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Our March Newsletter is here!



Gfod at the 68th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), New York

The 2024 Commission on the Status of Woman took place for two weeks in March 2024. GFoD's active participation was marked by crucial side-events, interventions, and meetings with high level decision makers, governments and civil society colleagues as well as other key actors, emphasizing #Gender #Poverty #Finance of CDWD in line with this year's theme.

Building discourse: Side-Events to #CSW68



Our official side-event co-organized with UN Women, UNFPA and Permanent Mission of Nepal shed light on critical issues and strategies

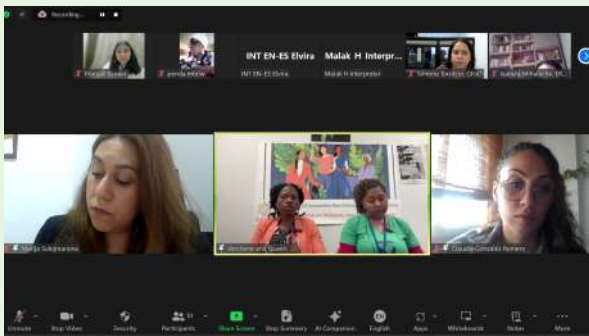
GFoD held its first official side event during Commission on the Status of Women on 13th March. The event was co-organized with UN Women, UNFPA and the Permanent Mission of Nepal with various high level figures in attendance. With online streaming system fully working, over a hundred people were able to attend the event in total.

Key Highlights: Mr. Suman R Aryal, Secretary, Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen, Govt. of Nepal made a powerful statement reiterating Nepal's support to the CDWD cause; Julia Bunting of UNFPA stressed on the need to include the issue of DWD in their ongoing work; and Marie-Elena John from UN Women highlighted the need to develop an intersectional racial justice lens to change harmful norms and practices. Strong CDWD Women voices reverberated through a vibrant panel represented by Beena Pallical, Simona Torotcoi, Queen Bisseng and Vercilene Kalunga - who highlighted various ways in which CDWD women are impacted at the intersections of descent, work and gender; and put forth recommendations to protect their rights.

Major outcomes: In addition to increased awareness towards CDWD issue and the intersections of gender and poverty for more than a hundred people who joined this event in person and remotely combined, some of the major outcomes of the event were: UN Women racial justice division looking to work on a collaborative policy brief, the process also pushed for a workshop with UN Women, and follow up meeting with WDEF (Women in Digital Empowerment Fund).

[Watch here](#)

In Collaboration with three Roma-led organizations, virtual side-event explored the Gendered aspect of Poverty among DWD communities across the globe



[Watch here](#)

On the 15th March, GFoD, in collaboration with three Roma led organizations - ERGO Network, Romalítico and Feminist Collective of Romani Gender Experts, we organized a Virtual NGO CSW side event, titled 'Feminization of Poverty: How Does Poverty Affect the lives of Women Discriminated on Work and Descent'.

Key highlights: Keynote speech Prof. Penda Mbow from Senegal shed light on CDWD Women working in leather, butchery and facing sustainable poverty due to lack of access to resources, forced/early marriages that hinder education, which often force women into prostitution. Panel - represented by Claudia Gonzalez, Queen Bisseng, Vercilene Dias, Logeswary Ponniah, moderated by Marija Sulejmanova, focused on challenges faced by women in various communities, including poverty, discrimination, lack of infrastructure; and explored possible solutions.

Major outcomes: Some further outcomes are building of network through presence of new organizations and community representatives, informal chats and networking before and after events allows to strengthen our presence in Europe.

CDWD Women from Africa, Latin America, Europe and Asia take center-stage to voice their issues and Good practices

The CSW NGO side-event titled "Building Bridges among Women Discriminated Against on Work and Descent" organized by GFoD and partner organizations which took place on the 20th March was another landmark event with the panel led by women leaders from various DWD communities such as Roma, Quilombola, Dalit, Palenque etc.

Key Highlights and outcomes: The significant results achieved through this well-attended event were capacity building of young CDWD women leaders, building of knowledge base on the strategies and good practices - shared during the event, solidarities forged with various women leaders and women led organizations which, together, explored the ways in which these discussions and actions at the United Nations, New York will ensure impact at the regional, national and local contexts. Some main points discussed during the event were Challenges of Marginalized African communities, Gender and descent based discrimination in South Asia and Brazil, Discrimination against Roma communities and Inclusion challenges, Improving working conditions for women vendors, prioritizing their health and safety, political inclusion, support of faith-based organizations etc.



[Watch here](#)

Reporting the Realities and Recommendations



Reporting experiences of poverty and discrimination among CDWD women and stating our demands

Ahead of 68th CSW, GfOD worked on a research report highlighting Poverty and Discrimination among CDWD women. The report stressed the situation of CDWD women and girls in Asia, Europe, Africa and Latin America, who face heightened marginalization due to cross-cutting, intersectional discrimination as a consequence of their CDWD identity and their gender - leading them to extreme poverty, and forcing them to engage in waste collection, sex work, and begging. Women from CDWD are often pushed into the vicious cycle of sexual slavery. Some recommendations to CSW involve: Recognition of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent, creation of UN special mechanisms such as a Special Rapporteur or Working Group mandate, for member states to use the opportunity and platform provided by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to make recommendations that address rights violations faced by CDWD women, girls and gender-diverse people and more.

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Release of Survey Report exploring the situation of Roma Women in Europe

During the virtual NGO CSW side-event on 15th March, survey report on the situation of Roma women in Europe done with NGO representatives and experts, in collaboration with ERGO Network, Romolitico, Institute for Roma Policy Analysis and Feminist Collective of Romani gender experts, was released by Isabela Mihalache, Sr. Advocacy Officer at ERGO Network. The survey, conducted from November 2022 to February 2023, found that less than 30% of NGOs are dedicated exclusively to Roma women, indicating a need for greater representation. Isabela highlighted the intersectional discrimination faced by Roma women due to their ethnicity, work, class, gender, and more. She emphasized that Roma women are often excluded from decision-making processes and experience discrimination and abuse. She highlighted the need for capacity building and microfinance programs to support Roma women in the informal labor market, and discussed policy recommendations, including recognizing and addressing structural racism, investing in civil society and policy development, and ensuring accountability and monitoring to ensure governments meet their commitments to Roma inclusion and gender equality.

[To be launched online](#)

Missions and Meetings

Permanent Missions and Government Meetings



Meeting with Sri Lankan ambassador to the UN

A small GFOD delegation recounted the experience of CDWD in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe to H.E. Ambassador of Sri Lanka to the UN in New York, Mr. Mohan Pieris, who showed overwhelming support for those left behind. Education and poverty eradication were identified as key areas of work which his country will continue to champion. In the meeting, Ambassador of Sri Lanka expressed his wish to support CDWD and recognizing this form of social stratification - which currently remains unrecognized in Sri Lanka. Together, we explored further opportunities to strengthen the cause - possibly through a UN envoy, collaborations at the coming HLPF, ways to recognize CDWD in Sri Lanka and more.



Meeting with the Permanent Mission of Romania

GFoD delegation consisting of Beena Pallical, Simona Torotcoi, Queen Bisseng, Sonu Das, Patricia De Costa and Ana met with Ioana Mihaila and Andrea Mocanu from the Romanian mission. GFoD delegates shared in detail about the CDWD issues, stressing the discussion on the situation of Roma community in Europe. It was a productive meeting that discussed the possible opportunities to engage with the Mission in promoting discussions on the cause in EU through 112th Session of the International Labor Conference, Summit of the future and more.



Meeting with Dr. Coulibaly K. Tiekoura, from the Ministry of the Family, Women, and Children of Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)

GFoD delegation of women from CDWD communities in Europe, Latin America and Brazil met with Dr. Coulibaly K. Tiekoura, from the Ministry of the Family, Women, and Children of Côte d'Ivoire, and exchanged views on Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (CDWD).



Meeting with the Permanent Mission of Mexico - Mr. Luis Elizondo

The meeting with the Permanent Mission representative of Mexico, Mr. Luis Elizondo with the presence of TIP Board member, Lucy Atkin was another productive exchange. The discussion focused on the issue of Discrimination based on Work & Descent, with Mr. Elizondo seeking to know about the significance of the term 'CDWD', its distinctiveness from the category of 'Minority', and the ways this issue could be understood in Mexico.



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Civil Society Meeting at the PM of Brazil

Several civil society actors held a meeting with the Permanent Mission of Brazil. CDWD issue was highlighted by our delegation. Civil society organizations put forth their issues and possible solutions. The CSO actors also pointed out to the lack of involvement of civil society in the draft outcome documents in Brazil and urged the government for greater involvement.

UN and Civil Society Networking



An informal workshop with UN Women on digging deeper into the challenges of CDWD Women

Led by Marie-Elena John, Senior Racial Justice Lead, UN Woman welcomed the GFOD delegation and introduced the history and creation of the Racial Justice and Equality Unit at UN Woman. The meeting with the racial justice unit presented a unique opportunity to work together and explore ways to address intersections of DWD while being gender responsive. The next several steps may include:

- Mapping on what is there already – tools, guidance notes etc.
- Collection of documents available on the communities
- Highlighting gaps and how to fill them with further field-work by GFOD

Meeting with Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament

This committee hearing gave GFOD delegates a chance to raise the undocumented phenomenon of CDWD in the context of the European Parliament. It focused on how to sensitize committee members to work on establishing a framework to recognize this largest invisibilized group today, and how this committee could call for a hearing or make recommendations which call for recognition and impact decisions by the European Commission for Europe and the world.



Experience sharing between GFoD delegates and DRUM (Desis Rising Up & Moving)

GFoD Delegates had a productive meeting with the members of 'Desis Rising Up and Moving' (DRUM), an organization working with immigrants from South Asia and Indo-Caribbean regions. The meeting involved sharing of each group's experiences, as well as common struggles, followed by questions and answers - contributing to shared solidarities, bringing the topic of Discrimination based on Work and Descent to the table.



Exploring future pathways through MGoS Summit of the Future

As a coordinating partner of the Stakeholder Group of Communities Discriminated on Work and Decent (SG-CDWD), TIP/GFOD facilitated the engagement of CDWD in line with General Assembly resolution 67/290 of the Major Group and other Stakeholders (MGOS).

During the meeting, crucial elements were discussed related to the final outcome agreement called "Pact of the Future", its annexes, and how to set an ambitious and targeted approach to ensure CDWD voices are heard - among other things.



Engaging with Women in the Digital Economy Fund (WiDEF) and UN Women to act on CDWD women's digital inclusion

This informal meeting with the advisor of the gender empowerment fund took place on March 15, 2024 in the office of UN woman with the objective to explore how TIP -GFoD can deepen and expand their work to ensure digital access to CDWD women left behind. The meeting continued with a brief general discussion on the gap between communities from most marginalized areas and technology - and how

TIP-GFoD can participate in addressing that through Women in Digital Economy Fund.

Key discussions took place during the Board Meeting with The Inclusivity Project



GFoD delegation met with the board members of The Inclusivity Project on 17th March in New York. The meeting saw key engagements on the strategic document, as well as the presentation of the Annual Plan. Key highlights involved discussions on the vision of GFoD and its future course of action - where Network Partner representatives present in the delegation, put forth their point of views.

Looking back at successes, highlights and gaps: CSW Review Meeting

Towards the end of CSW week, on 19th of March, GFoD held a review Meeting with the presence of GFoD delegates from eight countries. TIP Board Chair, Ms. Lucy Atkin, who also participated in the CSW in support of CDWD women, was present. The CSW GFoD team had a very interesting review of CSW participation while particularly looking at the collation of harvesting the outcomes of the participation. The meeting went over the Program, Logistics, Networking, and Gaps. It was noted that the engagement has been extremely productive and successful, with a resolution to work on filling the existing gaps.



CDWD Women Voices at 68th CSW: Experiences & Takeaways



"I return to my country with a bag full of knowledge and a desire to fight even harder for our Quilombola women. This way I will continue to improve my work in my organization CONAQ, my activism work, defense, better promote contacts of member states and the governments of my country, expand my contact networks, to implement the conclusions agreed in the CSW and keep myself better informed of my own country's official preparations." (translated from Portuguese)

- Patricia De Costa, National Coordination for the Articulation of Black Rural Quilombola Communities (CONAQ)

"Being a part of this year's CSW has made me realize the significance of such platforms that I find currently missing in my country – Bangladesh. Equipped with knowledge, strategies and solidarities, I have come back to my country with an ignited fire to create such spaces here, that act as a platform to women from the marginalized communities to raise their voices, to lead the movement; and to also enter the already existing spaces with much vigor to bring the voices of CDWD – the most marginalized – to the forefront of all discussion."

- Sonu Rani Das, Women Editor, Bangladesh Dalit and Excluded Rights Movement (BDERM)



"CDWD Women in Africa are known to be the most excluded, marginalized, stigmatized, segregated, and discriminated against at every level... The takeaway I bring to CDWD women in Africa is to assure them that there is a growing sense of solidarity and support towards them from other communities globally: women from Dalit, Roma, Quilombola, and Palenque communities, as well as support from permanent missions and other stakeholders."

- Queen Bisseng, UN Specialist at Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent (GFoD)

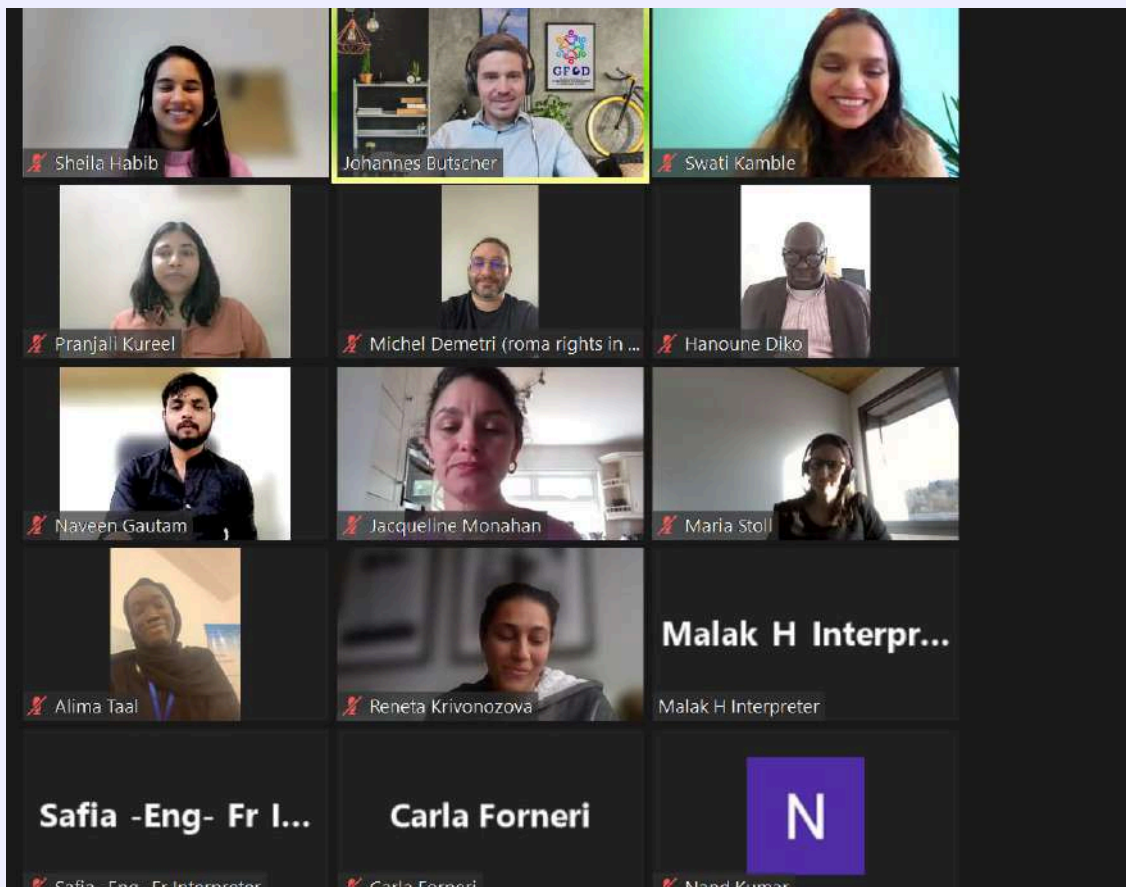
"This year, we have taken a much stronger approach: we have organized 3 events, we have met with civil society representatives, permanent missions, governmental representatives, and we brought evidence and documentation on the situation of CDWD women. This year CSW provided a unique opportunity to raise the issues of Roma women across Europe and ensure the visibility of the key challenges Roma communities face. This year CSW established an unprecedented development by having women from CDWD communities presenting in an official side event! I am hopeful that this will continue, since Permanent Missions representatives and UN agencies showed their openness to work on addressing CDWD concerns and advance our rights!"

- Dr. Simona Torotcoi, European Roma Grassroots Organizations (ERGO) Network



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Side-event to UNECE Regional Forum on Sustainable Development Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2024



The UNECE Regional Forum for Sustainable Development 2024 took place in Geneva on 13 and 14 March 2024, preceded by pre-meetings on 11 and 12 March. GfOD successfully hosted a virtual side event to RFSD on 11th March, 2024 -bringing together a panel to address issues related to 'Poverty and Discrimination among Roma and CDWD diaspora communities' in Europe. Moderated by Johannes Butscher of GfOD, the panel saw some strong voices such as Sheila Habib from European Anti-Poverty Network; Diko Hanoune from Association of Mauritanian Haratins in Europe, Swati Kamble - Independent Consultant and Dalit Woman activist, India and Me; and Kapitolina Kondur from ICO Chirli. The panelists brought forth the various experiences of poverty and discrimination faced by the Roma and CDWD diaspora communities in Europe, and reflected on the tools and opportunities for CDWD communities in Europe to escape poverty. For instance, Sheila Habib stressed on Impact Assessment as a significant tool, and the need to tackle segregation faced by the Roma Communities while especially ensuring access to justice and healthcare. Diko Hanoune threw light on the divisions amongst the black community based on caste-like structures, and to tackle it, he posed that Rule of Law, as opposed to dictatorship, is the first tool; while the second tool is our fight to have a UN Resolution that acknowledges this issue and protects the rights of the impacted. Along the same vein, Swati Kamble noted that South Asian communities that were formerly colonized are not a monolithic whole as they exist with caste-based segregations within this community. She stressed the need for policies to take this reality into account and address it.

[Watch here](#)

News from our Partners

ERGO Network releases Joint Statement with 9 Human Rights Organization

Our Network partner, European Roma Grassroots Organizations (ERGO) Network, together with 9 human rights organisations, calls on the European Union's leaders and European Institutions to ensure equality, anti-racism, and fundamental rights are a priority during the next legislative mandate.

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CONAQ: Questionnaire for Quilombola teachers

In order to map and analyze information about the profile of professionals who work in Quilombola School Education and collect data about the situation of the schools that serve Quilombola students, CONAQ is seeking responses from Quilombola teachers and professionals in education.

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