



The Canadian delegation at the 2019 UNCSW events in New York. Photo credit: Vicky Smallman



## SHF UPDATE – SEPTEMBER 2021 EMPOWERING WOMEN FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Women across the world continue to face important barriers to gender equity, in the workplace or other. In Canada, Honduras or Mexico, women have yet to achieve wage equality. This is why the Steelworkers Humanity Fund dedicates part of its project funding to support programs on education and advocacy that addresses such issues and contribute to the advancement of women's rights.

In March of this year, Steelworkers Humanity Fund staff Laura Ramirez was part of the Canadian Labour Congress's affiliate/member delegation that participated in the virtual events of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW). Every year, representatives of Member States, United Nations entities and non-governmental organizations gather at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, to review

progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women, identify challenges, set global standards and norms and formulate policies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide. This year's UNCSW events and recommendations focused on promoting full and effective participation of women in leadership positions, decision-making spaces and public life as well as the elimination of gender-based violence. Although this edition was held online due to restrictions linked to the pandemic, it remained a key moment for international advocacy for the promotion of the rights of women, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. For CLC delegates, this represents an important platform to lobby the Canadian government to act on UNCSW's recommendations.



## SHARING THE KNOWLEDGE

Based on this experience, on June 23, the Steelworkers Humanity Fund organized a women's exchange that allowed Steelworker members and partner organizations from Peru, Honduras, Mexico and Bolivia to reflect about how restrictive masculinities affect the lives of women in their countries and initiate a discussion on ways to change these social patterns.

Jennifer McMaster, President of USW Local 4820, talked about the Canadian reality in which men are expected to fit into preconceived roles that affect women's lives negatively. She explained how restrictive masculinities affect both women and men: "Restrictive masculinities bring expectations that men should play specific roles and occupy defined

social spaces which result in the restriction of opportunities for women while creating pressure, stress and frustration in men's lives."

Much needs to be done, but an analysis of the root causes of restrictive masculinities provided a better understanding of how social and cultural impositions determine men's behaviours and decisions. It is also the starting point to building awareness on their impact on women and men and start developing strategies that can change social and cultural rules, here and abroad.

The Steelworkers Humanity Fund and its Southern partners are committed to continue working on changing a culture that leaves women out of the conversation on equality and economic development.

The Steelworkers Humanity Fund project in India focusses mainly on the economic empowerment of women. Photo credit: Guillaume Charbonneau



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