

Women urge Governments to fix the Global Financial System to Unlock Gender Equality



CSBAG Deputy Director Carol Namagembe, Tororo Woman MP Hon. Sarah Opendi, Woman MP Kyegegwa district Hon. Flavia Kabahenda and various delegates at the UN United Nations 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York. Source (CSBAG)

Discussions at this year's UN Commission on the Status of Women have placed a spotlight on a critical but often overlooked issue: the biggest barrier to gender equality is not a lack of solutions, but a lack of financing.

Across multiple sessions, policymakers, practitioners, and advocates pointed to a growing disconnect between global commitments and the global financial systems. While women continue to drive innovation in agriculture, conservation, and entrepreneurship, the global financial architecture, shaped by taxation systems, debt burdens, aid flows, and geopolitical priorities, remains largely unresponsive to their needs.

"The challenge is not that women lack ideas or leadership," one speaker noted during the discussions. "It is that the systems meant to support them are not designed to include them."

Participants highlighted how global shocks, including rising geopolitical tensions, are reshaping national budgets in ways that disproportionately affect women. Increased spending on defense has come at the expense of social sectors such as health, education, and community development. At the same time, development financing has become increasingly unpredictable, undermining long-term programs aimed at women's economic empowerment.

"These shifts are not just numbers on paper," Angella Nakafeero, Commission at Uganda's Ministry of Gender said. "They translate into fewer services, fewer opportunities, and fewer resources reaching the women who need them most." The impact is already visible. Women's rights organizations, often reliant on external funding, are being forced to scale back operations or shut down altogether due to shrinking and short-term funding cycles.

Taxation systems were also identified as a major structural barrier. In many countries, regressive tax policies place a heavier burden on low-income populations, particularly women working in informal sectors. At the same time, revenue collection does not necessarily lead to equitable investment.

The implications extend beyond economic justice into climate and development outcomes. Discussions highlighted how flawed financial systems are slowing progress toward green transitions. A case from India demonstrated how targeted financial interventions helped informal workers, many of them women to recover from the economic impacts of COVID-19. By improving access to credit and linking it to national programs, women were able to rebuild their livelihoods. With financial stability came innovation. Women began adopting circular-economy practices, reducing waste, diversifying income streams, and increasing their earnings.

Ugandan MPs Flavia Kabahenda and Sarah Opendi stressed women's role in ecological sustainability. Opendi links agroforestry to finance, enabling women to grow trees for fuel/income and trains them in eco-product creation. Kabahenda's program promotes conservation awareness in schools. Both noted that a lack of gendered resources hinders women's conservation leadership, despite their crucial role in managing of land, water, and farms.

Education systems face a similar challenge. While innovative models integrating environmental sustainability and skills development are emerging, scaling them requires sustained and well-targeted investment. Without adequate financing, efforts to prepare young people, especially girls, for future economic opportunities remain limited in reach.

The Women, Peace and Security agenda also reflected the consequences of financial prioritization. Despite strong global commitments, progress has been uneven. Participants noted that gender-sensitive reforms in security sectors, including training, recruitment, and accountability systems, require consistent funding, something that is often lacking.

"You cannot implement commitments without resources," one speaker emphasized. "Political will, must be matched with financial investment."

Across all discussions, a consistent message emerged that women are already leading solutions, but the systems designed to support them are fragmented, underfunded, and often misaligned. Addressing these challenges will require more than incremental change. Experts called for a fundamental restructuring of global and national financial systems, including the mainstreaming of gender-responsive budgeting, reforms to make tax systems more equitable, and the creation of more predictable and flexible development financing.

CSBAG's participation is critical as we are already working to bridge this gap by advocating for transparent, inclusive, and accountable public finance systems that prioritize women's needs. Ultimately, the discussions at the Commission underscored a clear reality that achieving gender equality is as much a financial challenge as it is a social or political one.

About UNCSW70: The United Nations 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW70), happening between 9th to 20th March 2026, has gathered delegates from across the world including Ministers, UN experts, civil society leaders, and regional blocs, to interrogate one of the most enduring challenges to gender equality: the global failure to ensure full and equitable access to justice for women and girls. Delegates are also reviewing progress on women's participation in public life and the elimination of violence against women.