

In Conversation With Commissioner Fran Baum

Gender activism, politics, and intersectionality in the era of COVID-19

22 June 2022

Background

COVID-19 has highlighted and worsened many inequities that existed before the pandemic. These inequities include those of gender, class, race, caste, disability and sexuality. Examination of these inequities demonstrates the intersectionality between them and that effective policy responses need to be sensitive to this. Without an intersectional approach people will fall through the cracks. The gendered and race nature of the care economy has become apparent as has the low status and pay workers in this economy experience.

While many people with a disability have been at higher risk of infection and death during the pandemic, their access to health and care services has not been prioritized, and disability advocates have highlighted the ongoing marginalization of their voices. In addition, the majority of the social care workforce are women, employed on contracts without access to paid leave and with low wages. Despite being essential workers they often experienced financial hardship and were exposed to occupational risks from COVID-19.

Gender activists in many countries around the world have responded to the COVID-19 and demanded better responses from governments. These demands have been made along with demands for action on the climate and ecological crisis. Government responses have varied but in many countries the pandemic has been used by governments to crack down on dissent and responses have been militarized. The space for civil society action appears to be closing since the pandemic started. Yet nearly all social and economic reforms have their origins in civil society movements.

This session will examine how gender activists responded to the pressure of COVID-19 and government interventions, against a backdrop of the politicisation of gender-related issues and increasing recognition of the importance of intersectionalities.

Seminar objectives

- To examine how gender activists responded to the pressures of COVID-19 and governments' responses to the pandemic
- To analyse how gender-related issues were politicized during the COVID-19 pandemic
- To examine the extent to which government systems recognize and act on intersectionalities

Format

The 60-minute *In Conversation With...* series is structured to be forward-looking, solutions-focused, and conversational. The Commissioner will begin with a short presentation to set the scene. In the following conversation, speakers are encouraged to highlight promising approaches with concrete examples. An interactive session will follow to highlight interventions and questions from diverse stakeholders within the audience. The Commissioner will bring the webinar to a close with a concise summary of the key issues raised and the way forward.

Series outcomes

- Strengthen, grow, and connect the Commission and the UNU Gender and Health Hub's online and offline communities for increased knowledge sharing and synergized action towards more evidence-based and better-resourced integration of gender in health policies and programmes.
- Engage with external voices to enable the Commission to include new perspectives – particularly those who can challenge, enrich, and help develop the Commission's work.
- Create broader buy-in, seek feedback, and ensure the relevance of the Commission's work to diverse stakeholders, including the network of policymakers, academics, and implementers involved in the UNU Gender and Health Hub.
- Amplify existing efforts and support evidence-based policy action to catalyse system-wide change in gender and health.

Provisional programme

| Time (UTC) | Programme | Speakers |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| 12:00–12:05 | Welcome and Introductions | <i>Either Sarah or Pascale</i> |
| 12:05–12:15 | Setting the Scene [PPT] Intersectionality and its importance in understanding the impact of COVID-19 Civil society action | Fran Baum , Commissioner |
| Panel conversation | | |
| 12:15–12:30 | Contemporary Challenges: <i>(What is the problem?)</i> Connie: what have you learnt about care work in the 17 case study countries you have considered through an intersectional lens? Priyanka: how has gender together with other elements of intersectionality played out in the Indian political sphere? Anne: How did you see that disability and gender played out in the pandemic? | Moderated by Fran Baum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connie Musolino • Priyanka Samy • Anne Kavanagh |
| 12:30–12:45 | Towards Solutions: <i>(What are good practices/case studies that lead to action?)</i> Connie: what examples of good practice in terms of civil society activism did you see in our case study countries? Priyanka: what examples of good practice in India give you hope about making gender matter in political discourse? Anne: what would make the situation better for people with disability in a future pandemic? | |

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| | <i>Then depends on time I will ask an additional question(s) to fit with the flow of the conversation</i> | |
| 12:45-12:50 | Possible audience interaction Audience questions from live chat | <i>Moderated by Fran Baum</i> |
| 12:50-12:55 | Closing: <i>(Short final question – potentially Stop/Start/Continue)</i> <i>I'm going to give you all a chance to say in 2 minutes what message you would give to the LCGGH Commissioners about what you'd like to see in the Commission report</i> | |
| 12:55-13:00 | Summary and wrap-up Closing remarks | <i>Either Pascale or Sarah</i> |

The **Lancet Commission on Gender and Global Health** responds to the pressing need for substantial, structural, and system-wide change if we are to see considerable progress on gender equality and health equity by 2030. Learn more at genderandhealthcommission.org.

For more information, please contact:

- **Tiffany Nassiri-Ansari**, LCGGH Secretariat: nassiri@unu.edu