

Experiences at the CSW - Emi

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. It is instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

MY role at the CSW was to participate and collect evidence, facts and data on the priority themes, as well as to make new relationships and build upon existing connections. We worked to push our government to implement the agreements, and after that to do monitoring and evaluation on their progress and to measure the impact. I worked with a variety of organisations at the CSW, including CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, Women's Health Association Ethiopia, Partnership for Change (a Norwegian NGO), and the partner organisations of CHOICE to name a few. I also worked with members of the UN; such as the Ethiopian delegates and the Deputy Permanent Representative of Ethiopia to the UN.

By attending the CSW I have learned about UN processes and UN language, as well as how to use the UN as a platform to work with our government and hold them accountable. Attending the CSW helped me to build my capacity as a program coordinator, and it gave me a space to showcase our own projects, such as Get Up Speak Out and Youth DO IT. Moreover, this experience gave me the great opportunity to explore a new city and to connect with attendees from different perspectives and views, learn from them, make new relationships, and strengthen existing ones. The CSW is a great place to learn, but it does come with its own challenges also. I faced challenges on a logistical level, such as not having a Delegate's ID and not having a clear role, to the content of the conference. I went with a lack of adequate knowledge on the CSW, so you learn a lot while you're there, and approaching delegates from Ethiopia was challenging for me. Furthermore, choosing one session to attend is difficult as there are so many offered!

Key tips for future young people attending advocacy conferences

Attending big international advocacy events might be one of the best things we can do for our career. We will learn new facts, data, and make all kinds of new connections (and yes, there's usually travel and the opportunity to explore or discover new city). From prepping in advance to having a great time at the conference, in my opinion and from my own experience, here's what young people need to know to make the most out of it.

Be well prepared before attending the conference. Do research about the topic and the issue, and after that try to explore if there are options to be a presenter, session facilitator or a speaker; this will make one's participation visible. Big international conferences are good opportunities to meet new people, but also building on relationships that already exist is key. So, reach out to them before the conference to set up a time to meet for coffee or a meal. After that, follow-up actions (send email, phone call, face to face meetings) are mandatory to keep the relationship alive for the future. After getting a lot of new information, inspirations and contacts at the conference, one of the best things that we can do is to share them with fellow co-workers, friends and colleagues.