

# Critical Knowledges Across Borders

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## Workshop 3

### The role of civil society



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#### Sharing our Knowledge

There is no settled definition of civil society and what it encompasses. However, those working in this sector are driven by values not profit. Civil society is a resource for the protection of rights and democratic legitimacy in any constitutional arrangement. This workshop implements a 'dig where you stand' approach to enable women to consider their experience of civil society support, advocacy and activism around equality and other issues.

#### Expanding our knowledge

There are numerous case studies that document how women have engaged with referendums on constitutional change to gain rights and better equality outcomes for women. This session provides an expert overview of women's activism during the Scottish Independence referendum in 2014. The session examines how women organized into pro-independence and 'better together' campaigns. It highlights how demands for gender justice were situated within these women's campaigning groups' agendas.

#### Envisaging our futures

President Biden noted that: 'No fundamental social change occurs merely because government acts. It's because civil society, the conscience of a country, begins to rise up and demand - demand - demand change'. What is the role of civil society in relation to discussions of constitutional change? What resources do women's groups in civil society need? What can stakeholders do to support the women's sector? What opportunities are there for building deeper cross-border civil society links? Can deepening cross-border links support women's civil society work?