



EVENT IN BRIEF



CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT ANTICIPATE TO TRANSFORM

The Ethiopian President Calls for Collaboration to Make Maximum Impact

Forum participants (above) with the Ethiopian president, Her Excellency Ambassador Sahlework Zewdie and Her Excellency Yalem Tsegay, the Minister for the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. (Photo © UN Women/Fikerte Abebe)

The national forum for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working on gender equality and women's empowerment was held on 22 April 2019 in Addis Ababa at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. The forum aimed at creating a platform for CSOs working on gender and women's rights to jointly identify opportunities, challenges, and strategies to transit from a decade long restrictive legislation on CSOs and on how to effectively use the new CSOs proclamation expected to transform the civil society landscape. Organized by the office of the Ethiopian President, Her Excellency Ambassador Sahlework Zewdie in collaboration with UN Women's Ethiopia Country Office, the forum brought together around 200 participants from Civil Society Organizations working in different regions.

The one-day forum financially supported by UN Women with a key message '**Collaboration for Maximum Impact**' was one of the actions that the President has been taking to work on women issues as a priority. The forum stressed on open and collaborative working relationship among CSOs and their partners, a strategically aligned implementation of gender equality programs, and on creating a thriving civil society space with strong national networks. In her opening remarks H.E. Ambassador Sahlework Zewdie applauded the CSOs steady effort to make a difference in women's lives despite the restrictions and advised the participants to effectively use the new opportunity through collaboration,



Her Excellency Ambassador Sahlework Zewdie. (Photo © UN Women/Fikerte Abebe)

"Assurance of gender equality and women's empowerment is the responsibility of all not only in Ethiopia but also globally as the Sustainable Development Goals are inclusive of communities and non-governmental organizations. Lack of networking and effective communication among CSOs are the major gaps identified in the past. This triggered inadequate knowledge creation and sharing. As a result, competition dominated. The main message of the forum is 'collaboration for maximum impact' and if we do not collaborate, the new opportunity, may pass without making effective results on gender equality and women's empowerment."



Her Excellency Yalem Tsegay, the Minister for the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth. (Photo © UN Women/Fikerte Abebe)

Her Excellency Yalem Tsegay, the Minister for the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth expressed her gratitude to the President for undertaking the first of its kind initiative of bringing the CSOs together and promoting a collaborative effort for maximum result. She also emphasized on the determination of her Ministry to support CSOs,

“Women’s challenges are multiple. Initiatives designed by individual CSOs become more effective when collaborated. I strongly believe that the joint initiative by the president will bring a change for better. the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth is ready to strategically and collaboratively work with the CSOs than ever before.”

Mr. Jima Dilbo, the Director General of the Agency for Civil Society Organizations in his part presented the new CSOs law focusing on the specifics, which aim to improve the gender equality and women’s empowerment works by CSOs, as well as on the roles that the CSOs and the Government will be playing through collaboration,



Mr. Jima Dilbo (right), the Director General of the Agency for Civil Society Organizations. (Photo © UN Women/Fikerte Abebe)

“As the country is in transformation and collaboration being the key strategic approach for the benefit of the nation, the Government believes CSOs have significant roles to play in the country’s development, democracy, and peace. One of the main reasons for the new CSOs law on gender equality and women’s empowerment is to create and enhance collaboration such as in the development of policies and related legal frameworks to ensure sustained and impactful results.”

UN Women’s National Programme Coordinator, Mrs. Yelfigne Abegaz, advised on the need to foster partnership and coordinate fragmented initiatives to maximize impact allowing to reach a larger number of women and girls whose rights are violated and devoid of basic needs and facilities,



(First from right) UN Women’s National Programme Coordinator, Mrs. Yelfigne Abegaz. Photo © office of the president)

“It is important to bear in mind that we are accountable to our women and girls who are left behind due to discrimination, injustice and stereotype that left half of the population in a vicious cycle of poverty. This is the time to make good use of the enabling environment, to efficiently and effectively utilize resources, as well as to join hands, minds and hearts. In today’s world, evidence-based dialogue and negotiations is the key to influence valuable decisions on gender equality and women’s empowerment.”



Forum participants in small groups discussions. (Photo © UN Women/Fikerte Abebe)

In 2019, the Ethiopian Parliament approved a new law governing Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to transform the past decade long restrictive legal administration on civil society sector in the country. The new proclamation no. 1113/2019 is expected to thrive the sector. CSOs working on gender equality and women’s empowerment are among the key sub-sectors to benefit from the improved enabling environment. By collaborating with the President’s office to organize the forum, UN Women became among the first supporting the new opportunities for CSOs in Ethiopia in general and gender equality and women’s empowerment sector in particular.