

W4GF Position on The 2024 United Nations Civil Society Conference in Support of the Summit of the Future: Urgent call for gender equality and the meaningful participation of women, adolescents, and girls in all of our diversity

May 7th, 2024

Dear Madam,

Dear Sir,

Women4GlobalFund (W4GF) is a global network of advocates for gender equality that spans 72 countries, with 350 advocates of women and girls in all of our diversity, based mostly in the global south. W4GF is dedicated to making sure that projects from the Global Fund are gender-sensitive and transformative and address the needs and priorities of women and girls in all their diversity. We firmly believe in women empowerment, with an emphasis on the youth, facilitating and advocating for our meaningful participation and engagement in decision-making processes, how we influence policies, and demand accountability, thus improving the health and well-being; specifically addressing the most urgent needs around HIV, TB, and Malaria, as these disproportionately affect us.

As we begin the 2024 United Nations Civil Society Conference, we want to share our position and perspectives, reaffirming our commitment as active advocates for gender equality and women's rights, particularly within the context of global health and the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. We find it imperative to address the inclusion, progress, and engagement of the health topic in this Conference and in the Summit of the Future; mainstreaming the urgent need to have a gender-sensitive and transformative approach on how to address the most pressing current challenges for women and girls in all of our diversity.

At W4GF, we firmly believe that women and girls in all their diversity, as well as women-led organisations, movements, networks, and civil society play a crucial role in shaping policies and decision-making processes that impact the health and lives of all of us; playing a key role in contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Therefore, we advocate for our meaningful inclusion and participation in decision-making spaces, including the negotiations of the Pact for the future. We call for the urgent inclusion of health topics, addressing the pressing challenges that HIV, TB, Malaria continue to pose to women and girls all over the world, resulting in an IMPACT for the Future Outcome Package that will articulate the three objectives of the conference that is inclusive, impactful and innovative with a clear focus on gender-transformative commitments. It's crucial to move beyond mere rhetoric on gender equality and make concrete commitments to sustainability fund actions aimed at achieving gender equity and upholding the human and health rights of women and girls.

Despite some progress, the SDG target of ending communicable diseases by 2030 remains off course. Currently, an estimated 129 million girls worldwide are denied education, depriving them of vital information on HIV prevention. Alarming, every three minutes, a young woman or adolescent girl aged 15-24 acquires HIV in sub-Saharan Africa alone. At the same time, AIDS remains the leading cause of death among women of reproductive age across the African continent¹. Contrary to the global commitments, funding for HIV programs in low- and middle-income countries saw a decline of 2.6% to \$20.8 billion, with a notable shortfall in addressing the societal factors: access to justice, stigma, discrimination, exclusion and poverty. Furthermore, global coverage of antiretroviral therapy among pregnant women has remained stagnant since 2016, signalling a concerning lack of progress².

In 2021, an estimated 1.6 million people died from TB and 10.6 million people fell ill with TB, an increase from 10.1 million in 2020. The TB incidence rate rose by 3.6% between 2020 and 2021, reversing declines of about 2% per year for most of the previous two decades. Also, there were an estimated 247 million malaria cases globally in 2021, compared to 224 million in 2015³.

¹ https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/pressreleaseandstatementarchive/2024/march/20240311_CS68

² Commission on the Status of Women Sixty-eighth session New York, 11–22 March 2024. 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": gender mainstreaming, situations and programmatic matters. Women, the girl child and HIV and AIDS.

³ UN 2023, SDG 3 Progress and Indicators, https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3#progress_and_info

Also, gender equality remains an elusive goal globally, with ongoing violations of women's rights and persistent gender-based violence perpetuating the HIV, TB and malaria pandemics. The international community is falling short of meeting the gender targets outlined in SDGs, a situation worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic, armed and war conflicts, debt crisis, and the terrible effects of climate change. All these hinders crucial investments in education, health, and social protection, disproportionately affecting women and girls. It is unacceptable that at the current rate, we need 300 years to end child marriage, 286 years to close gaps in legal protection and removal of discriminatory laws, and 140 years to achieve equal representation in leadership in the workplace ⁴.

Thus, we call for the UN CSO Conference and the Summit of the Future to address pressing global challenges, including those related to health, gender equality, women's rights and our meaningful participation. It is essential to ensure the voices and perspectives of women-led organisations, movements, networks and civil society representatives are heard and considered in the Pact for the Future, along with a Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations; to be adopted through intergovernmental negotiations to provide multilateral solutions for a better future for women and girls in all of our diversity. Specific references to health in the zero draft need to be enhanced, including commitments to follow up on the UN High-Level Meetings on TB, PPPR, and UHC. We call for the inclusion of specific language and commitments recently approved at the Commission on the Status of Women Sixty-eighth session "Women, the girl child and HIV and AIDS Resolution", we require a stronger emphasis on gender-transformative actioning to achieve gender equality, equity and the inclusion and meaningful participation of the most vulnerable and marginalised.

W4GF believes that the Pact for the Future, must reflect commitments to the rights of women and girls and gender equality. It should include gender-transformative programming for HIV, TB, and malaria, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights, Gender-Based Violence, and the impact of climate change and ongoing crisis and armed conflicts. While also addressing community health systems strengthening and sustaining and increasing funding to achieve health for all.

As many other women-led movements and organisations we are unable to attend the Conference. Thus we trust that our collective messages reach decision-makers at the Conference; having a more gender-comprehensive Outcome Package reaching key stakeholders, including the Summit of the Future Co-Facilitators, the UN Office of the President of the General Assembly, UN Member States, International Organisations, and other Civil Society partners; paving the way for a future defined by collaboration and meaningful participation of women and girls in all of our diversity.

Thank you for considering our perspectives on this important matter. We look forward to fruitful discussions and outcomes during the UN Civil Society Conference and beyond.

Sincerely,



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W4GF is a dynamic global platform of women and gender equality advocates who share a deep commitment to ensuring that Global Fund programmes are gender-transformative to meet the rights and priorities of women and girls in all our diversity. For more information, contact [Ángela León Cáceres](#), Global Coordinator, Women4GlobalFund (W4GF)

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⁴ UN 2024, SDG 5, Progress and Indicators, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5#overview>