

## Reflection after CSW58

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Having spent two weeks of attending panel discussions in the Conference, parallel events and side events, I am reminded that although we may have different experiences and issues to deal with in our own local communities, we are all part of a global community and none of us is immune from the issues raised under the MDGs. A consistent message that comes up time and time in the different events is that we are not here just advocating for women movement, but about the issue for humanity – it is impossible to talk about global development without addressing the issue of gender equality and women empowerment. I am particularly impressed by the frank and inspiring sharing by Laymah Gbowee when she pointed out that we will come across some form of inequality whether we are in a developing and developed country. Inequity exists in places that we think we have overcome it and there are places of arrogance where we may have an attitude of champion and did nothing to achieve gender equality. She reminded us that we need to realize that we are not privileged but blessed and the reality is that we are living by the grace of God. It is also important that the Church should step into the public space to speak up about things that affect the society to change the tide and make the difference, no matter what community we are from we still have a part to play – let the world do what they do and do what we do best and what we know how. She also explained that advocacy was not about shouting loudly but making the case in a practical sense.

What she said was echoed in another panel discussion on the role religious leaders in accelerating the achievements of the MDGs where one of the speakers remarked that the challenge was not so much the eradication of poverty but the eradication of indifference. The speaker also remarked that religions were transformative and had the power to transform the conversation and it was the human qualities that make the difference.

Another message that impresses me is the vision of engaging men and boys in achieving the MDG goals, as UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka had pointed out, we should “reshape the reality” of gender roles. This may be a challenging issue in Hong Kong which is still influenced by a conservative Oriental culture of male dominance. However, this is not insurmountable. As the government is making efforts in public education programs in gender education and promotion of gender mainstreaming, the younger generation would be more receptive to the notion of gender equality. It is also helpful to note that gender equality is an issue for humanity as a whole and that men and women are co-partners in the efforts of achieving the MDGs.