



SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER

Social Work Day at the UN- Creating a More Inclusive World: Overcoming Barriers to EnABLE Environments

Social Work Day at the United Nations in 2023 highlighted the role of social workers in addressing the different barriers faced by individuals with disabilities around the globe. The day brought together social work students, faculty, social workers, advocates, and experts from various countries and states from the United States to discuss and share their experiences in the field of social work and disability. The theme of the event was “Creating a More Inclusive World: Overcoming Barriers to EnABLE Environments”. The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW), and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) of the UN and the Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN sponsored the event. The speakers’ presentations explored how social workers can promote a more inclusive and accessible environment for individuals with disabilities by tackling issues such as education, employment, health care, housing, and other social services.



The event began with opening remarks from IASSW member, Dr. Shirley Gatenio- Gabel. She emphasized the need for collaborative efforts to address complex accessible barriers and acknowledged the crucial role of social workers as agents of change. ICSW UN main representative, Dr. Sergei Zelenev introduced the first speaker, John Wilmoth, the officer-in-charge of the UN DESA’s Division for Inclusive Social Development and the director of the Population Division. Mr. Wilmoth highlighted DESA’s work towards accessibility, inclusion, and the rights of people with disabilities. He pointed out that one of the biggest challenges involves the failure to acknowledge the diverse backgrounds and lived experiences of individuals with disabilities. He concluded by recalling the ongoing need to strengthen partnerships between governments, the UN, civil society organizations, and people with disabilities to create a more inclusive environment. Helena Jauhiainen, a human rights expert in the Permanent Mission of Finland to the UN in New York highlighted Finland's efforts to implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as well as the major gaps encountered by this country. IFSW member, Dr. Robin Mama introduced the third speaker, Gopal Mitra, the global lead on disability and development in Programme Group, New York Headquarters. He provided an overview of how to strengthen the social service workforce for children with disabilities. Dr. Patricia Welch Saleeby,

Social Work program director, and associate professor at Bradley University in Illinois, provided an overview of her work as a social worker and international advocate for disability rights. She highlighted her international scholarly work promoting the international classification of functioning, disability, and health in clinical practice and in the application of the capability approach as an alternative framework for better situating disability. The final speaker was Walter X. Kalman, the executive vice president for the New Jersey chapter of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. He provided an overview of the parental approach to disability specifically in the journey of parents with individuals with disabilities. The event concluded with questions from the audience and a video about the international perspectives of disability- a video shown at the global student conference, developed by the student planning committee.

You can watch Social Work Day at the UN via the UN LiveTV:

<https://media.un.org/en/asset/k1q/k1qxtf4vjf>



Global Social Work Student Conference- Respecting Diversity Through Joint Social Action: Reframing Disability to Ability

The Global Student Conference occurs annually in tandem with Social Work Day at the UN. The student conference was

born out of students' desire to engage interpersonally about topics discussed at SW day at the UN. The theme of the event focused on "Respecting Diversity Through Joint Social Action: Reframing Disability to Ability". The International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW), International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW), and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) sponsored the event. The event was also hosted by Fordham University, The University of Connecticut and Monmouth University.

The appeal of the student conference focused on community, action, and interaction. The event was primarily for students, professionals, and educators, following a similar theme as Social Work Day at the UN. The event started with opening remarks from IFSW student interns, Julia Larock (Student from Fordham University), and Kelsey Wills (Student from Monmouth University). They welcomed all participants to the event and let student member, Kusum Adhikari, introduce the first speaker, Dr. Mary Beth Bruder, Director of the University of Connecticut A.J. Papanikou Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service. Dr. Bruder provided an overview of disability and how to build productive life in society for people with disabilities through interdisciplinary work. Student member, Maira Asif, introduced the second speaker, Mr. Olusola Samuel Owonikoko, Director of Project Enable Africa based in Nigeria. Mr. Owonikoko discussed how his organization has provided training and support services to over 250 organizations to develop inclusive policies, practices, and programs, training over 5,000 young persons with disabilities and promoting employment opportunities in Nigeria.

Student co-chair and IASSW intern, Eunices Pineda, introduced the third

speaker, Benedicta Oyèdayò Oyèwólé, an intersectional feminist and advocate from Nigeria. Ms Oyèwólé presented the importance of using an intersectionality framework when addressing disability barriers and promoting disability rights. The presentation was followed by an interactive activity, directed by student member Maira Asif. Rev. Dr. Holly Bonner, Director of Spirituality and civic engagement at Wagner College then presented the social perceptions of disability and counter-narratives, including her personal story as a social worker with a disability. Student Co-chair Kelsey Wills, introduced the showing of a video created by the student committee before calling on the final speaker, Linda Levin, a recent MSW graduate from Fordham University and former IFSW student intern. Ms Levin provided a call of action to social work students, faculty, and other participants. The event concluded with closing remarks from Eunices Pineda, questions, and a networking session.

If you would like to watch the recording from the student conference, please visit:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mFqA2pfUWg>



New Education Resource for Social Work Educators- International Perspectives of Disability Video

As part of the Global Student Conference, the student committee developed a video International Perspectives on Disability. The purpose of the video was to provide an educational tool to those

unfamiliar with disability and a platform to hear the changes people with disabilities from different countries want. Eunices Pineda, IASSW Intern at the UN NY (and student at the University of Connecticut) was the one in charge of the final editing. Joining Eunices on the video committee were Julianna Larock (IFSW Student representative, and student from Fordham University), Kelsey Wills (IFSW Student representative, and student from Monmouth University), Maira Asif (Student from Rutgers University), and Kusum Adhikari (student from Adelphi University). The video was showcased during Social Work Day at the UN as well. It features speakers from Pakistan, China, Ecuador and the U.S., all of whom have lived experience with disabilities.

You can have access to the video via youtube and the IASSW website:

<https://www.iassw-aiets.org/featured/11162-education-resource-international-perspective-s-of-disability-video/>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sL0jU3ut3K4>



Commission on the Status of Women, Sixty-seventh session (CSW67) Opening of the session & General discussion

The annual Commission on the Status of Women is usually the biggest event held at the UN with delegates flooding in from all parts of the world, creating a very exciting event. The opening session, however, is mostly procedural. Nonetheless, readers may be interested to know which

countries played leadership roles. Commission chair, H.E. Ms. Mathu Joyini of South Africa. She welcomed all delegates and participants to the 67th Session of the Commission for the Status of Women (CSW67). The representatives from Argentina and Mongolia were chosen as the vice chairs of the 67th commission. The representative of Morocco was elected to stay in the working group on communication for the 67th and the 68th session of the commission as well as the representatives of Bangladesh and the Dominican Republic.

The event continued with opening remarks from the Commission's chair, the UN Secretary-General, the president of the Economic and Social Council, the President of the General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology, the Representative of Civil Society, and a youth representative. Participation of top officials shows the importance of the CSW. In her opening statement, the chair stated that she is glad that the commission was in person this year. She expressed her solidarity with all women and girls in conflict and disaster-affected areas. She presented the commission's theme for this year, "Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls". She also introduced the review theme "Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls." from CSW62. She stated that the commission will evaluate the progress in the implementation of the agreed conclusions from the 62nd session as well as consider an emerging issue of getting back on track in achieving gender equality in the context of overlapping emergencies. She emphasized that the commission will have a

youth section for the first time where young people will engage and discuss the priority theme. UN Women Executive Director, Sima Bahous emphasized the role of the commission which is to develop norms and standards for urgent issues such as technology. She highlighted how gender inequality, the gender-pay gap, technology inaccessibility, and gender violence influence the current challenges faced by women. The digital technology revolution presents a new set of opportunities for women and girls as well as challenges to gender inequalities. She pointed out how gender equality cannot be archivable if we do not close the current technology gap. The session concluded with general discussions from the members of the state and delegates. *For more information about CSW67, please visit:*

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw67-2023>



CSW67 Side Event- WGG Youth Conversation Circles at the CSW67

IASSW intern Eunices Pineda and IASSW member, Dr. Rebecca Davis served as co-facilitators in a side event hosted by the Working Group on Girls. The event reviewed the gendered impacts of innovation and technology as well as identifying solutions and recommendations that promote a more inclusive and equitable digital innovation. Girls and young women gathered for a 90-minute discussion in groups of 10. The Conversation Circles were led and facilitated by girls (14 - 18 yrs. old) with the support of young women and adult women.. The main discussion topics included Access and Infrastructure, Gender

bias and STEM awareness, Education and Training, Harmful online interactions, and Leadership and participation. The conversation started by asking each participant to only write their first name to protect their identity. The moderator welcomed all the participants and directed them to their respective rooms to start the conversation circle. Groups were assigned to be at the virtual room for 45 minutes. The results of the conversations were collected after 45 minutes. Some of the common themes were: underrepresentation in leadership, lack of support, unsafe virtual environments, harassment, and gender bias. The event concluded with closing remarks from the moderator. The recommendations and results will be shared with UN Women and Member States to promote new recommendations and resources for girls and young women.

Rethinking how to Bridge the Gender Digital Divide (CSW67 Side Event)



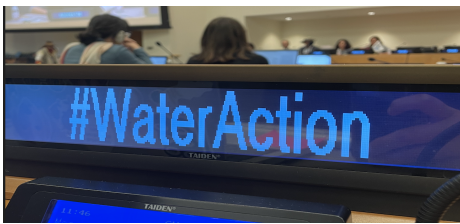
The impact of the gender digital divide on gender equality, economic empowerment, education, and inclusive political participation were emphasized in a side event hosted by the African Union and the European Union. Fatima Kyari Mohammed, African Union Ambassador, pointed out how bridging the gap of gender digital technology is also bridging the gap in development, particularly inequality, and empowerment. She highlighted the importance to meet girls and women where they are, addressing accessibility, cultural

appropriateness, literacy, and infrastructure. She concluded that the internet and technology can become enablers for women and girls. Panelist Ugochi Daniels, Chief of Staff at the UN Agency for Palestine Refugees, highlighted how the digital revolution has changed the lives of billions but continues to be disproportionately distributed among genders. She pointed out how migrant women are at the greatest disadvantage due to the lack of access to digital information and secure telecommunication. She stated that women provided 50% of global remittances in 2020 but most of them did not have access to proper systems to transfer remittances, causing them to use traditional methods which are more expensive and riskier. She concluded that bridging the digital gap can contribute to the advancement of gender equality and increase significant economic benefits for women and girls. Maria Soraya Rodriguez Ramos, a member of the European Parliament, highlighted that ensuring access to equality and accessible education including a focus on digital literacy can be a game changer to make gender equality progress. She noted that education cannot change the world but education can change women and girls who will change the world.

Ms. Sinead Bovell, a youth digital expert, provided a brief introduction about her work at WAYE- a tech education company, and how women and girls tend not to be part of the digital conversation. Then the next panelist, Sweetie Anang, a STEM advocate, spoke on technology as a key component of economic development in Africa. She also pointed out how the advances in technology and social media have increased employment opportunities and Africa's GDP. She concluded that it is important to protect women and not categorize them into a homogenous group but instead emphasize the diversity among

women around the world. The final panelist, Chido MPemba, the African Union Youth Senior Official, highlighted the different initiatives within the African Union including the 1 Million Next Level Campaign. She emphasized the importance of building the skills of women and continuing to keep up with the current digital trends. The event concluded with questions and discussion.

United Nations World Water Conference 2023



For the first time in decades, the UN held a global conference focused solely on water and sanitation. Several IASSW representatives participated in the World Water Conference held at UN headquarters from March 22-24. This major conference explored diverse issues related to water and reviewed progress on Sustainable Development Goal 6: “Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.” Hundreds of side events covered the major themes of the meeting: Water for Health, Water for Development, and Water for Climate, Reliance and Environment. Clean water is essential for health and the Covid pandemic underscored global inequality in access to this essential resource. Millions of people lacked access to soap and clean water and were unable to follow even the basic prevention strategy of hand-washing. As is true for other SDGs, progress has been too slow for targets to be met by 2030 without significant scaling up of efforts.

In parts of the world, there is available surface water, but it is not safe to drink without further treatment. Other

countries suffer from drought that severely limits access to water for agriculture, industry, and for households. Conversely, floods are devastating more and more areas of the world, from California to Pakistan. The conference was highly interdisciplinary. Participants included experts from public health, medicine, agriculture, civil engineering, disaster response, education, social work, international law and more. They represented NGOs, governments, universities and corporations. Innovative projects were presented, many of which were partnerships between NGOs and the private sector or NGOs and governments. The UN team would be interested to know if any IASSW members are involved in water-related projects.

For access to materials from the conference, visit

<https://sdgs.un.org/conferences/water2023>

First Plenary Meeting - UN 2023 Water Conference



The importance of a UN meeting is indicated by the presence of high level participants. By this measure, the Water Conference was definitely a top level event. After a musical opening ceremony, the opening session plenary began with remarks by UN Secretary-General, António Guterres. After the election of King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands and President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon as conference presidents, the Secretary General pointed out that water is humanity’s lifeblood and a human right. He highlighted how water overconsumption and

unsustainable use have put water in a dangerous position. He called on member states to create sustainable changes that ensure water preservation. Next, H.E Csaba Kőrösi, the 77th president of the General Assembly, highlighted the consequences of water mismanagement and failure to provide sustainable solutions. He stressed the importance of making water a global public good by adjusting policies, legislation, and financing accordingly. More opening remarks followed from the president of the Economic and Social Council, the Secretary-General of the Conference, and the Secretary General of Economic and Social Affairs. Bangladesh, Belize, Burundi, Colombia, Chile, Denmark, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iceland, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, and Saudi Arabia were assigned as Vice-Presidents by acclamation. H.E Catalina Velasco Camposano from Colombia was assigned as Rapporteur-General of the Conference.

Luis Alberto Arce Catacora, President of Bolivia opened the general debate. He emphasized that Bolivia recognizes water as the most fundamental right to life under the basis of Mother Earth and good living. In a remark that will be appreciated by social workers, he concluded that sustainable action must be taken to protect this fundamental human right, emphasizing that water is not an environmental issue but a social and an economic issue as well. President of Iraq, Abdul Latif Rashid emphasized the current water crisis in Iraq, affecting lives, employment, human displacement, and threatening food security and biodiversity. He concluded on calling member states to make measures and arrangements to ensure water accessibility for everyone. The general discussion was continued by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Slovenia, Libya, Gambia, Tuvalu, Namibia, Cuba, Vietnam, Barbados, European Union, Aruba, and

Netherlands. The opening ceremony concluded after remarks by the youth representative of the Netherlands.

For more information about the Water Conference, please visit:

<https://sdgs.un.org/conferences/water2023>

ECOSOC Youth Forum 2023

Every year the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) organizes the ECOSOC Youth Forum. The event provides young individuals a platform to discuss important issues related to sustainable development and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This year, the event took place from 25 to 27 April 2023, focusing on the theme of ECOSOC and the 2023 UN High-level Political Forum on sustainable development (HLPF) on “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at levels”. During the Forum, participants engage in various interactive sessions, including panel discussions with member states, workshops, sharing recommendations and innovative ideas, and presentations.

For more information about the ECOSOC Youth Forum, please visit:

<https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/2023-ecosoc-youth-forum>



The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2023

The twenty-second session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) took place from 17-28 April 2023. The forum provides a platform for

individual communities to discuss their concerns, share their experiences, and engage in dialogue with member states, UN agencies, and civil society organizations along with other stakeholders. The forum highlighted a wide range of issues related to indigenous peoples' rights, development, culture, and well-being. The priority theme of the session was “Indigenous Peoples, human health, planetary and territorial health, and climate change: a Rights-based Approach”. The forum raises awareness about the challenges faced by indigenous communities worldwide and facilitates discussions in the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

For more information about the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, please visit:

<https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/unpfii/unpfii-twenty-second-session-17-28-april-2023>



UPCOMING EVENTS SECTION

The High-level Political Forum 2023



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This year, The High-level Political Forum will take place from Monday, 10 July, to Wednesday, 19 July 2023. The event is expected to have both in-person and virtual events. The priority theme for this

year is “Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels.” The event will unpack the effective and inclusive recovery measures to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and explore actionable policy guidance for the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at all levels. Check to see if your country is presenting a Voluntary National Review (VNR). High level panels and side events can be watched on UN WebTV.

For more information see:

<https://hlpf.un.org/2023>

SDG Summit 2023



This year, an SDG Summit will take place from Monday, 18 September, to Tuesday, 19 September, during the United Nations General Assembly high-level week. During the Summit, Heads of State and Government will follow-up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This will be the second SDG Summit since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in September 2015. 2023 marks the high-way point in the 15 year 2030 agenda. The need to dramatically scale up efforts is sure to be emphasized. The NGO Committee for Social Development is conducting outreach to member bodies to gather information for input to the Summit. You are encouraged to respond to the call for short video or written statements that will be circulated to members before the end of June.

The summit can be watched on UN WebTV.

For more information see:

[https://www.un.org/en/conferences/SDGSu
mmit2023](https://www.un.org/en/conferences/SDGSu
mmit2023)

Farewell from Eunices, IASSW Intern 2022-2023!



As my internship with IASSW comes to an end, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the invaluable experience and opportunities I have had during my time here. As an intern, I had the privilege of

working alongside exceptionally talented and knowledgeable individuals who not only shared their expertise but also promoted an inclusive and collaborative environment. The guidance, mentorship, and support I received from my supervisor and the IASSW team have been invaluable and shaped my understanding of global issues, international policy, and sustainable development goals. The skills and knowledge I have gained will undoubtedly serve as a solid foundation for my future endeavors.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Lynne Healy and the entire IASSW team for providing me with this remarkable opportunity. I am deeply grateful for your trust, guidance, and encouragement throughout my field placement. The impact of this



experience will resonate with me for years to come. I look forward to using the knowledge acquired and implementing it in my professional journey.