

Curb Sexual Harassments - Empower Families as Institution of Love and Respect

Marivir Montebon
July 15, 2025



L-R Forum moderator Nagma Shrestha, actress Sophie Fergi, and Marina Roman.

New York - At the youth-led side event titled "Sexual Harassment as a Barrier in Achieving Sustainable Development Goals," the Women's Federation for World Peace International proposed the empowerment of the often-forgotten institution, the family, with parental trainings on moral leadership.



Merly Barlaan (right), WFWPI VP for Admin and UN Relations Director: governments must empower families. Next to her is Marina Roman, ballerina and social media producer.

WFWPI Vice President and UN Relations director Merly Barlaan said that "investing in training of parents as educators and institutional leaders to model moral leadership is a big gap which governments

must act with urgency."

The well-attended forum on sexual harassment as a barrier on the realization of SDGs was organized by the International Association of Youth and Students for Peace, WFWPI, the Global Forum of Communities Discriminated on Work and Descent, and the Major Groups of Women and Youth on July 15, 2025. It was among the side events of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development organized by the ECOSOC at the UN New York headquarters.



The side event "Sexual Harassment as a Barrier in Achieving SDGs" was organized by the IASYP, WFWPI, MGWY, and the GFCD on July 15, 2025, at the UN NY headquarters.

Barlaan was the last speaker and was asked to respond to the question "how can value-based education and the role of families contribute to creating safer environments for young people? And how can we ensure these values are passed down across generations - not just through institutions, but through everyday life?"



L-R Alima Taal, Kathryn Traverse, and ECOSOC Vice President and Nepal UN Representative Lok

Bahadur Thapa.

"We cannot continue to invest in machines more than we invest in mothers. We cannot afford to train engineers for 20 years but expect parents to raise future citizens without any formal guidance. If we do not educate our young people in love, in responsibility, and in family life, we will continue to see the very fabric of society unravel. The SDGs are not only about economies, but they are also about people. And people are formed in families," remarked Barlaan.



Merly Barlaan and Alima Taal enjoy a conversation with UN representatives Dr. Elaine Duval and Juliette Hatulan after the forum.

She recommended to governments the following institutional measures which WFWPI is implementing in its 128 chapters worldwide.

- *Integrate holistic family-building education into national curricula - with the same seriousness and investment given to STEM education.
- *Create certification programs in marriage preparation and parenting, accessible to all couples before entering family life.
- *Fund community-based family education centers, particularly in rural and underserved areas, as part of national development and gender protection strategies.
- *Include families as central stakeholders in the whole-of-nation approach to violence prevention, peacebuilding, and moral leadership.

WFWPI's "Family as the School of Love" education programs integrate family-building, nation-building and peace building as the blueprint to a sustainable world peace where women and girls are safe and protected.

At the forum moderated by IAYSP's Nagma Shresta who was Miss Universe Nepal 2017, youth leaders shared their narratives on struggling and overcoming sexual harassment at home and in their workplaces.

Actress Sophie Fergi said it took a long time for her to stand up for herself when being exploited and harassed as a young actress.

For Shresta, ballerina Marina Roman, and human rights activist Alima Taal, a strong support system has helped them develop the courage to speak up and act against their harassers.

"When girls know their worth, and boys are taught to honor that worth, we raise a generation that will break the cycle of harm and build a future of peace. Now is the time for governments to act - to invest in family-building as a matter of national security, peace, and dignity," said Barlaan.