

## A Round Table Discussion on Women and Aid

By Grace Murphy

Responding to the latest natural disasters and on-going conflicts and the fact that women and girls suffer discrimination and violence in many parts of the world, the [Women's Foreign Policy Group](#) presented a round table discussion, "Equity and Empowerment: A Feminist Approach to Aid," on Thursday, 12 September 2019 at IIE in New York City.

Randi Davis, director of [UNDP's Gender team](#) presented a gender-equality "landscape." A solid framework is already in place to put pressure on governments to demand more women in political leadership roles. Although improvements have been made, the numbers are still only about 20%. There is still a need for women to be economically self-sufficient and resilient. There have been advances in education and in women's awareness of their rights, but new challenges arise because of migration and climate change.

Ms. Davis sees a 3-part gender equality strategy: help women achieve economic empowerment; put women in decision-making positions (including the law and health care); give women support in crisis situations and post-violence.

Marci Hersh, senior manager of humanitarian advocacy at [Women Deliver](#), began by relating her experiences after the earthquake in Haiti. Then and now the needs of women are minimally addressed and aid is still top down, not grass roots. Aid distribution meetings are conducted in English, rather than the native language of the recipients, and are often held in remote locations. Gender-based programs get only a small percentage of the aid.

For the future, Ms. Hersh sees the need for a system-wide re-evaluation of aid distribution so that the providers – community leaders and advocates – be consulted; that funds be channeled to those organizations (such as NGOs) that are already in place; and that women use technology and modern communication systems to make their voices heard.



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In the Question and Answer time slot both presenters agreed that one only has to ask women and they will tell you what they need.

## UN Women

By Lochie Musso

In July 2010, the United Nations General Assembly created the department of [UN Women](#) combining earlier UN agencies devoted to women's priorities. The UN recognized the need for gender equality in 1975 when it proclaimed the first International year of the Woman focusing on gender equality and empowerment. In the 2030 agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals, Gender Equality is number five. 1995 marked the historic Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action signed by 189 countries represented at the fourth World Conference on Women.

Today the UN is totally involved in activities supporting women's and girls' rights and empowerment. Marking the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres called on all people to end violence against women during the Generation Equality event held for sixteen days in November/December. ["Orange the World: Generation Equality Stands against Rape"](#) and "Generation Equality—Realizing women's rights and an equal future" are just two in a lexicon of programs aimed to fulfil SDG #5.

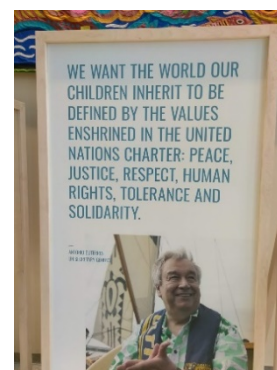
The theme for International Women's Day (8 March 2020) will be "I am Generation Equality: Realizing Women's Rights". The **Generation Equality Forum, a civil society–centered, global gathering**, organized by UN Women and co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France will kick off in Mexico City, Mexico (7–8 May 2020), and culminate in Paris, France (7–10 July 2020).

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, has been United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women since 2013. With a PhD in education and a lifetime experience with both national and international agencies, she is well qualified for her position. She was coordinator at the World YWCA in Geneva Switzerland and founder of the Umlambo Foundation which supports leadership and education. She served in many departments in her home country and was a Member of Parliament and Deputy President in South Africa's first democratic government. Learn more at [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org)

**Iceland has been listed number one in political empowerment amongst women and number one for closing the gender income gap for seven years running by the World Economic Forum's survey for gender equality!**

## A Visit to the UN Lobby

After passing through the UN Security Tent, a visitor steps onto an open plaza then into a large lobby where there is a gallery devoted to global issues. The exhibits are changed regularly. This Fall the focus was on Earth. Pictures taken from satellite cameras showed what is happening around the world both good and not so good. Here are a few photos and the explanations as seen in the UN Lobby.



(Note: all photos taken by Lochie Musso)

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