

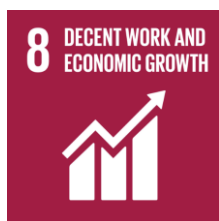


# Notes from the field...

## Spring 2017

By the IASSW Interns at the United Nations, New York, 2016-2017

### 61<sup>st</sup> Commission on the Status of Women



The 61st Commission of the Status of Women occurred from 13th-24th of March 2017. The theme of the event was “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work” and was led by the Bureau (countries appointed to the leadership group for the commission) consisting of representatives from Brazil, Egypt, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Japan, and Germany. Key points in the discussions included the affirmation of the Beijing Platform Agenda, adopted in 1995 at the Women’s Conference, and the need to integrate the framework into the 2030 Agenda, the recognition of structural barriers to women’s advancement, the importance of strong national mechanisms to advance the rights of women and the importance of including boys and men in gender equality action. The Commission also mentioned the important contributions women have to the economy as well as the positive impact that is brought by migrant women. Particular concern was expressed over the occupational segregation between men and women, pervasive gender gaps, and disproportionate impacts of poverty and climate change on women, especially women with disabilities.

Some recommendations that emerged included ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of

All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention of the Rights of the Child with their additional protocols by all remaining countries, implementation of the conventions of the International Labour Organization (1930, 1948, 1949, 1951, 1957, 1958, 1973, and of 1999), enforcement and creation of national laws prohibiting gender-based discrimination, promotion of the education of women and girls, and the mainstreaming of gender sensitivity into all education and training programs. For more information, please visit

<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw61-2017> for outcome documents and lists of side events and parallel events.

### IASSW Participation in CSW 61 Parallel Events:

#### **IASSW Presents on Women’s Economic Empowerment at CSW Parallel Event**

**(By Dr. Shirley Gatenio Gabel):**



UN Team members presented at a parallel event of the 61st UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on behalf of IASSW. The title of the presentation

“Pitfalls of Today's Neoliberal Economy on Women's Economic

Empowerment” drew a sizable crowd of women from Africa, China, Britain, Eastern Europe, South America, Canada and the United States. The women were attorneys, doctoral and university students, practitioners and academics. The presentation was based on the survey that Dr. Darja Zavirsek carried out on behalf of IASSW’s Women's Interest Group (WIG) and was used to stimulate discussion of the women’s experiences with neoliberalism ranging from dating experiences on college campuses, the workplace, to the fight for asylum. The women discussed interpretations and consequences of intersectionality using their own or well-known experiences in their country and possible actions to take to reverse neoliberal trends. Dr. Shirley Gatenio Gabel shared information about how to hold countries accountable using the Sustainable Development Goals at the United Nations including a timeline of advocacy opportunities.

### IASSW Participates in Subcommittee on Xenophobia and Inclusion Parallel

Event:



Participants in the IASSW CSW Parallel Event with Presenter, Shirley Gatenio Gabel (back row, 3<sup>rd</sup> from right)

The NGO Committee on Migration (CoM)’s Subcommittee on Xenophobia and Social Inclusion hosted a parallel event for the Commission on the Status of Women entitled “Countering

Xenophobia: The Social and Economic Contribution of Migrant Women”. IASSW

Intern Melanie Berzins served on the subcommittee throughout the academic year and was centrally involved in the planning and execution of the event. The uniquely structured event featured a diverse variety of media to convey the impact of xenophobia on the lives of refugees and migrants, including the generously-granted use of photos from the [I am a Migrant Campaign](#). The event opened with introductory remarks by moderator and CoM Executive Committee member Eva Richter, followed by a collaborative reading by subcommittee members Saionara König-Reis, Iman Habib, Pamela Morgan and Melanie Berzins of the poem “Home”, by British-Somali poet Warsan Shire.

Marta Roig, Senior Social Affairs Officer for UN DESA, presented on the topic of leaving no one behind and the imperative of inclusive development, followed by Stefania Piffanelli, Deputy Director of UN

Information Centre, who presented on the [UN TOGETHER Campaign](#), an umbrella initiative that



IASSW Intern Melanie Berzins introduces “Debunking Myths to End Xenophobia” Infographic at Committee on Migration CSW Parallel Event



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aims to work in partnership with governments and civil society to combat xenophobia and promote solidarity with migrants and refugees around the world. These thought-provoking and informative presentations were followed by audience Q&A that highlighted both the hopes and fears of attendees regarding the fate of migrants and refugees in light of increasingly nationalistic and restrictive immigration policies and rising xenophobia-fueled violence against migrants and refugees.

Subcommittee members Saionara König-Reis, Iman Habib and Melanie Berzins followed with a presentation of the infographic “Debunking Myths to End Xenophobia”, which presents myths that fuel xenophobia toward migrants and refugees and contrasts them with evidence regarding the reality of these perceived risks and detriments. You can view the infographic on the [NGO Committee on Migration’s Website](#).

The event proceeded with an intimate interview conducted by Pamela Morgan with Betel Bogrek, a Muslim woman from Turkey who shared her experiences with xenophobia and the impact it has had on her life and her family’s life regarding access to education, employment and other services. Bogrek also shared the kindness she has been met with by most Americans and the successes she had in getting her PhD and becoming a math teacher. Video of the interview can be viewed [here](#).



*Turkish-American immigrant Betel Bogrek interviewed by Pamela Morgan of the Subcommittee on Xenophobia and Social Inclusion during the CSW Parallel Event*

The event concluded with an interactive component for attendees to send messages of support to migrants and refugees. Click here for photos of the event: <https://goo.gl/photos/AawinJAHsbhJXAUy7>

### Other CSW Parallel Event Summaries:

In the section below, we highlight selected CSW sessions that are particularly relevant to social work and social work education. They illustrate the richness of the CSW meetings as a place to share innovative work from around the globe, to assess progress toward gender equality, and to identify priorities for continued efforts, especially on SDG5 on promotion of gender equality. We hope this sparks your interest and that

some of you will consider coming to New York for future sessions of the Commission.

Melanie Berzins attended a CSW parallel event entitled “*Women’s Economic Empowerment for Reducing Violence and Achieving the SDGs*”, sponsored by Volunteer Service Overseas Nepal.

Panelists expressed very disparate views about where things stand for women’s safety, economic empowerment and overall equality in Nepal, highlighting both tremendous progress as well as stark needs. Panelists representing Nepalese government ministries emphasized progress, highlighting new legislation criminalizing domestic violence and sexual harassment; progress on policies connected to the implementation of CEDAW to eliminate discrimination and promote equal rights for women;



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and the increase in women’s participation in parliament, which now stands at 29 percent. Other areas of progress mentioned included the appointment a gender focal person to every government ministry and the development of a National Women’s Commission. Panelists representing civil society, including one who is a social worker, focused more on areas where improvements are needed to promote women’s rights. These included the burden of women’s domestic work and care responsibilities; gender-differentiated citizenship laws; and a persistent lack of prosecution of domestic violence cases resulting from women’s social role in Nepalese culture, in which the ideal of the “good woman” is considered subservient, compliant, and self-sacrificing. The social worker panelist also noted that only 6% of Nepalese women are engaged in the formal labor market, and only 10% of women are paid for their work. The panelist emphasized the need to make the Nepalese government more aware of the economic benefit of women joining the formal labor market.

IASSW intern Chelsea Cornwell attended a parallel event entitled “*Changing Climate/ Changing Work*” on World Water Day. The event was sponsored by the US Human Rights Network and featured community leaders representing populations being harmed by water- related issues exacerbated by climate change. Speakers spoke eloquently on the subjects of Native American water

rights in northern California, the impact of hurricanes on African American industrial farming communities in North Carolina, sewage seepage in impoverished neighborhoods in rural Alabama, and desertification-reversal projects in Tunisia. The event was grounded in the perspective of indigenous women and organizers brought in elements of Native American spirituality to emphasize the marginalization of indigenous peoples around the globe. The entire event can be watched here:<https://www.ushrnetwork.org/events/changing-climatechanging-work-women-leaders-economic-empowerment-human-right-water>

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Melanie Berzins

attended another parallel event entitled “**Systemic**

**Intersectionality: Structural Collaboration to End Violence Against Women**”, sponsored by Australian Women Against Violence Alliance. Aboriginal community educators presented on grassroots programming they were implementing in Australia to dialogue, educate, improve access, and build support networks for aboriginal women experiencing domestic violence. The community educators described local

program successes, including trainings for football teams and police forces, dialogues to build trust between aboriginal communities and white communities, particularly with police, with sensitivity to the historical context in which child protective service workers used to forcibly remove lighter-skinned aboriginal children from their



Panelists speak at *Women's Economic Empowerment for Reducing Violence and Achieving the SDGs* CSW Parallel Event



homes to be raised with white families. They discussed awareness campaigns aimed at reducing intersectional barriers to access, including combating the perception among some aboriginal women that existing domestic violence services were “not for them” - for example, aboriginal women in one workshop confided that they did not think they could actually call the domestic violence hotline number they were given, as they believed it was “only for white women”. The presenters emphasized the importance of not speaking for aboriginal women or making assumptions about their needs, and instead listening to their perspectives and their solutions.

Melanie Berzins attended an event called **"Power of Girls: Poverty Ends with Us - Our Agenda"** sponsored by The Grail. The event consisted of a panel of girls and young women sharing stories of their engagement in various projects on girl empowerment in their countries, including Mozambique, Uganda, Mexico, South Africa and Portugal. Girls shared about projects aimed at empowering girls in their countries to pursue STEM careers and positions of leadership. Two of the young women panelists were social work students from Portugal. They were working with a project called Girl Effect which invests in research, technology, and branding to build platforms for girls across the globe to exchange ideas and resources that promote girls’ rights. Other girl panelists shared their work on

clean water projects in South Africa; girl empowerment and SDG action plan workshops in Mexico; and increasing girls’ economic empowerment in Uganda through a program in which girls create art and sell their creations to pay for school fees. Several girl panelists called on their governments to invest in girls, stem gender-based violence and address poverty that marginalizes girls by preventing them from being able to attend school.

**Grassroots Survey:**

**SDG Awareness and Engagement**

The Grassroots Task Force of the NGO Committee for Social Development has produced and disseminated a survey to elicit feedback from grassroots organizations in 44 countries slated to submit Voluntary National Reviews on their progress on particular SDGs. These countries will be submitting reports at the High Level Political Forum this summer on their countries’ progress on Goal 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger) , 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing), 5 (Gender Equality), 9

(Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), 14 (Life Below Water), and 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). The goal of the survey is to determine the degree to which grassroots organizations in these countries



*Girl panelists speak at "Power of Girls: Poverty Ends with Us - Our Agenda" CSW Parallel Event*

are aware of the SDGs, engaged in working on the SDGs, and the degree to which their respective governments are raising awareness and partnering with civil society to achieve the SDGs. The 2030 plan calls for governments to



conduct “inclusive reviews” of their progress. There should be outreach to civil society organizations, including social work organizations. We hope you will be monitoring what is happening in your country.

The survey has been translated into 5 languages - English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Arabic - based on predominant languages spoken in the countries reporting, as well as available translation resources. It has been made accessible online as well as in paper form to increase accessibility for grassroots organizations with limited technological resources/internet access. The Grassroots Task Force plans to present the results of the survey in a side event to coincide with the High Level Political Forum in July, 2017.

The survey was distributed to all members of IASSW and we are hopeful that many of you will complete and return the survey.

### Social Work Day at the UN

On April 17th, the 34th annual Social Work Day at the UN Headquarters took place, followed by a Social Work Student Forum. The event is planned and sponsored by members of the IASSW and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). This year’s theme was “Promoting Community and Environmental Stability” and speakers included: His Excellency the Honorable Ambassador Masud Bin Momen, Permanent Representative of the Mission of Bangladesh to the United Nations; John Ennis, Chief

of Information and Outreach in the Office of Disarmament Affairs at the United Nations; Terri Klemm, Associate Professor and BSW Program Director, Centenary University; Elizabeth Gustafson MSW Student from the University of Connecticut, Roberto Borrero, NGO Committee on the Rights of Indigenous People, and IASSW President, Annamaria Campanini, who provided concluding remarks.

IASSW Representative Shirley Gatenio Gabel served as the IASSW co-chair of the event planning group with Robin Mama of the IFSW. Carol Cohen and Martha Bragin also served as IASSW representatives to the planning committee.



*IASSW representative Shirley Gatenio Gabel, IFSW representative Robin Mama, and speaker Terri Klemm begin the session at UN Headquarters*

Speakers educated nearly 400 attendees on the environmental impact that armed conflict and fracking have on small, large, and global communities. Speakers also touched on their experiences with and the importance of environmental activism. Additionally, attendees gained a more in-depth understanding of the complexities surrounding indigenous people’s rights and their relationship to the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations. If you were unable to attend the event, it was video recorded by the UN. You can watch the session here:

<http://webtv.un.org/search/34th-annual-social-work-day-at-the-united->





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[nations/5400996547001?term=social%20work%20day](https://www.un.org/en/sections/dpa/news-stories/2017/03/2017-world-social-work-day-conference-held-at-palais-des-nations-united-nations-office-at-geneva-switzerland.html)

The Student Forum's theme was "World Water Rights: Promoting Environmental Justice in a Globalized World". The Forum was spearheaded by IASSW intern Chelsea Cornwell and IFSW intern Juli Juabsamai and was attended by over 100 social work students. Speakers included IASSW UN Representative Dr. Lynne Healy, Dr. Dheeshana Jayasundara, from the University of North Dakota, and Dr. Juan Chebly, Lead Advisor in the UN Environmental Program, and Emma Langsner, MSW Student at Fordham University. Dr. Michael Cronin, IFSW Representative and Associate Professor at Monmouth University moderated the panel discussion. Speakers discussed the Standing Rock, Water Protectors issues in the United States in depth, looking at the history and context leading up to the movement as well as the water shortage crisis throughout the world. The event was summed up by examining how and why social workers need to take action regarding these issues to complement and inform our work.

The student event was also recorded via Facebook Live and can be found on the Social Work Day at the UN facebook page here: [https://www.facebook.com/SWDayUN/?ref=aymt\\_homepage\\_panel](https://www.facebook.com/SWDayUN/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel). Be sure to also follow the event on Twitter @SWDayUN for updates when the planning starts up again in the fall.

**Sustainability Highlighted in  
World Social Work Day Geneva**

"Social Work and Sustainability" was the theme of the 2017 World Social Work Day conference held March 21 & 22 at the Palais des Nations, United Nations Office at Geneva, Switzerland. This now annual event is organized by the IASSW and the IFSW in collaboration with United Nations agencies and with the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland – Social Work, Geneva (HETS). This year, UNRISD (UN Research Institute for Social Development) was an active partner in an event that also featured participation by experts from the International Labour Organization, UNAIDS, UN High Commission for Refugees, and the UN High Commission on Human rights. An opening roundtable of these experts and Paul Ladd, Director of UNRISD was moderated by Klaus Kuhne, IFSW's Main representative to the UN in Geneva.

The themes of environment and sustainability permeate the UN's 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. They are also one of 4 main themes of the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development, creating a perfect fit for this year's program. Speakers challenged the audience to consider the following: What can social work contribute and which competences are needed to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)? Lena Dominelli (Durham University, UK and former IASSW President), a renowned expert on environment and social work, gave the keynote address at the conference: "Green social work, environmental justice and the global agenda." In her work, Dominelli emphasizes the human impact of climate change and environmental disasters and the



roles that social work needs to play in prevention, mitigation and sustainable development.

A panel of academicians and IO and NGO representatives concluded the event with concrete examples of the challenge of sustainable development for social work in various contexts, including Cambodia, Togo, Armenia, and Geneva, about subtopics such as: protecting children from violence and reaching the most vulnerable; socio-economic transformation that implies new forms of vulnerability; agricultural production in urban areas, and more.

It is increasingly clear that social work must include more emphasis on the physical environment in its conception of the environmental emphasis of professional intervention. The 2017 Geneva event was an important step in this direction. There is much work remaining for our social work organizations on this topic. For IASSW, continuing effort is needed to address the challenges to integrating sustainability into social work curricula.

## **Thank You!**

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as the IASSW student representatives to the UN for the 2016-17 academic year. We believe we have represented IASSW well. Thank you for reading our newsletters and for your feedback on our work.

Respectfully,

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