

CSW 65 Expert Group Meeting

'Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls'

Virtual meeting, 5-8 October 2020

Expert biographies

Experts

Lubna Al-Kazi is an Associate Professor at Kuwait University in the Sociology Department. She is the founder and director of the Women's Research and Studies Center which was established in 2010 at Kuwait University in coordination with the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, Kuwait and the United Nations Development Program. The center is presently in charge of implementing the gender component of the national plan of Kuwait 2017-2018 as part of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on Gender Equality. Al-Kazi graduated from the University of Texas at Austin with a Ph.D. in Demography and Sociology.

Amani Aruri is a Palestinian activist who is passionate about linking, improving, and increasing support to women and youth peacebuilders. She is also passionate about growing young people's pro-social civic engagement and democratic participation, particularly in high-risk contexts. She holds a Master's degree in Economics from Birzeit University. She has utilized her skills to manage innovative programs that serve marginalized groups, especially youth and women in Palestine, with a particular focus on gender issues within Palestinian society. Aruri is a member of the UN Women gender innovation program-AGORA, and a member of the Global Youth Task Force on Beijing +25, and was recently selected as a member of the task force on the Generation Equality Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action.

Honorable Wafa Bani Mustafa is a lawyer and a three consecutive term Member of the Jordanian Parliament (Jerash Governorate). The first woman to chair a bloc in the Jordanian Parliament, she is also a founder of the Jordanian Women's Caucus (2013). She Chairs the Coalition of Women MPs from 13 Arab Countries to Combat Violence against Women. She serves as Vice-Chair of the IPU Standing Committee on Sustainable Development and is a founder of the Forum of Arab Parliamentarians for Population and Development. Bani Mustafa was selected among 50 international women leaders by Women in Public Life Initiative, USA. She is the Women Political Leaders' Ambassador to Jordan. At the beginning of 2019, she was chosen among 210 women leaders for her activism in human and women's rights by Khalil Gibran Chair for Values and Peace at the University of Maryland, USA. She is a member of the Climate Parliament and the IRENA Legislators Forum, and an international elections observer. She is an International Campaign Trainer, Vice-Chair of the Board of Trustees in Phoenix Center for Economics & Informatics Studies, and member of the Board of Trustees for the National Center for Human Rights. She obtained her BA in law and her MA in Psychological Counseling.

Kosana Beker is Program Director of FemPlatz, a civil society organization working with the Gender Knowledge Hub NGO and the Women's Research Center on a femicide review investigation within the context of the EU-UN Women regional programme 'Implementing Norms, Changing Minds'. A renowned women's rights activist in Serbia, she has authored numerous publications and academic papers in the field of gender equality and discrimination. Beker has also worked as Assistant Commissioner for the Protection of Equality (2010-2016) and has been a member of the Executive Board of Equinet - the European Network of Equality Bodies (2013-2016). She obtained her PhD at the Center for Gender studies of The Association of Centers for Interdisciplinary and Multidisciplinary Studies and Research at the University of Novi Sad, her Master's degree in Gender Studies from the UN mandated University for Peace, Costa Rica and holds a BA in Law from University of Belgrade.

Flávia Biroli is a Professor of Political Science at the Institute of Political Science of the University of Brasília since 2005. She is presently the president of the Brazilian Political Science Association. Her Masters and PhD were in the area of Political History at the State University of Campinas and she has since been working within the field of Political Science. She has published many books and articles about gender and democracy in Brazil, feminist political theory and media and democracy. Active in public debates about gender equality in Brazil, she was part of the Civil

Society Advisory Group for UN Women in Brazil and is working with them on projects about gender parity and political violence against women. In 2019, she was part of the Expert Group that produced the report on Beijing+25 for the Sixty-fourth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Drude Dahlerup is a Professor Emerita at Stockholm University, Sweden and Honorary Professor at Roskilde University, Denmark. She has published extensively on gender and politics, quota systems, women's movements and feminist theory. In a most-cited 1988-article, "From a Small to a Large Minority", she applied the 'critical mass theory' known from nuclear physics to the minority position of women in politics. She edited the first global overview on the adoption of electoral gender quotas: *Women, Quotas and Politics*, 2006. Newest books: *Has Democracy Failed Women*, Polity Press, 2018 and *Double-Edged Politics on Women's Rights in the MENA Region*, ed. with Hanane Darhour, 2020. She helped develop International IDEA's global site on electoral gender quotas. A co-founder of Redstockings, the Women's Liberation Movement in Denmark. Dahlerup took an active part in the first development of Women's Studies/Gender Studies, in Denmark and the Nordic countries as well as internationally.

Joy Ngozi Ezeilo, is a Law Professor and Dean Emeritus, Faculty of Law, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. She served as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children (2008-14). She is a Member of the UN Civil Society Advisory Board on Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and was a member of the Board of Trustees for the UN Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking (2013-16). She founded Women Aid Collective, a national organization in Nigeria that promotes the human rights of women and young people. She also runs the Tamar Sexual Assault Referral Centre and is the National Chairperson of the Sexual Assault Referral Network Nigeria. Ezeilo is the 2019 winner of the National Human Rights Award in Nigeria. She has received several awards including a Nigerian Government honour, Officer of the Order of Niger (OON) in 2006 and was recognized in 2013 by Newsweek/Daily Beast Magazine, USA as one of the 125 women of impact in the world for her work, especially in combating human trafficking--a modern day slavery. She is also a recipient of the prestigious British Chevening scholarship and a grantee of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation's Funds for Leadership Development.

Müge Kökten Finkel is Assistant Professor and the Director of the Master's in International Development Program at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, and the Co-director of the Gender Inequality Research Lab (GIRL) at the University of Pittsburgh. Before her academic appointment, she worked as a Social Development Specialist for the Middle East and North Africa region at the World Bank and consulted for the International Food Policy Research Institute. Since 2015, she has been collaborating with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to increase the availability of data on gender equality in public administration.

Shireen Hassim is Canada 150 Research Chair in Gender and African Studies at Carleton University, Ottawa. She has written and edited several books including *No Shortcuts to Power: Women and Policymaking in Africa*, and *Go Home or Die Here: Violence, Xenophobia and the Politics of Difference in South Africa*. *Women's Organisations and Democracy: Contesting Authority* won the Victoria Shuck Award for Best Book in Women and Politics from the American Political Science Association. Her most recent book was an archival recuperation of the work of the South African sociologist, Fatima Meer. She is a Member of the Academy of Science of South Africa and served as an elected member of its National Council.

Lebrechtta Nana Oye Hesse-Bayne is the Executive Director of Shidaa Sustainable Development Solutions Ltd and currently serves as the Board Coordinator / Secretary for the Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL). She works with Governments, NGOs, International Organizations and Development Banks and has lectured part time in the past for the University of West Indies, Institute of Gender and Development Studies, Trinidad and Tobago. Nana has also worked with the United Nations Resident Coordinator's Office in Trinidad and Tobago, providing technical and Coordination advice to the UN Country team and its thematic groups. She has worked on the broad thematic areas of Gender Based Violence, Gender & Development, Governance, Women's Political Participation and Youth Development. Working on socio-economic and gender justice issues for Nana is a unique privilege to affect lives and advance change in countries, communities, and institutions. Hesse-Bayne holds a Master of Economic and Social Studies Degree in Development Management, specializing in poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods.

Zeina Hilal has worked to advance gender equality and human rights in and through parliaments for 20 years. She joined the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 2006 where she is now the Manager of two flagship programmes of the organization: Gender Partnership and Youth Participation. She works with parliaments from around the world to inform and support deliberations, legislation and policymaking for the elimination of gender-based discrimination and violence and for the empowerment of women and youth. Promoting and supporting the participation of women and youth in politics is a key area of her expertise and a key priority for the global organization of national parliaments that she serves.

Khin Hla received her LL.B (Law) degree from the University of Yangon in 1996. In 2008, she set up Young Chi Thit organization which works for the empowerment of women and at the community level and advocates to government at the national level for legal and policy changes. Khin Hla has been promoting women's participation and leadership in politics and decision-making at all levels by implementing a women's leadership programme across the country since 2015. SheLeads aims to create an enabling environment by addressing the barriers that hold women back from becoming leaders and building their capacity by giving them the skills and knowledge they need to take on leadership roles. On behalf of Young Chi Thit, Khin Hla has been working as Co-Chair of the Technical Working Group on Women's Participation in Politics and Economics, which is part of the National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (NSPAW) 2013-2022 implementation mechanism. She is also a member of Rakhine State Women Committee at State Level.

Honorable Rebecca Alitwala Kadaga is a lawyer and politician who has been Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda since 19 May 2011. She is the first woman to be elected Speaker in the history of the Parliament of Uganda. She is also the current Member of Parliament (MP) for the Kamuli District Women's Constituency, Busoga sub-region, a position she has held since 1989. In 1996, Kadaga served as Secretary General of the East African Women Parliamentarians Association. From 1996 to 1998, Rebecca Kadaga was the Minister of State for Regional Cooperation. Kadaga studied law at Makerere University, graduating with the degree of Bachelor of Laws, in 1978. She went on to obtain a Diploma in Legal Practice from the Law Development Center in Kampala in 1979. In 2003, she obtained the degree of Master of Arts (MA), specializing in Women's Law, from the University of Zimbabwe.

Mona Lena Krook is Professor of Political Science and Chair of the Women & Politics Ph.D. Program at Rutgers University. Her first book, *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide* (Oxford University Press, 2009), won two major book awards from the American Political Science Association. She has published widely on gender and political representation, particularly on gender quotas and the impact of women in public office, as well as reports for the Inter-Parliamentary Union on youth representation in parliament. Her most recent book, *Violence against Women in Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2020), develops this concept, illustrates what it looks like in practice, and catalogues emerging solutions around the world. Since 2015, she has collaborated with the National Democratic Institute on its #NotTheCost campaign, and more recently, she launched a website at <https://www.vawpolitics.org> to gather resources and raise awareness of VAW in politics worldwide.

Sonja Lokar is a sociologist, feminist, political activist and advocate for women's human rights in Slovenia and internationally since her youth. She has been an elected politician, a reformer and served as Secretary General of her parliamentary social democratic party between 1989-1991. As former Executive Director of the CEE Network for Gender Issues and Chair of the Stability Pact Gender Task Force worked with women activists across all social, ethnic, religious and political divides in 21 countries. As former president of the European Women's Lobby she worked all over the European Union on Women issues and for the political empowerment of women. She was one of the lecturers of the first RAD seminar: "Security Sector Reform in the Western Balkans". She holds a degree in French Language and a degree in Sociology from Ljubljana University.

Otilia Lux de Coti is the Adviser on the Women's programme of the Fund for the Development of the Indigenous Peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean and Adviser on Women's programme of MADRE. Previously, she was the Vice President of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues from 2001 to 2007 as well as the Representative of Guatemala to the UNESCO Executive Board between 2004-2007. From 1997 to 1999 she was the Commissioner for Historical Clarification on the violation of Human Rights and Acts of violence in Guatemala. She served as Director at the International Indigenous Women's Forum. Ms. Lux de Coti has held several decision-making positions at the national level such as the Minister of Culture and Sports in Guatemala and Member of

Congress of the Republic of Guatemala for the WINAQ Political Movement. She has also participated in committees for Women, Extraordinary National Transparency and Indigenous Peoples. Throughout her career she has received innumerable recognitions and awards, including the notable the Bartolome de las Casas (Spain), Legion of Honor (France) and Francisco Marroquin (Guatemala) awards.

Lucina Di Meco is a women's rights and gender equality expert, advocate and author. Her latest research, #ShePersisted. Women, Politics & Power in the New Media World, analyzes the relationship between women political leaders and social media and was featured on the Washington Post, Time Magazine, El Pais, and Politico. In her previous work, Lucina focused on the power of networks to support women overcome the barriers they face to access the political career and increase their effectiveness once in office. Her research includes a resource guide and a 10-step toolkit for female political activists. Lucina currently serves as Senior Director for Girls' Education & Gender Equality at Room to Read, and Advisory Board Member at FundHer. Lucina has a Magna Cum Laude in Political Science from the University of Turin, a Master's in Development Economics from the University of East Anglia, and a Diploma in Gender Studies from the *Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales*.

Sofia Minieri is passionate about advocating for civil society's advocacy agenda on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) to meaningfully incorporate women with disabilities. She is the Coordinator of Projects on SRHRs for WWD at Red por los Derechos de las Personas con Discapacidad (REDI), the National Network for the Rights of People with Disabilities in Argentina. Through her work, authorities of the National Program on Sexual and Reproductive Health agreed to establish a working group with REDI and other NGOs, which has resulted in enhanced policies on SRHRs for WWD. Additionally, Sofia helped REDI develop the first virtual platform on SRHRs in Argentina, combining the gender and disability perspectives, thus reflecting an intersectional approach to sexual and reproductive rights and offering WWD the information they need to fully exercise their SRHRs. She received a Master of Law degree from Columbia Law School.

Ambassador Liberata Mulamula of Tanzania is a Visiting Scholar and Associate Director of the Institute for African Studies at the George Washington University. Area of interest is Women Empowerment and Leadership in Africa, and role Multilateral Diplomacy in Global Politics. A graduate of St. Johns' University, USA. Distinguished career diplomat. She served as Tanzania's Ambassador to the United States, among others, and promoted the relations between the two countries to greater heights. She also served as Senior Diplomatic Advisor to the former President of Tanzania, H.E. Jakaya Kikwete. She was the First Executive Secretary of the sub-regional organization for Peace, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region covering 11 post- conflict countries of Africa and others. She is a member of the UN Secretary General's Group of Independent Eminent Persons for the Peacebuilding Architecture Review and Advisory Group on Peacebuilding Fund. She is a recipient of the Order of the United Republic of Tanzania 2015 Award for Distinguished Public Service.

Pippa Norris is a comparative political scientist who has taught at Harvard for more than a quarter century. She is the Paul F. McGuire Lecturer in Comparative Politics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, and Founding Director of the Electoral Integrity Project, Director of the Global Party Survey, Co-Director of the TrustGov Project and on the Executive of the World Values Survey. Her research compares public opinion and elections, political institutions and cultures, gender politics, and political communications in many countries worldwide. She is ranked the 5th most cited political scientist worldwide. Major career honors include, amongst others, the Skytte prize, IPSA's Karl Deutsch award, fellowship of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, APSA's Charles Merriam award and the Samuel Eldersfeld lifetime achievement award, and the PSA's Sir Isaiah Berlin award, as well as several book awards and honorary doctorates. More details and papers can be found on www.pippanorris.com and under #PippaN15 on Twitter.

Sandra Pepera is Director for Gender, Women and Democracy at the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Before joining NDI in 2014, she spent thirteen years as a senior officer at the UK's Department for International Development, leading offices in the Caribbean, Rwanda-Burundi and Sudan. Pepera spent time in British domestic politics; and as a political analyst in the Political Affairs Division at the Commonwealth Secretariat. She led work on women and politics at the University of Ghana and in outreach public policy during the period of unstable political transition in the early 1990s. This included participating in a program that supported the ANC Women's League

during South Africa's transition from apartheid to majority democratic rule in 1993. Sandra is a member of the Cambridge Sustainability Leaders Network, the Royal Commonwealth Society, the Global Board Ready Women initiative, and the International Advisory Board of the Commonwealth Journal for International Affairs. She is also a Trustee of UK-based charity Glitch, which works to end online abuse.

Jennifer M. Piscopo is Associate Professor of Politics at Occidental College. Her research on representation, gender quotas, and legislative institutions in Latin America has appeared in over 20 peer-reviewed journals and in multiple edited volumes. She is co-editor of *The Impact of Gender Quotas* (Oxford University Press) and consults regularly for international organizations. Her public facing writing on women and politics has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Boston Review* and *Ms. Magazine*, among other U.S.-based and international outlets. She received her Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of California, San Diego, where she was a Visiting Fellow at the Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies. Recently, she was the Peggy Rockefeller Visiting Scholar at the David Rockefeller Center of Latin American Studies at Harvard University.

Shirin M. Rai is Professor in the department of Politics and International Studies and the Director of Warwick Interdisciplinary Research Centre for International Development (WICID). She has written extensively on issues of gender, governance and development. Her latest book (with Carole Spary) is *Performing Representation: Women Members in the Indian Parliament* (2019, OUP) She has consulted with the United Nations' Division for the Advancement of Women and UNDP. She is a founding member of the South Asia Research Network on Gender, Law and Governance, was Director of the Leverhulme Trust programme on Gendered Ceremony and Ritual in Parliament and serves on the Editorial Boards of *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, *Politics and Gender*, *Journal of Narrative Politics*, *Global Ethics*, *Gender and Development* and *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*. Professor Rai is currently the lead editor for the OUP Handbook on Politics and Performance.

Socorro L. Reyes is a policy analyst, governance adviser, legislative specialist and women's rights advocate who consults internationally on public policy and governance, social development and gender equality. She is the Regional Gender and Governance Adviser of the Center for Legislative Development. Previously, Reyes was Asia-Pacific and Arab States Chief of UN Women HQ (2005-2011) where she supervised four sub-regional offices. Reyes served as UNDP Senior Gender Adviser to the Government of Pakistan (2001-2004) designing the capacity development program for 36,000 women councillors and conceptualizing the Women's Political School. She was also Director of Gender and Governance of the New York-based Women's Environment and Development Organization (1999-2001) and spearheaded the Global Campaign for "50-50 Get the Balance Right!". Reyes taught Political Science at De La Salle University (1971-1991) and was the first Chairperson of the Department of Political Science. Reyes has written and published widely on Women's Political Participation, most recently "Gender and the Electoral System: What Works for Women" and "Gender Assessment of the Legislative Structures and Processes of Selected Southeast Asian Countries from a CEDAW Perspective." She recently completed a study of "Gender Relations in the Extra-Judicial Killings (EJK) Household" in the Philippines in collaboration with the Women and Gender Institute (WAGI) of Miriam College. She has also conducted several training courses for WAGI's Women's Political Participation Project.

Andrew Reynolds is a faculty member in the School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. His research and teaching focus on democratization, constitutional design and electoral politics. He is particularly interested in the presence and impact of minorities and marginalized communities. He has worked for the United Nations and many other organisations focussed on democracy and electoral politics. He has also served as an international consultant on issues of electoral and constitutional design. He has received research awards from the U.S. Institute of Peace, the National Science Foundation, the US Agency for International Development, and the Ford Foundation. Reynolds received his B.A.(Hons) from the University of East Anglia, a M.A. from the University of Cape Town and his Ph.D. from the University of California, San Diego.

Emilia Sáiz is Secretary General of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). She has worked with the international movement of local and regional governments in different capacities since 1997, leading programmes and initiatives on institutional capacity building, the participation of women in local decision-making and decentralized cooperation. She played a critical role in setting up the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, and has followed and represented local and regional governments in iconic international processes

such as the Rio and Beijing +20 as well as the Climate Agreement, the SDGs and Habitat III and facilitated the contributions from local constituencies to United Nations processes.

Nadezda Shvedova, Visiting Fulbright Scholar at the Institute of the USA and Canada Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences-RUS, is the Head of the Center for Socio-Political Studies (since 2007). She holds a Doctorate in Political Science and PhD in World History and is a professor in the Faculty of World Politics at the Russian State Academic University for Humanities (GAUGN). She is the author of 200 publications on political systems, gender, human rights, and a member of the editorial board of the magazine: "A woman in Russian Society". Shvedova was nominated by the "Women's League" as a candidate to the State Duma (1993), authored "The Code of Honour of the Russian Women's Movement" co-founded «WOMEN'S FORUM» (Russia), and is a member of the Society of American Culture Studies. The RAS awarded Shvedova the Certificate of Merit in recognition of pioneering research (1999); a Certificate of Merit in recognition of activity to improve women's status in Russia (by the Ministry of Labor, 2003); the Medal "850th Anniversary of Moscow" and the *Veteran of Labour*.

Houda Slim been active in public life as a teacher of more than 22 years and as an activist for youth civic engagement and democratic transition in Tunisia. She has led and participated in several studies on democracy and youth participation. From 2014 to 2019 Slim was a Member of the Tunisian Representative Assembly. She is one of the founding members of a new political party, *Mouvement Machrouu Tounes*, where she now serves as a senior leader, elected to the party's executive bureau and the Order Committee. She was previously president of a regional committee for Youth, Culture, Education, Higher Education and Sport (Governorate of Tunis). Slim was elected to the executive bureau of the Arab Women Parliamentarians Network for Equality 'Ra'edat'. She graduated from the Faculty of Art, Letters and Humanities la Manouba, Tunis with a Master's degree of applied linguistics. She is currently writing her PhD thesis on gender inequality in education.

Fatou Sow is a Senegalese professor and researcher in Sociology and Feminist Studies. She spent her entire academic career at the *Centre national de la recherche scientifique* (France). She was firstly based at the University Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar (Senegal); then at the University Paris-Denis Diderot (France). She taught at various academic institutions in Senegal, France, and overseas, mainly in the US and Canada. She has been a member of several scientific organizations (CODESRIA), and various feminist organisations among which DAWN (Fiji), the African Feminist Forum (Ghana), and Women Living Under Muslim Laws (UK). Her research interests have been in development issues in Africa and a feminist approach to social science and women's studies.

Laurel Weldon is Distinguished Professor of Political Science at Simon Fraser University in Canada. A Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, she is co-editor of the *American Political Science Review*. Previously, she held a Distinguished Professorship at Purdue University, where she served as Director of the Purdue Policy Research Institute, founding Director of the Center for Research on Diversity and Inclusion, Interim Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and briefly as Acting Provost. Professor Weldon's work focuses on the role of social movements in influencing public policy; violence against women; representation; women, work and poverty; intersectionality and diversity and inclusion. She was founding co-editor of *Politics, Groups and Identities* from 2011-2018. She specializes in comparative research that is global in scope. Recent awards include the Award for Best Book from the Human Rights Section of the International Studies Association.

Human Rights Mechanisms

Hilary Amesika Gbedemah is a Ghanaian lawyer and a women's right activist. She is a member of the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) where she currently serves as Chairperson. While on the Committee, she was Chair of the Working Group on Enquiries, Follow-up Rapporteur, and Chair of the Working Group on Education which produced General Recommendation 36. Other working groups she served on include: Access to Justice, which produced CEDAW's General Recommendation 33, and Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction. She also delivered papers and conducted several training and dissemination seminars on the Convention in Africa, Europe Asia and America. She has a Bachelor's degree in law from University of Ghana, and a Master's from Georgetown University, Washington. She is the Rector of the Law Institute in Ghana.

Dubravka Šimonovic is the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences for the period 2015 - 2021. She was a member of the CEDAW Committee between 2002 and 2014 and served as its Chairperson, as well as Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) between 2001 and 2002. She also Co-chaired the Council of Europe Ad hoc Committee that elaborated on the Istanbul Convention. In 1995 Simonovic attended the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing while heading the Human Rights Department at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Croatia. She was also posted as the Minister Plenipotentiary at the Permanent Mission of Croatia to the UN. Simonovic was the Ambassador to the OSCE and UN in Vienna. She holds a PhD in family law and is the author of several books and articles on women's rights and violence against women.

Melissa Upreti is Vice Chair of the UN Working Group of the Human Rights Council on the issue of discrimination against women and girls. Her work as a human rights lawyer and feminist activist spans over two decades during which she has led fact-finding missions, undertaken strategic litigation, built the capacity of civil society organizations, authored publications and advised governments. Ms. Upreti started her career at a grassroots feminist legal advocacy organization in Nepal followed by The Asia Foundation. She spent 16 years at the Center for Reproductive Rights where she was founding attorney of the Asia Program and, among other things, participated in the first CEDAW Special Inquiry focusing on women's reproductive rights in 2012 and was co-petitioner in the landmark case, *Lakshmi Dhikta v. Nepal*, which recognizes access to abortion as a constitutionally protected right. As Senior Director of Program and Global Advocacy at the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), she currently leads multidisciplinary initiatives at the intersection of gender, labor, human rights and macroeconomic policy, with a strong focus on feminist movement building, and oversees the Global 16 Days of Activism to End Gender-based Violence Campaign that was initiated by CWGL in 1991. She has an LL.M. from Columbia Law School where she was a Stone Scholar and a law degree from India. Ms. Upreti is also a Fellow in the International Reproductive and Sexual Health Law Program at the University of Toronto.