



## Notes from the field...

### Reports from the 62<sup>nd</sup> Commission on the Status of Women



It was all about women from March 12<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. During the 62<sup>nd</sup> Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 62), a bureau made up of representatives from Ireland, Kenya, Columbia, Estonia, and Bangladesh along with a committee made up of multiple member states from every region of the world, met to discuss the most pressing issues facing rural women in today's world. In addition to meeting tirelessly to negotiate with each other and civil society to draft and adopt an outcome document, there were also hundreds of side-events both inside the UN and in the surrounding community, providing informative and engaging presentations on women and girls' rights. Below are reports from IASSW members on a few of the numerous events that took place during the Commission. To check out more information about CSW please visit

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw62-2018>.

### The Maternity Leave Paradox: an IASSW Sponsored Event!

What do parental leave policies look like in your country? This was one of the discussions that took place in the Armenia Cultural Center during the IASSW sponsored side event at CSW 62. The workshop, titled the Maternity Leave Paradox, was facilitated by IASSW's own Dr. Shirley Gatenio-Gabel, accompanied by four doctoral students from Fordham University. Each presented data identifying the current policies related to parental leave benefits in their home countries as well as the barriers to accessing these benefits and explained that in every country, women living in rural areas face the most challenges in accessing maternity leave benefits.

Xiaoran Wang presented on China and explained that as a result of its low fertility rate and aging population, the Chinese government has adjusted its policies to encourage its people to have children. Currently a woman is allowed 98-128 days paid leave after having a child. The barriers to this policy stem from it being an employer-based program which limits who truly is eligible for it, especially those in informal or agricultural sector.



Dr. Gatenio-Gabel addresses the audience as Fordham students (Left to right) Yael Gil'Adi, Meg Knapp, Tanzilya Oren, and Xiaoran Wang prepare to give their presentations. Photo Credit: Justice Konowe

surprisingly), the US has the least protective policies of the four countries presented at the event. While other countries' policies typically cover paid leave for at least 3 months, many American women are forced to return to work within just a few short weeks. The US has policies that will protect women from being fired from their job to take time off from work, but there are no obligations for employers to provide paid leave to their employees.

Yael Gil'Adi reported that Venezuela recently updated its maternity leave policy to provide 26 weeks paid leave for mothers with 14 day paid paternity leave. Barriers that limit rural women's ability to enter the formal labor force limits access to benefits of these policies.

It is clear from the reports provided by the Fordham doctoral students that many countries have progressive maternity leave policies in place but there are significant barriers and challenges that governments need to begin to recognize in order to truly ensure equal access to all.

### **Shouldering the Burden; Climate Induced Migration**

Who carries the heaviest burden as the planet warms? The Committee on Migration and the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh showed that migrant women shoulder that burden of climate

Tanzilya Oren provided the audience with a perspective from another region, Uzbekistan. According to Tanzilya, Uzbekistan is a very rural country where many of the young women work as seasonal labor on cotton farms and are not recognized as part of the national labor force. Working in the informal sector means that women are not able to contribute to the Social Insurance Fund which provides paid leave for mothers for up to 126 days; they therefore are not eligible to access these benefits. Internal migrant workers also face barriers to benefits because they are linked to one's place of residence, so those who have to move around for work often become excluded from receiving benefits.

Meg Knapp covered maternity leave policies of the United States. Surprisingly (or perhaps not so



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change. During this CSW62 side event, co-sponsored by IASSW, panelists discussed the struggles that rural women face as a result of natural disasters and the effects of slow onset climate change.

Meher Afroze, MP the Honorable State Minister for Women and Children Affairs of Bangladesh discussed the land degradation her country is currently facing as a result of climate change. She explained that the low-lying deltas of Bangladesh are vulnerable to rising sea levels, and cyclones causing salination of soil and fresh water sources. The Minister also pointed out that women and children are more vulnerable to becoming internally displaced as a result of these impacts.



Panelists (left to right) Ms. Carla Mucavi, Ms. Nasima Begum, the Honorable Meher Afroze, Ms. Teresa Blumenstein, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Ms. Molly Gerke, and Ms. Traore Chazalnoel preparing to present on the burdens of rural women during climate change.  
Photo credit: Justice Konowe

In response to many devastating natural disasters, Bangladesh has also taken a leading role in developing disaster response and preparedness plans. Regional disaster preparedness meetings are held to develop response plans and strengthen structures. In addition, the country is developing technologies to prevent water contamination and developing flood resistant agriculture. In order to ensure economic securities, trainings are provided for women to gain skills to create economic opportunities for themselves outside farming.

Panelists Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, Carla Mucavi of the Farming and Agriculture Organization, and Mariam Traore Chazalnoel of the International Organization on Migration spoke on the efforts of the United Nations to address the needs of migrant women who are facing the impacts of climate change. The audience also heard from Molly Gerke, Co-founder of the Open the Door Foundation, who presented a grassroots perspective from Vanuatu.

This event was very well attended by both civil society, and UN agencies. It was exciting to see such a strong interest in this very important topic of migrant women and their burdens from climate change.



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## Gender Based Violence

From Girls to Women: Gender Based Violence Across the Life Course, was an evening side event sponsored by UNICEF and The Global Evidence Consortium (GAGE). The introductory program flyer stated that every 10 minutes, somewhere in the world, an adolescent girl dies as a result of violence. The session focused on the impact of gender-based violence on the development of adolescent girls in developing countries, humanitarian crises and protracted conflicts. The UNICEF representative recognized the incredible energy within the UN surrounding CSW 62 as she welcomed everyone to the meeting. She described the UNICEF program, *You Report*, which is a digital platform for providing information for youth. This website, easily available on a mobile phone, provides information on reproductive health, gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS to help youth make informed decisions. There are already 5 million reporters and users of this website.

A representative from CARE stressed the difficulty of changing the economic, social and cultural norms which lead to gender based violence and gender inequalities. She believes that programs need to be implemented very early on in a child's life within the family, in order to educate and ultimately challenge gender norms.

Conflict and war exacerbate gender-based violence against adolescent girls. Not only is rape used as a weapon of war, but the loss of economic viability due to war leads to child marriage and sexual exploitation. Conflict also destroys communities and social protection networks which lead adolescent girls to become more vulnerable. The representative from the International Rescue Committee described programs in war ravaged areas which are organized and led by girls because of their essential knowledge of their own needs.

In Zimbabwe, the No Child Bride Program, provides girls with reproductive health services, mobile legal aid services, and supports educational opportunities. One sixteen-year old girl who was forced into marriage and had two children, attended this program and with its support, left her husband, returned to school and won a constitutional court case against child marriage. Grassroots initiatives with input from adolescent girls are essential to helping, educating and supporting girls and communities against gender-based violence.

## Modern Slavery

Lichtenstein and the United Kingdom hosted the side event, *Modern Slavery and its Impact on Women and Girls*. Representatives from Nigeria, Argentina and Kenya each spoke on specific initiatives, policies and laws their countries have



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implemented to fight human trafficking, sexual abuse and enslaved labor. They discussed the factors that enable trafficking such as food insecurity, poverty, conflict and gender inequalities and then identified solutions and strategies to prevent slavery and trafficking. Extremist groups, including ISIS and Boko Haram, use rape, sexual abuse, kidnapping and violence as acts of war. One panelist explained that most countries have made trafficking illegal, yet few perpetrators ever get prosecuted. Victims need to be supported and stronger legal repercussions need to be established.

A representative from the Freedom Fund, an international non-profit working on this issue, outlined grassroots best practices which include: raising awareness, addressing root causes, engaging entire community and most importantly, building girls' and women's agency and power. The last speaker, a young immigrant woman from Vietnam, introduced RISE, the NGO she founded to promote the rights of rape survivors. Her personal story of being raped and then confronting subsequent years of exploitation and heartache, led her to push legislation, the Sexual Violence Survival Act, through Congress after graduating from Harvard. Her story and her work are an inspiration. In conclusion, the panel called for an end to impunity for traffickers and the enactment of basic protections for victims of sexual assault and enslavement.

## Women in Rural Communities and Rights to Land Ownership

Women's right to land ownership was the subject of the CSW 62 side event: *Implementing Tools for Improving Rural Women's and Girl's Security of Tenure and Delivery of the SDGs*. The panelists discussed the vital nature of land ownership for rural women and how implementing policies affecting their right to own and cultivate land will work towards achieving the SDGs. Owning and farming their own land will ultimately contribute to the elimination of poverty and hunger, will provide more funds for girls' education and work towards gender equality and female empowerment.

Traditionally, land is passed down within families from male to male members, and widows and the sick are thrown off their lands or their property is demolished. They therefore lose all economic viability as well as their homes. Poor women are also more vulnerable to being taken advantage of by land dealers and corrupt government officials. As the Deputy Executive Director of UN Women explained, adoption of policies and laws ensuring the right for rural women to own land is a vital part of achieving many of the SDGs by 2030.



## Why Women?

### THE WHY

Films that may be useful to social work educators were shown at a

CSW 62 side event hosted by the Government of Denmark and the WHY Foundation. The WHY, “Initiates, produces and distributes public media projects to a global audience through broadcast, cross media platforms and outreach activities to ensure that all people have free access to independent information”. They have produced documentary series entitled *Why Democracy?* and *Why Poverty?* Their newest film is *Why Slavery?* WHY Women, a subgroup of The Why, produces films in order to raise awareness about girls’ and women’s health, rights and well-being worldwide. Three short films and one long film all deal with issues directly affecting rural women and girls in developing countries. The first, “It Started with a Duck”, shows how during the monsoon season, one woman and her family were unable to produce crops because of flooding and the loss of their chickens. An NGO provided a duck to the family, who had more ducks. These ducks produced eggs which the woman could then sell. The ducks were unharmed during the monsoon because they could swim in the flooding rivers. The money made from selling the duck eggs allowed this woman to buy a goat and a cow and the family became financially secure. This

story is about mitigating the effects of climate change on rural communities.

The next film, “The Benefits of a Toilet”, describes the importance of having access to a toilet for girls. Not only does it provide privacy but improves safety and has shown to keep girls in school. The narrator ends the film by proclaiming that access to basic sanitation and water is a basic human right.

The third film, “What Ami Didn’t Know”, is about the importance of providing maternal and reproductive health care in rural areas in order to reduce maternal mortality in rural Sierra Leone.

The last film was about a young Iranian girl who was very keen on Astronomy and longed to become an astronaut one day. She came up against the rigid, patriarchal norms of Iranian society, such as girls not going out alone at night, early marriage and the role of young women as wives and not professionals, when trying to advance her studies. She fought her family to let her go out stargazing at night and attend university. Ultimately, she married an enlightened man who wanted her to succeed professionally and supported her goals. She eventually meets the first Iranian woman astronaut who mentors her and pays for her university education. These films are excellent, and I highly recommend viewing them on the website

[www.thewhy.dk](http://www.thewhy.dk).



## Celebrating Social Work Day at the United Nations!

### 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Social Work Day at the United Nations



Dr. Annamaria Campanini and Dr. Shirley Gatenio-Gabel before the start of Social Work day at the UN.  
Photo Credit: Meredith Courtney

A great day for social workers at the United Nations!! On March 26<sup>th</sup> more than 700 social work students, educators, and practitioners came together to celebrate Social Work month at the United Nations. This event was co-sponsored by IASSW and IFSW to provide social workers the opportunity to learn what issues are being discussed and work is being done at the UN, as well as making the United Nations aware of social workers and the work we do all around the world.

Those in attendance represented 17 U.S. States, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, Canada, Japan, the

United Kingdom, India, Thailand, China, Argentina, Spain, Zimbabwe, Romania, New Zealand, Turkey, Ireland, Italy, and Grenada. The session began in true social work tradition with a brief opportunity for the audience to greet those sitting next to one another and make new friends. Even the panelists got up to introduce themselves to one another! The theme of this year's event was Climate Change, the Sustainable Development Goals, and Social Work. Panelists presented from various perspectives on the impacts of climate change and its importance to the social work profession.

The first speaker was IASSW's own fearless leader and President, Dr. Annamaria Campanini who began by highlighting the profession's long history with engaging in environmental justice, including the work of Jane Addams within the settlement movement addressing waste and sanitation issues to ensure the health and wellbeing of the population. She recognized that in today's world, there is a need for social workers to look at climate change to ensure protection of vulnerable populations.

The second speaker, His Excellency Ambassador Teburoro Tito of Kiribati, spoke with pride about the resiliency of, and the burdens carried by the Kiribati people in the face of climate change. He spoke of the social, economic, and emotional consequences occurring as sea levels rise and land becomes uninhabitable and called for social workers



to take action to help save his land and other small island nations like it.



(Left to Right): Dr. Meredith Powers, Ms. Traore Chazanoel, his Excellency, Ambassador Teburoro Tito, and Mr. Daniel Thomas.  
Photo Credit: Meredith Courtney

Mr. Daniel Thomas, Special Advisor of Advocacy and Communications at UNICEF, spoke about the effort of the United Nations to address climate change. He gave examples such as the 2014 climate summit, COP 21, and the Paris Agreement. He also recognized that there are those with the belief that the UN is ineffective but reminded the audience that without the UN there would not be a space for international conversations to take place. While progress may be slow at times, it is progress nonetheless.

Mariam Traore Chazanoel, with the International Organization on Migration, expressed her appreciation for social workers, disclosing that several members of her family are social workers. She also highlighted the connection between climate

change and migration and shed light on the need for policy makers to recognize climate migrants.

Mr. Mark Chambers, Director of Mayor Bill De Blasio’s office of Sustainable Development in New York City, brought the global perspective back to a local level by discussing the initiatives within the city to reduce waste and pollution. He also emphasized the need for every citizen to be engaged in their communities, stating we must “fight like your life depends on it, because it does.”

Our final two speakers were Dr. Meredith Powers of the University of North Carolina, Greensborough, and Dr. Rory Truell, Secretary general of the International Federation of Social Workers. Each highlighted the role social workers play in ecological justice and the need for this to be a key part of our practice in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.



Social Work Day at the UN Planning Committee (left to right): Dr. Cronin (IFSW), Ms. Jolaade Olatunji (IFSW Intern), Dr. Gatenio-Gabel (IASSW), Ms. Madeline Lee (IFSW Intern), Ms. Justice Konowe (IASSW Intern), Dr. Congress (IFSW), Ms. Shrevie Shepherd (IASSW Intern), Dr. Bragin (IASSW), and Dr. Mama (IFSW)

Photo Credit: Meredith Courtney



IASSW interns Justice Konowe and Shrevie Shepherd were thrilled to be a part of this engaging event and have the opportunity to take part in a celebration occurring at the UN and in 151 countries around the world. IASSW planning team members Shirley Gatenio-Gabel (Co-Chair with Michael Cronin), Carol Cohen and Martha Bragin should be saluted for their contributions to this important event. Happy World Social Work Day to all!

Work and the International Federation of Social Workers. This event was planned and organized by four social work interns from the University of Connecticut, Fordham University and Monmouth University.

The theme was Sustainable Development Goals, Climate Change and Social Work. Most of the participants were well versed in climate change issues and were excited to explore the connection between climate change and their day to day social work practice. They were also ready to understand how they can effect change in their local communities in order to mitigate the effects of more frequent natural disasters and a growing number of displaced populations worldwide.

After an initial introduction to the Sustainable Development Goals, the attendees broke into six



IASSW members represented at Social Work day the UN (left to right): Darla Spence Coffey, Shrevie Shepherd (intern), Justice Konowe (intern), Dr. Annamaria Campanini, Dr. Lynne Healy, Dr. Rebecca Thomas, Dr. Shirley Gatenio-Gabel, and Dr. Martha Bragin. Photo Credit: Meredith Courtney

### Social Work Day; A Student Forum

Social Work Students from all over the United States descended on Fordham University in New York City on March 25 for the Student Forum held in conjunction with Social Work Day at the United Nations. The afternoon event was sponsored by the International Association of the Schools of Social



IFSW interns Madeline Lee and Jolaade Olatunji, and IASSW intern Shrevie Shepherd share their personal experiences that brought them each to become passionate about climate change as social workers. Photo Credit: Meredith Courtney



breakout sessions, each exploring a different topic related to climate change and human populations. These sessions included: Responding to Natural Disasters by Dr. Madelyn Miller; Climate Change from a Grassroots Perspective by Molly Gerke; Advocating for Climate Change Rights by Sister Margaret O'Dwyer; Climate Change and Infectious Diseases by Dr. James Shepherd; Environmental Advocacy with Terri Klemm; as well as a showing of the documentary *Climate Refugees*.



Sister Margaret O'Dwyer of the Daughters of Charity discusses advocating for climate change rights to social work student at Fordham University during the Student Forum event.  
Photo Credit: Meredith Courtney

The participants were enthusiastic about what they learned in each of these sessions and felt inspired to increase awareness of all of these issues within their communities, schools and workplaces.

The afternoon ended with a question and answer session with leaders from the international organizations, Darla Coffey, Executive Director of the Council on Social Work Education and IASSW Board member, IASSW President, Annamaria

Campanini, and IFSW leaders, Priska Fleischlin and Nigel Hall. They all spoke on how students can become involved in each of these organizations as well as how participants can become prepared for a career in social work, whether nationally or internationally, in an ever-changing world.

The event ended with everyone excited to attend Social Work Day at the UN the following morning.

### **Faculty Roundtable Initiated at the Social Work Day Weekend**

“Ensuring international content and learning for all students” was the topic for a faculty roundtable discussion held simultaneously with the Student Forum on March 25<sup>th</sup>. The event, sponsored by the Katherine A. Kendall Institute of the Council on Social Work Education and the International Association of Schools of Social Work, engaged faculty members from across the United States and several other countries, who were in New York to accompany student groups to the annual Social Work Day at the United Nations. Participants shared good practices in a lively discussion and posed additional questions for future examination. Several speakers expressed the goal of providing every student with an international exchange study or practice experience but recognize that cost and other practical considerations make this unlikely. An alternative is to engage students more locally in multicultural settings, especially work with



immigrant communities. Other approaches noted by participants are to involve students in advocacy on global issues such as human rights and environmental justice, connect them to international research projects, and ensure that course readings



Faculty in attendance during the round table event at Fordham University on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018

are drawn from authors in diverse countries.

A few participants recommended that more clarity be sought on the goals for international curriculum. As one asked, “What do we mean by international content and why are we adding it?” Although extensively explored in the literature, it is essential to communicate a clear rationale to the wider educational community in order to move forward. Ultimately, a more seamless approach would be preferable, rather than putting content areas into “silos” that separate rather than integrate knowledge. Ideas for extending the conversation through international dialogue included convening an informal interest group discussion at the Dublin world conference in July 2018 and planning for a session as part of the formal program at the

IASSW/ICSW Conference in Rimini in 2020. IASSW President Annamaria Campanini was enthusiastic about this idea. In the meantime, participants recommended another faculty group session as part of the 2019 Social Work Day at the UN events.

### Upcoming events:

#### 17th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII)

**Date:** 16-27 April 2018

**Location:** United Nations Headquarters, New York

**Theme:** “Indigenous peoples’ collective rights to lands, territories and resources”

For more information on this event or to follow online please visit

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/unpfii-sessions-2/2017-2.html>

Respectfully,

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