

Experiences at the CSW – Prisca

The Commission on the Status of Women is a platform where countries affirm the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The CSW brings together advocates from all over the world, government delegations and civil society organisations with an interest in advancing girls and women's rights. Within the CSW they discuss strategies, lessons and best practices in the promotion of women and girls empowerment. This platform also provides recommendations on the promotion of girls and women's rights in political, economic, civil, social and education fields.

I was part of the CSW for my role in the empowerment of girls and women in Malawi through the alliance of Get Up!! Speak out!!. My role mainly involved engagement with my government delegation to ensure they speak up on recommendation that promote young girls' access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). I was also able to engage with other advocates and provide support in advocacy related initiatives at the CSW. The actors that I predominantly worked alongside were CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality and the organisations within the Right Here, Right Now alliance, as well as the Malawian Ministry of Gender, and the GUSO representatives from Ethiopia.

My experience at the CSW has helped me to build valuable skills, such as networking and collaboration. I have learnt that no man is an island, and it is better to work as a group than to work alone. By providing support to advocates inside the negotiation room (be it support with snacks or research on progressive language), we help to push the SRHR agenda forward and motivate the people in the negotiating rooms. Furthermore, I have also widened my knowledge on the strategies that the Right Here, Right Now alliance employs in their advocacy work. Another great learning experience from the CSW was understanding how the UN language works, including being able to differentiate between progressive and non-progressive language, and how to push for governments to advocate for more progressive language.

Advocating at the UN can be a difficult experience; the main challenge I encountered was sometimes not knowing what I should do and being unable to understand what counts as progressive language at the beginning of the CSW. You need to take time to process the overwhelming pool of information coming in. However, the team I was with supported me well and provided me with simplified material to easily understand and contribute to the processes. Moreover, I was unable to get a delegate's badge, which made it a little difficult to follow the negotiations from outside.

One Tip for Young People Attending International Advocacy Conferences

Preparation is key. It is important to prepare before attending international advocacy events, this could include; preparing a list of people you would potentially want to meet, creating talking points for when you meet those people, set goals for advocacy events, and *never* forget your business card as you may just meet some people briefly. Furthermore, always do research on the advocacy topic and look at what was agreed upon in previous years; it makes it easier to follow up on the issues.