

International Association of Applied Psychology

United Nations News, February 2024

As we move forward with our successful engagements at the UN, IAAP is set to actively participate in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), a two-week-long forum held at the United Nations headquarters in New York City that has the attention of leaders and decision-makers around the world. Thousands of women and men from around the world come to New York to participate in the advocacy, networking, and resolutions/calls to action that take place at the sessions. These events are mainly in person, but many are broadcast online live through UN WebTV, so they can be viewed in real-time, or later found on the UNTV website. See the CSW website at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw67-2023/side-events>

The CSW's commitment to advancing gender equality and empowering women and girls supports our IAAP aim to harness psychological science for societal benefit. Many of our members' work is in this area, directly connecting to the rights of women and girls and social justice for women and girls.

The CSW meeting has two formats: One is driven by government Member States and UN Women, and another is organized by the civil society arm of CSW, namely, the NGO CSW/NY Forum. These latter events are predominantly being offered online so all IAAP members will have a chance to watch and participate in them.

IAAP is actively engaged in both formats of the CSW meeting, participating in more events than any single government or NGO. We are co-sponsoring 7 events with the Mission of Sierra Leone to the UN, alongside other governments, UN Agencies (UNICEF, UNFPA) and NGOs, (Save the Children and others) and leading 6 events in the NGO Forum on issues of women and girls, in partnership with various stakeholders. These NGO Forum events are organized by students of Dr. Kuriansky at Columbia University Teachers College. Additionally, we are co-sponsoring an event at Turkish House with a Turkish NGO focused on the protection of women.

Given IAAP's focus on applying psychological research to inform policies that support gender equality, we will have an active presence throughout the commission, which runs from March 11-22, 2024. The priority and sub-themes for this year are:

- **Priority theme:** Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.
- **Review theme:** Social protection systems, access to public services, and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The CSW is committed to **gender equality**, the rights and empowerment of women and girls, the **elimination of all forms of violence** and discrimination against women and girls, and ensuring **social justice** for women and girls. These are enshrined in international documents, including the Sustainable Development Goal #5 about gender equality in the UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, as well as World Health Organization declarations and many other important documents.

Addressing these issues is critical because since the COVID-19 pandemic, statistics have shown an alarming rise in the incidence of violence against women. UN Women and Women Count [report](#) that “1 in 2 women reported having experienced violence or knowing a woman who has, since the pandemic.”

There is a clear need to accelerate gender equality in many parts of the world, including in all of Africa and other developing regions.

This year, IAAP continues its collaboration with the Mission of the Republic of Sierra Leone, a partnership that has flourished through many significant UN meetings. Our involvement has deepened, particularly as our IAAP representative, Judy Kuriansky, has been appointed as an Advisor to the Mission, a government delegate position. In recognition of her 25-year service to the country, she has been awarded the highest honor, the Order of the Commander of the Rokel, by the President.

Sierra Leone, situated on the West African coast with English as its official language, confronts distinctive gender equity challenges due to its complex history, cultural diversity, and civil conflict aftermath, highlighting the relevance of the CSW68 theme. Despite these challenges, the country is progressing significantly towards gender equality by capitalizing on its cultural diversity and resilience. Notably, Sierra Leone has implemented innovative measures like the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act and introduced the first-ever government-adopted Gender-Based Violence Information Management System Plus (GBVIMS+), demonstrating a firm commitment to fostering a more equitable society. These efforts signify substantial potential for change, underscoring Sierra Leone's commitment to enhancing the well-being of women and girls.

Sierra Leone has achieved significant progress in advancing social justice for women and girls internationally, efforts that resonate with IAAP's mission. Through collaboration with Sierra Leone, we've seen substantial achievements at the UN, including securing numerous panel slots. Notably, the First Lady of Sierra Leone has led two groundbreaking initiatives: the adoption of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Access to Justice for Survivors of Sexual Violence and the establishment of World Day for Zero Tolerance Against Child Sexual

Exploitation, Abuse, and Violence. Nationally, Her Excellency's efforts have been instrumental in the enactment of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) Act, which includes severe penalties for violence against women and girls, such as life imprisonment. Additionally, Sierra Leone has set a precedent with the first-ever government adoption of a technology-based system to track violations against women and girls, serving as a model for other nations.

Notably, Sierra Leone has been voted on to the Security Council as of January 1, 2024, and thus has a big voice in negotiations, representing not only their national interests but all of Africa. A large part of their agenda is focused on Women, Peace, and Security.

IAAP is excited to co-sponsor several events showcasing achievements in Sierra Leone and globally. A group of IAAP youth division members from Dr. Kuriansky's class at Columbia University Teachers College will be accredited to participate, offering them a unique chance to support event logistics and engage with high-level officials. These officials represent various entities including UN agencies (UN Women, WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA) and a range of NGOs focused on women's issues, such as Irish Aid, Trocaire, the 50/50 Group, Women's Forum, CARE International, Mission 89, United Through Sport, Accelerate Hub, Plan International, the International Association of Applied Psychology, and the Give Them A Hand Foundation.

The topics of the events IAAP is co-sponsoring are as follows:

- 1) *Addressing Feminized Poverty through Financial Inclusion*: This event entails an exploration of strategies for empowering women economically and alleviating poverty through improved access to financial services.
- 2) *Mainstreaming Gender in the Big Five Game Changers in Sierra Leone*: This event showcases Sierra Leone's integration of gender equality within its development agenda, emphasizing sectors such as food security, youth employment, and public service.
- 3) *Beyond the GEWE Act in Sierra Leone*: This event includes an evaluation of progress and future directions following the enactment of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Act, with a focus on strengthening gender equality efforts.
- 4) *Rollout of GBVIMS+*: This event highlights Sierra Leone's national strategy to deploy the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System Plus (GBVIMS+), aiming to enhance response to and case management of gender-based violence.
- 5) *Bridging Gender Disparities and Combating Trafficking*: This event concentrates on Sierra Leone's efforts to create equitable spaces for women while addressing trafficking and

exploitation, underscoring the importance of policy development and social protection interventions.

6) In conversation with adolescent girls: What it means to be girls globally on the world stage.

7) *Building A Better World With And For Adolescent Girls: What Girls Want High-Level Event.* Presented by UNICEF, in partnership with Sierra Leone, UN Women, Accelerate Hub and Plan International, this panel will present results from a global survey, the Five Big Policy Asks, and research on the investment case for multi-sectoral programming for adolescent girls. The event will call for renewed investments in adolescent girls, making the case that now – more than halfway through the 2030 deadline of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals – is the time for bold action grounded in evidence and designed in partnership *with* adolescent girls, that accelerates the path to gender equality.

Some of these events will be simulcast on UN WebTV, available both live and online. For others, arrangements are being made for the events to be shown on YouTube or other platforms.

We are proud to say that members of IAAP's Student and Early Career Division (Division 15) who are also members of Dr. Kuriansky's class and GAAP Lab, will also have a chance to make an intervention (a short commentary) in these sessions, showcasing the important role of emerging professionals and of youth in driving forward the agenda on gender equality and women's empowerment. Their involvement underscores the importance of integrating fresh perspectives and innovative approaches in tackling global challenges related to gender disparities.

Significantly, The First Lady's "Hands Off Our Girls" campaign is a model for countries in efforts to end child marriage, rape, and all forms of violence against girls.

See: <https://www.afdb.org/ar/news-and-events/press-releases/unga-2019-hands-our-girls-african-first-ladies-take-campaign-against-rape-early-child-marriage-un-general-assembly-30556>. The First Lady's commitment to rights of women and girls is also personal: she is herself a survivor of early marriage.

Her Excellency has received many honors and appointments because of her work. For example, on September 19, 2023, UNAIDS appointed the First Lady of Sierra Leone as a champion for adolescent girls and young women

(https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/pressreleaseandstatementarchive/2023/september/20230919_first-lady-sierra-leone-champion-adolescent-girls-young-women).

At the heart of these gender campaigns is the importance of education, for girls and boys. For example, Her Excellency is a champion of Education Plus, an initiative launched by UNAIDS, UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women to prevent HIV infections through free universal, quality secondary education for all girls and boys in Africa, reinforced through comprehensive

empowerment programmes. Importantly, the initiatives involve engaging males. In fact, His Excellency Julius Maada Bio, the President of Sierra Leone, is the only African leader who has given so much voice to justice for victims of sexual violence and rape and is a role model for other leaders not only in Africa but worldwide. These engagements offer a vital platform for IAAP to contribute to international dialogues on gender equality, using our applied psychology expertise to foster policies and practices that support women and girls globally. It also offers our youth an exceptional opportunity to meet, and make contact with, high-level officials at the UN agencies and missions, since many of them aspire to jobs within the UN system.