



# Human Rights Advocates

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Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

My name is Rachel Reyes, and I am representing Human Rights Advocates at the 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

As an accredited NGO with consultative status, HRA would like to encourage the Commission to approach this year's thematic issue – “The equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS” – with a broader perspective so as to include refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and transnational domestic workers.

We commend the Commission for including language in the Agreed Conclusions protecting the rights of transnational domestic workers as an exploited class of women that often goes unnoticed in discussions about gender equality in the household. Domestic workers have human rights, and domestic work is paid household work, not indentured servitude. The mention of domestic workers in the Agreed Conclusions is a very positive development in the discourse on the equal sharing of responsibilities at the household level, but HRA urges the expansion of the drafted language to provide all necessary protections to this population.

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*HRA has consultative status, Category II, with the United Nations Economic and Social Council*

Furthermore, the household framework should not be limited to the traditional ideas of a home, but extended to the temporary structures of refugee and IDP camps. Some of the world's largest populations of displaced persons reside in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the world's highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates are also found. Increased vulnerability to infection can be linked to the frequently reported sexual exploitation of refugee women by the very bodies charged with their care. Perpetrators include the host nations themselves, peacekeeping troops and humanitarian aid workers.

Accordingly, HRA asks the Commission to consider the plight of refugee and IDP women, who often live in male dominated camp structures, devalued and forced to survive by bartering sex for food, health care and other relief services. Recognizing the realities of refugee and IDP women will further true gender equality between men and women.

Therefore, HRA suggests the Commission take further steps to:

- Recognize, reaffirm and implement the Millenium Development Goals and Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement;
- Urge member states to recognize and ratify both the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees; and
- Hold violators accountable for the sexual abuse, racism and xenophobia faced by refugees, IDPs, and transnational domestic workers.

We welcome delegates and NGOs to review HRA's reports on these 3 topics. Thank you for your time, and we look forward to working with all of you to achieve these goals.