ACT Alliance Key Advocacy Messages – UNCSW67

There are 5 key areas for ACT's advocacy at CSW, which relate to the submitted statement to the UN, and connect with thematic priorities for the Gender Programme. The aim is to consistently use this messaging to influence the Agreed Conclusions.

1. Faith, Human Rights and Countering Pushbacks

- Our commitment to gender equality and justice is based on our shared belief in human dignity and that every individual has the same inalienable value and fundamental rights.

- Religious leaders and faith actors can be strategic partners and powerful forces, in both preventive and responsive measures, to counter rising fundamentalisms and push back against the push back on gender equality.

- Worldwide, more than eight in ten people identify with a religious group.

Faith, Human Rights, and Countering Pushbacks Advocacy Asks:

- Invest in innovative partnerships with faith actors to challenge destructive social norms.
- Work with faith actors to counter economic, political and religious fundamentalisms. In particular, in policy-making spaces, where women's, girls' and LGBTQI+ persons' rights and SRHR are being blocked.

2. Digital gender divide

- Closing the digital gender divide is essential for reaching gender equality and sustainable development. The digital gender divide is not only a technology issue: it is an economic, social and cultural issue that requires a comprehensive, multi-sectoral and coherent approach in addressing structural factors. Digital transformation is increasingly driving business and the world of work.

- The unequal participation in the digital age is further excluding the most marginalised, who are often women and girls.

- Research shows that women use technological solutions to a lesser degree than men and even less women utilise more advanced digital applications. This is a result of social and cultural norms, lack of affordability, literacy and technological infrastructure, particularly in rural communities.

- Women face barriers to education in Information Communications and Technology, and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Most developers of technological solutions do not involve women in the development, design, testing and roll out of new innovations.

- Lack of women and other under-represented groups in positions of technological development is impeding their access and use of technology. Without decisive action, the digital divide will be the new face of inequality.

- Remove barriers to women's access and use of digital technologies, with a focus on availability, affordability, safety and security of digital technologies, services and connectivity.

- Ensure the integration of inclusive and gender-responsive approaches in the design, use and development of digital technologies, taking into account intersectional factors of exclusion, such as age, socioeconomic status and educational background.

- Promote the inclusion of women and girls in all their diversity in the digital transformation, not only as users but also as creators of technology and facilitate their advancement to visible leadership and decision-making roles.

- Invest in the development of digital skills and digital literacy of girls and women in education.

- Work with faith actors as strategic partners to address gender inequalities and harmful social norms that restrict women and girls from equally participating in the digital sphere.

3. Innovation:

- Access to internet and digital solutions provide opportunities to promote the fulfilment of women's human rights and economic empowerment, for example, through opening avenues for engaging with the public, expanding access to education and information about women's human rights and comprehensive sexuality education.

- Faith actors have long campaigned against gender-based violence, and in this work digital solutions have proved to be important tools to communicate with communities, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Innovative solutions have, for instance, enabled survivors to report violence to the police via video link, making it possible to report such crimes while in secure shelters. Faith actors, women's organisations and other civil society actors have also used digital solutions for information campaigns about gender-based violence and women's human rights, as well as established support groups.

- Technology has the potential to facilitate financial inclusion for the most excluded populations. The growth of technology has enabled financial inclusion through mobile money services and the digitalisation of self-help groups. In Uganda the digitalisation of Voluntary Savings and Loan Associations has enabled local communities, mostly women who are unserved by formal financial institutions, to solve challenges related to liquidity, access formal financial services and have digital financial footprints.

- Technological solutions are used to address intersecting global challenges, for example, climate and gender justice. In Bali, women entrepreneurs have managed to mitigate the recurring problem of flooding due to enormous amounts of waste ending up in streams

and rivers, by establishing a waste bank. The waste bank uses a mobile application that enable women from the community to register and sell collected waste, which is processed and sold to companies that recycle plastic waste to use for their products.

- Youth play a key role in innovation and achieving gender justice, for example, by strengthening social movements, shaping policies, and implementing innovative solutions.

Innovation Advocacy Asks:

- Ensure the integration of inclusive and gender-responsive approaches in the design, use and development of digital technologies, taking into account intersectional factors of exclusion.
- Promote the inclusion of women and girls in all their diversity in the digital transformation, not only as users but also as creators of technology and facilitate their advancement to visible leadership and decision-making roles.
- Work with faith actors as strategic partners to address gender inequalities and harmful social norms that restrict women and girls from equally participating in the digital sphere.
- Recognise the role of youth in the creation of new technologies and innovation.

4. Online gender-based violence and civic space

- Digital technologies are a double-edged sword, that both enable and restrict civic space. In recent years, we have seen how physical violence have been transferred or extended to online spaces exposing women and girls in all their diversity to a cycle of violence.

- Violence against women offline and online is a manifestation of systemic marginalisation of women throughout society. Women human rights defenders and women political actors are particularly targeted.

- Digitalisation makes it easier for states to block people's rights to information, censor opinions, spy on and repress its citizens, with a disproportionate impact on the rights of women and other marginalised groups. Moreover, with the development of new digital tools, such as biometric surveillance and with little/no accountability for private tech corporations, human rights are constantly under threat. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights endorsed in 2011 and the 2019 UN Gender Guidance on Business and Human Rights have been important steps in reinforcing that human rights frameworks and principles apply to business entities but have their limitations.

- There is a risk that data collected by tech and financial companies could be used in investigations and court cases to enforce anti-SRHR laws. This poses significant risks to peoples' right to privacy, right to information, and human right defenders' and civil societies' ability to organise.

- Address violence against women and girls in digital space. Protect and support those that are targeted online, in particular women human rights defenders including faith leaders speaking out for gender justice.
- Adopt and enforce policies and laws that prevent and protect women and girls in all their diversity from all forms of online violence and safeguard the online privacy of women and girls in all their diversity.
- Work with faith actors as strategic partners to address gender inequalities and harmful social norms that restrict women and girls from equally participating in the digital sphere.
- Ensure that ethical frameworks for corporations involved in digital technologies are in line with international human rights law obligations, including principles of equality and non-discrimination.
- Promote inclusive dialogue with local civil society and create safe spaces for conversations where especially women, girls, youth, LGBTIQ+ persons, migrants, and indigenous or religious minorities, can participate and set the agenda for strategies.
- Ensure a gender transformative and people-centred approach that puts people at the heart of the digital transformation – driven by people's needs, human rights and intersectional challenges - is adopted in the Global Digital Compact and other policy documents.

5. Patriarchy, Masculinities and Social Norms

- Patriarchal norms and unjust structures of power (systematic, institutional, governmental, cultural) exacerbate access to the internet and digital technologies.

- Toxic masculinities legitimise men and boys' dominant position within society, making the planet, and women and girls, subordinate to them. This impacts everyone, and negatively shapes social structures.

- Gender differences and inequalities are breeding discrimination, exclusion, and violence, especially for women, but also for men who are not fitting in the hegemonic models of masculinities.

- Deeply entrenched patriarchal social norms and socioeconomic conditions shape the lived realities and increase climate vulnerabilities for women and girls in all their diversity.

Patriarchy, Masculinities and Social Norms Advocacy Asks:

- Engage men and boys, including faith actors, in transforming masculinities, and shaping new social norms, which value gender justice.
- Create spaces for men and boys, in all their diversity, explore identities and practises that break away from the restrictive patriarchal models.