

28 May 2025

Expert Workshop on the role of the family and family-oriented approaches, policies and programmes in the promotion and protection of human rights and in sustainable development (28-29 May 2025)¹

Statement for Session 1

Achieving the full enjoyment of human rights by family members, including achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls

Speaker: Dr Amrita Kapur

We welcome the focus of this workshop on achieving gender equality, including within families, and recall that States' obligations to protect the rights of individuals within families, of every form, is without exception. In armed conflict and crisis contexts, this applies to women and girls in specific ways because of how gender roles change. Women are not only caretakers or survivors; they are also frontline responders, heads of households and community leaders.

However, not only are these contributions often overlooked, but women are also at greater risk of greater risk of abuse, neglect, exclusion because systems fail to protect and support them. Patriarchal laws and norms legally and socially discriminate against widows and women-headed households, including through barriers to inheritance, property ownership and access to services. Undermining women's decision-making power perpetuates their marginalisation, including within their own families.

Further, when women cannot legally transfer their nationality to their children, especially in cross-border or conflict settings, this gendered legal gap has profound intergenerational impacts.

States must dismantle legal and social discriminatory structures through inclusive, gender-responsive reforms and policies to uphold the equal enjoyment of human rights by all family members. This includes supporting unpaid care work, performed largely by women, ensuring access to decent livelihoods, and promoting alternative, non-violent models of masculinity that value caregiving, emotional expression and shared responsibility. Furthermore, it is essential that States diverting resources from humanitarian aid, social services, and climate adaptation to military spending urgently reverse this trend and instead invest in robust, gender-responsive social infrastructure.

¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/expert-workshop-role-family>