



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
December 2022

Original: Language

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-seventh session

6-17 March 2023

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by YWCA of Japan, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

Statement

The YWCA of Japan has begun working on the improvement of the status of women and their empowerment in the grassroots level immediately after its foundation in 1905, including submitting a report to ILO regarding the situation on rural women and women working in factories. Today, the YWCA of Japan continues to work with 24 local associations, responding to women's needs on the ground.

Recently under the COVID-19 crisis, it has encouraged nation-wide collaboration between women using online platforms, creating safe spaces for young women and enabling international networking. We wish to present a few of the issues we found during the process, in relation to the themes of CSW 67:

- While access to ICT means is becoming increasingly crucial in all parts of society, there is a growing gap between those who are capable of utilizing technology and those who are not. Especially, as communication means and infrastructure rapidly shift to ICT devices, there are situations where those belonging to generations that are less accustomed to the use of such tools are left behind, and there is a need for public investment and support so that all people can communicate and collaborate on the same platform.

- Moreover, with the decrease in the opportunities to access in-person communication and support, there is a new risk of social isolation of women as well as concerns that information, environment and experiences available to girls and children during their development phase may become more limited due to shifts to virtual methods. There is a need to ensure that social resources provided in non-ICT platforms are not compromised.

- With the widespread internet use, an increased risk of exposure to harmful discourses, sexual exploitation and harassment is experienced in Japan as well. An environment where girls and children are safe to grow must be ensured.

- During our work on disaster survivor support, discriminatory social structures have become visible, where women are disproportionately affected by disasters, and where energy plants providing electricity to urban areas tend to be built in suburban and rural areas, exposing residents to danger and damages at times of disaster. Japan is currently seeing attempts for restarts and constructions of nuclear power plants, which pose serious threats to women's rights to health including SRHR and wellbeing. It is crucial that women are adequately represented in decision-making on this matter.

- Military bases are also often located in non-urban areas. Within the current global situation where political confrontation and security threats are spoken of in increasingly strong terms, Okinawa is seeing further militarization and concentration of burden, furthering the risks faced by women and children. Voices of local residents including women must not be ignored. Such issues represent the situation where patriarchy and discrimination directly expose human life to danger, demonstrating the urgent need for change.

- Patriarchal gender stereotypes tend to be more distinctly present in rural communities. As a result, an increasing number of young women are moving to urban areas. There are cases where local municipalities are finding out that young women who move out are clearly less likely to return to their original communities later in life compared to young men, and are launching actions to eliminate gender gap. It is important to tackle gender

inequality for the realization of an ideal community where all people are respected, instead of regarding such measures as a means of alleviating the aging society.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit this statement and look forward to working with the non-governmental organization community, the Commission on the Status of Women, and the United Nations Economic and Social Council to advance these critical issues.