and Technology*](#)
- » [*Women in Diplomacy*](#)
- » [*Women's Voices: Spotlighting Cross-Regional Interreligious Practices towards the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls*](#)

The webinars align with the thematic priorities of key international processes, including the Sustainable Development Agenda, the UN Women, Peace and Security Agenda, and the annual CSW, with the aim of approaching these thematic priorities from an interreligious dialogue perspective. Since the project's inception, the series has turned a lens to the significant contributions that women, as well as faith communities, make in promoting gender equality in various fields such as environmental policy, economic empowerment, cultural heritage preservation, diplomacy, prevention of violence against women, and peacebuilding.

Turning the tide on women's inequality webinar and high-level online meeting

Achieving equality between women and men requires strong partnerships, together with a comprehensive understanding of the existing discrimination and disparities in the social, economic and political contexts. PaRD's dedicated Workstream on Gender Equality and Empowerment pays particular attention to increasing understanding of this crucial topic. KAICIID has acted as a co-lead of the Workstream since 2022. This collaboration has led to the mobilisation of partners for CSW side events, international observance days on women's rights, and joint publication and webinars.

In line with the Workstream priorities, in 2024, PaRD and KAICIID came together to devise a new approach for the Women's Voices series. Structured around two online events, this approach also applied a new format methodology for the webinar series by blending the traditional webinar format with a workshop approach. The collaboration between the two organizations, together with the innovative approach, successfully bridged the gap between grassroots realities and global leadership, connecting diverse voices with decision-makers to drive meaningful progress on gender equality.

ABOUT KAICIID AND PARD

The International Dialogue Centre – KAICIID is a unique intergovernmental organization born from a vision of interfaith cooperation and peace. The Centre works to create dialogue between people and communities who would not otherwise come into contact, but whose cooperation is essential to building sustainable, long-term solutions to global challenges. The inclusion of women of faith in dialogue processes and amplifying their voices is at the heart of KAICIID's programmatic work as a cross-cutting theme.

The International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD) convenes governments, multilateral entities, academia, religious and other civil society actors on a long-term basis to amplify contributions to the SDGs and make them visible at a global level. It facilitates dialogue among over 170 members, sharing of good practices and evidence, and collaboration to better inform policy and practices through recommendations and practitioners' guidelines.

Grassroots Actions to redress dynamics that hinder progress on women's empowerment

Held in April 2024, the first online event was a webinar on "*Turning the Tide on Women's Inequality: Transforming challenges and opportunities for sustainable economic solutions for all*". The webinar was framed under the subtitle "*Grassroots actions to redress dynamics that hinder progress on women's empowerment*". It highlighted the barriers that hinder women's empowerment and explored innovative examples and success stories of interreligious and intercultural grassroots initiatives supporting gender equality.

Enabling audience participation in plenary and breakout sessions allowed for a deeper examination of the intersection of poverty, institutional strengthening, and financing, through the lens of an interfaith and gender perspective. It highlighted the need for collaborative action and explored the intersectionality of loss and damage, climate financing, gender funding, youth empowerment, and hunger alleviation within the broader context of faith-based initiatives and sustainable development.

These insights informed the second event, a high-level discussion that used the grassroots outcomes to shape talking points and generate actionable recommendations.

Recommendations to redress dynamics that hinder progress on women's empowerment

In August 2024, the second of the two interlinked events was organised by KAICIID, in cooperation with the PaRD and its Gender Equality and Empowerment Workstream, as a high-level online meeting (HLOM). Bearing the same title and framed under the subtitle "*Recommendations to redress dynamics that hinder progress on women's empowerment*", the HLOM was informed by the methodology and outcomes of the April webinar, and sought to build on its recommendations through a deeper examination of the CSW68 conclusions.

Presentations by the keynote speaker and panellists reflected and expanded on the insights of the April webinar by providing best practices and examples at international, regional and national levels on transforming challenges and opportunities for sustainable economic solutions for all. These were followed by a roundtable discussion and a Q&A with audience participants.

TURNING THE TIDE ON INEQUALITY:

Transforming challenges and opportunities for sustainable economic solutions for all

WEBINAR

Keynote speaker:



Shahin Ashraf MBE, Co-Lead of PaRD Workstream on Gender Equality and Empowerment; Head of Global Advocacy and Research at Islamic Relief Worldwide

Panellists:



Alissa Wahid, KAICIID Fellow, Director Gusdurian Network Indonesia



Amina Khalid, Network4Dialogue, Initiatives for Change, UK



Anila Noor, Network4Dialogue, Founder New Women Connectors, Netherlands



Reverend Teh Francis Yai, Founder Goodness and Mercy Mission, Cameroon

HLOM

Keynote speaker:



"Mama Shamsa" Shamsa Abubakar Fadhil, Chair, Mombasa Women of Faith Network, Board Representative of the African Women of Faith Network

Panellists:



Mónica Ferro, Director, United Nations Population Fund, London Office



Joyce A. Mdachi, Country Coordinator, Global Network of Religions for Children (GNRC) Tanzania; Director, Global Religions for Children Foundation Tanzania (GRCF)

THEMES

- Interfaith dialogue and inclusive platforms
- Collaborative diplomacy and policy reform
- Capacity building and leadership development
- Sustainable economic opportunities and environmental justice

PARTICIPATION IN THE TWO ONLINE EVENTS

123 participants

2/3 female and 1/3 male

7 RELIGIONS

Baha'I, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism

from **15 regions and 41 countries**, ranging from Algeria through to China, El Salvador, Norway, Thailand, and Zambia.

All panellists and participants – a diverse mix of global experts and grassroots activists – then took part in four facilitated breakout groups guided by the themes that emerged from the April webinar. The full and meaningful participation of all attendees, together with their real-time engagement with the panellists, elevated the discussion and resulted in recommendations to redress dynamics that hinder progress on women’s empowerment, focusing particularly on a comprehensive, intersectional and sustainable approach to achieving gender equality, with women and girls at the core.



THE HLOM WAS SUPPORTED BY PARD MEMBERS, INCLUDING

States:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs

German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

United States Department of State

Regional international organization:

African Union

International FBOs and networks:

Islamic Relief Worldwide

Arigatou International

United Sikhs Initiative

The findings in this paper are based on the input from the panellists with attainable recommendations reflecting the key insights of these experts and the outcomes of the breakout sessions, in which they took an active part. The resulting recommendations, which emerged from the diverse and inclusive mix of global and grassroots experts, call for actionable plans to leverage the collective power of faith communities in addressing the disproportionate impacts of poverty, hunger, and climate change on women and girls.



“Religious actors play an important role in the formation of people’s values, norms of acceptable behaviour and life roles. Consequently, religious actors occupy a unique position to make transformational and sustained progress towards gender equality and empowerment.”²

Interfaith Dialogue and Inclusive Platforms

Interfaith dialogue unites diverse perspectives, fostering understanding, respect, and peaceful coexistence while promoting shared values like women’s rights. It empowers religious leaders – who hold a unique position of trust and influence, – actors and communities to transform attitudes and actions toward a more inclusive, equitable society.



Ethical foundations for gender equality and women’s empowerment. Encourage religious actors and leaders to identify and amplify aspects of religious doctrine that support human rights and provide ethical foundations to gender equality, taking ownership of the movement for women’s empowerment within religious institutions and throughout the faith communities.



Gender equality through inclusive dialogue. Integrate religious literacy and cultural understanding into dialogue training and facilitation. Equip faith leaders, actors and community members with dialogue tools. Emphasise women’s involvement as equal participants in these dialogues, ensuring diverse representation and positioning them as key contributors. Utilise education and dialogue tools to encourage youth, men and boys to advocate for women’s rights fostering allyship for women’s empowerment across cultural, intergenerational and religious lines.



Social change through inclusive interfaith platforms and networks. Enhance interfaith collaboration through interfaith dialogue platforms and networks, – as spaces of knowledge-sharing and exchange of good practices – bringing together diverse stakeholders to address social inequalities and drive social change. Establish the

² PaRD, *Gender Equality and Empowerment*

platforms as safe spaces where women of different faiths and backgrounds can express their voices and amplify their successes, alongside and supported by men and religious leaders.



“Village of support” – intersectional women’s networks within and across faith communities. Establish women’s networks and chapters within and across faith communities, incorporating intersectional perspectives to create a “village of support” where women can connect, collaborate, share resources, and nurture each other’s growth in leadership, economic empowerment, and engagement in political processes. These inclusive platforms foster a collaborative ecosystem that advances gender equality and uplifts women across all sectors.

Collaborative Advocacy and Policy Reform

Women’s diverse experiences – shaped by age, religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic factors – must be acknowledged in all legislation, policymaking and programming. Accurate, disaggregated data provides insights into the root challenges of gender inequality. Addressing this intersectionality is key to the creation of targeted, impactful policies.

Legislation and policymaking that protect women from discrimination, promoting a safe environment and enabling women’s agency is essential for effective engagement in democratic governance. Legal and policy frameworks are critical in going beyond defining women as just victims, but also as active agents of change, facilitating their involvement in all levels of governance and policymaking. This includes advocating for the domestication and localisation of key frameworks – such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325,³ which urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts – and empowering women at the grassroots level to understand and lead in their implementation.



Multi-sector partnerships for gender equality and policy advocacy. Foster partnerships across faith actors and communities, the private sector, all levels of government and authorities, and civil society to build a united front on gender equality by advancing justice, healthcare, reproductive rights, women’s empowerment through targeted advocacy and resource allocation. Bridge the gap between policymakers and faith communities. Mobilise faith leaders and communities to drive social and policy change, leveraging

³ UN Security Council, *Resolution 1325 (2000)*, [S/RES/1325 \(2000\)](#) and the broader *Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda*.

their influence to advocate for government accountability on gender equality. Engage and strengthen the capacity of men, youth, and religious leaders as partners and allies in promoting gender equality in policymaking.



Investing in champions of gender-inclusive advocacy. Invest in the leadership skills of women (starting at the grassroots level), by creating safe, inclusive spaces for them to express and advocate for shared goals, while preparing them for governance roles and policy advocacy. Promote grassroots champions – women and men – of women’s rights, training and empowering them to engage with local authorities and advocate for gender-inclusive policies that reflect the diverse realities of women’s lives.



Promoting and financing gender-inclusive policies. Promote sustainable economic solutions through gender-inclusive policies, annual budgeting provisions, and the restructuring of financial frameworks to ensure equal opportunities and dedicated funding for women’s rights initiatives.



Addressing root causes of gender inequality through disaggregated data-driven policies. Establish mechanisms for the collection and analysis of accurate, disaggregated gender-specific data across faith groups, governments, the private sector, and civil society to provide critical insights into systemic barriers and inform targeted, implementable policies. Promote participatory research, especially by women of faith to add to the identification of root causes of gender inequality. Develop tools for gender-sensitive analysis, and guide reforms such as gender quotas in governance and electoral systems to increase women’s representation and participation.

Capacity Building and Leadership Development

Effective capacity building, through shared investment in gender equality, requires strong partnerships across faith groups, the private sector, governments, and civil society. Faith-based initiatives have significant potential to drive societal change by their ability to engage large, cross-border communities. The private sector also plays a vital role in fostering safe, inclusive environments and promoting opportunities that uplift women’s rights. Men and boys are equally important as partners, allies and champions, in achieving gender equality by participating in capacity-building programmes focused on women’s rights, fostering allyship for women’s empowerment, and advancing shared leadership and economic opportunities.



Capacity-building partnerships towards inclusive program-

ming. Collaborate with faith actors, governments, the private sector, and civil society to design and implement capacity-building programmes that address the diverse needs of women, particularly those in underserved or vulnerable groups, or conflict-affected situations. These programmes should provide sustainable economic resources, such as land, as well as education and training in financial literacy, professional, and business skills.



Women's empowerment and (faith) leadership through education and training opportunities.

Develop and promote educational and training programmes with an interfaith perspective to build capacity, enhance leadership skills, and empower women and girls to exercise their agency. These programmes should foster understanding, diversity, and gender equality, engaging faith actors as educators and role models in creating inclusive environments that support equal participation of women in leadership within religious institutions and their communities.



Resource and technical support of women's empowerment and leadership.

Collaborate with and support women-led organizations through the provision of resources and training to enhance women's leadership skills and empower them to take on leadership roles. Leverage connections and mutual aid to provide access to resources, mentorship, peer networks, and knowledge-sharing platforms for women in and aspiring for leadership and governance roles.

Sustainable Economic Opportunities and Environmental Justice

Addressing gender-specific needs in climate adaptation and fostering women's participation in sustainable practices is both a moral and economic imperative. Women face disproportionate impacts from conflict and climate change, further delaying equality. Investing in education – spanning financial literacy, professional training, and environmental awareness – empowers women to lead sustainable initiatives and achieve sustainable financial independence. Equitable family roles, taught from childhood, can dismantle stereotypes about unpaid domestic work, enhance mutual understanding, and further facilitate women's opportunities for – not only access to – education and sustainable economic empowerment. This holistic approach strengthens families, boosts women's economic participation, and paves the way for enduring social and economic progress.



Partnerships and programming for sustainable economic development.

Cultivate partnerships among governments, the private sector, civil society, and faith communities to foster investment

in financially sustainable opportunities for women. Promote financial support systems and advocate for women's economic participation, ensuring access to resources, networks, and environmentally-conscious initiatives that empower them to achieve financial independence in safe, inclusive environments. Develop programmes that provide financial literacy training, support for small-scale business development, and exposure to diverse career paths through initiatives like job shadowing and fellowships. Support women-led economic initiatives, emphasising long-term sustainability and community benefits.



Fostering equality through shared roles and youth education. Create learning spaces where women and men can engage together, fostering mutual understanding of gender roles and promoting sustainable equality through shared economic opportunities and domestic responsibilities. Introduce youth education programs to dismantle stereotypes around unpaid domestic work, instilling values of equity and respect from an early age. This cultural shift strengthens families and communities, enabling women to fully benefit from education and economic opportunities while driving enduring social and economic progress.



Investment in women-led sustainability and environmental justice initiatives. Invest in women-led sustainability projects and advocate for equitable environmental policies that integrate environmental justice with gender equality. Educate communities on the links between environmental stewardship, economic sustainability, and gender equality, highlighting women's critical role in these efforts. Promote community-wide commitment to sustainability by addressing women's intersectional needs and empowering their contributions to environmental justice initiatives.

CONCLUSION

The outcomes of the HLOM could only be arrived at through the key insights and contributions of the experts, panellists and participants. The resulting recommendations emphasise fostering ethical foundations for gender equality through inclusive dialogue, interfaith dialogue platforms, and intersectional women's networks that provide supportive environments for gender equality. They highlight the importance of building multi-sector partnerships, investing in gender-inclusive advocacy, and addressing inequalities through data-driven policies as critical steps toward systemic change.

Further, the recommendations call for strengthening women's empowerment through inclusive capacity-building programmes, education and leadership training, and resource support. Finally, they advocate for social transformation and investment in women-led environmental initiatives, which play an essential role in driving sustainable economic development and ensuring lasting progress and equality.

The HLOM recommendations reinforce the path towards accelerating gender equality and women's empowerment. In so doing, they serve as a basis for elaboration at local, regional and multinational events, such as the CSW69 and its side events celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the Beijing process.⁴

4 UN Women, [CSW69/Beijing+30 \(2025\)](#)