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International Association of Schools of Social Work  
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Asociacion Internacional de Escuelas de Trabajo Social  
国际社会工作教育联盟  
国際ソーシャルワーク学校連盟



# Notes from the field...

## December 2016 – January 2017

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

### Migration

#### The Global Migration Film Festival

The Global Migration Film Festival, organized by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in



Mari Malek speaking at the Global Migration Film Festival

celebration of International Migrants' Day (18 December) and IOM's 65th anniversary, was held from 5-18 December 2016.

One of the film festival's events was held on 15

December in which three very powerful short films were

screened depicting various migrant and refugee experiences. The films highlighted the intergenerational effects of social and economic exclusion for an undocumented Mexican immigrant family living in the United States ("The Price of Nuestros Sueños"); the harrowing costs and false promises of attempting -- or even completing -- the journey to Europe for West African migrants and refugees ("Wallah – je te jure"); and the burden on Afghanistan natives of having to choose whether to stay or leave the country ("How We Choose"). The event also featured a panel discussion of filmmakers, activists and migrant advocates sharing their

experience and calling for swift international action to address the global migrant crisis.

A keynote address was delivered by Mari Malek, South Sudanese refugee, UNICEF Learning for Peace Advocate, and Founder of Stand4Education. Malek shared her personal experience and advocated for ending the distinction between migrants and refugees, asserting that all migrants should be offered the same protections, regardless of status. Maria Pia Belloni, representing the NGO Committee on Migration, advocated for greater protections for migrant children and an explicit and universal ban on child detention. Concluding remarks were given by Deputy Secretary General of the UN, Mr. Jan Eliasson, who applauded the recent steps taken by the international community toward addressing the migrant crisis, while also acknowledging the need for further action and responsibility-sharing.

Mr. Eliasson also acknowledged the rampant xenophobic sentiments and populist movements across the globe that have grown in tandem with the migrant crisis, and highlighted



Maria Pia Belloni speaking at the Global Migration Film Festival



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the need to provide counter-narratives of migrant and refugee stories like those shared in the film festival, as well as through the efforts of the UN's recently-launched [TOGETHER Campaign](#).

The TOGETHER Campaign is an umbrella initiative aimed at promoting acceptance and integration of refugees and migrants while countering xenophobia and discrimination by building empathy through storytelling; creating multi-stakeholder coalitions committed to fighting xenophobia; countering myths and misperceptions about migrants by highlighting the positive social, economic and cultural contributions of migrants; and encouraging global action to promote solidarity and non-discrimination in countries of origin, transit and destination. The Campaign was launched at the UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants and will run into 2018 when the Global Compacts on Refugees and Migrants are expected to be adopted.

### Global Forum on Migration and Development Meets

In early December, a Global Forum for Migration and Development took place in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The two-day conference focused on the economics of migration, the sociology of migration, and the governance of migration throughout a series of six roundtable discussions. Several lines of agreement emerged from the talks as issues that should be included as priorities in the Global Compact for Migration. Concepts agreed upon include: protecting the rights of all migrants, particularly migrants in vulnerable situations, regardless of status; keeping channels open for safe and regular migrant worker movements to meet labour market needs; ensuring that

host societies promote migrant inclusion; identifying the impacts of migration on development efforts; and maintaining national border integrity while effectively addressing irregular migration and combating trafficking and smuggling.

This meeting was held in preparation for the Global Compact on Migration scheduled for 2018. The goal of the Compact is to create a global framework guiding how the world responds to humans in transit. It will include policy recommendations for all dimensions of migration, linking migration with development, addressing unusual migration patterns, and responding to refugees and those who are forcibly displaced. Please visit the Global Forum on Migration and Development website <http://www.gfmd.org/docs/bangladesh-2016> if you would like more information on the development of the Compact.

### Social Development Commission to Meet

The NGO Committee on Social Development (CSocD) is preparing for the Civil Society Forum occurring on 30-31 January. This Forum is organized by the NGO CSocD and the Division of Social Policy and Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs to facilitate discussions between civil society, the UN, and UN member states, prepare civil society members for the Commission on Social Development, and critically look at the two-year focus of the Commission, "Strategies for the Eradication of Poverty to Achieve Sustainable



Development for All". The theme of the Forum this year is Social Protection and will highlight how social protection, including social protection floors, is the best strategy to achieve the eradication of poverty.

Following the Civil Society Forum, members of the IASSW UN Team of Representatives will be participating in the 55<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Commission for Social Development from February 1-10. IASSW is co-sponsoring a side event with ICSW, the governments of Finland and Namibia, and UNESCO. More will be reported on this in the next newsletter.

Additionally, the Grassroots subcommittee of the NGO Committee has identified a research project to be the focus of their work this year. The subcommittee plans to survey grassroots-level organizations within countries who are scheduled to submit voluntary reports at the High Level Political Forum in July about their progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. The Committee is most interested in surveying organizations who serve people most likely to "be left behind" and evaluating their level of awareness regarding the Sustainable Development Goals and the actions their countries are taking towards implementing the Goals. The survey is currently being developed and



SDG 1 sets seven targets to eradicate poverty in all its forms, everywhere. Read more [here](#).

reviewed by the Committee. The goal is to have the report ready for the High Level Political Forum in July.

**Reader alert:** If you or your school of social work are engaged in grassroots projects focused on one or more of the SDGs, please contact us to be sure you receive a copy of the survey. We would like to ensure social work representation among the responding projects. In 2017, The list of countries that will report to the UN this year can be found at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>. The 2017 reports will focus on selected SDGs: Goal 1 (Poverty); Goal 2 (Hunger and Agriculture); Goal 3 (Health) Goal 5 (Gender Equality); Goal 9 (Industry and Infrastructure); Goal 14 (Oceans); and Goal 17 (Partnerships to achieve the goals).

### Updates on Ageing

NGO Committee on Ageing Meetings: The NGO Committee on Ageing November meeting featured a panel discussion on the rationale for, and efforts toward, advocating for a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons. The panel featured Deputy Permanent Representative Mateo Estremé of Argentina, who relayed a fairly bleak message, in that he does not believe negotiations in December will lead to a convention, mainly because of a lack of a critical mass of member states supporting the convention. Reasons for opposition include budgetary concerns, as well as a sense that older persons' rights are covered already by



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existing conventions, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The Committee's December meeting featured a presentation by Thomas Kamber, Founder and Director of Older Adult Technology Services (OATS) in New York City, who provided a brief training on the use of social media as a tool to advocate for the rights of older persons.

NYU Workshop on Advancing a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons: On 11 December, Melanie Berzins attended a Workshop on Advancing the Campaign to Elaborate a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons, sponsored by the Australian Human Rights Centre, co-organized by the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, HelpAge International, and hosted by the NYU School of Law's Center for Human Rights and Global Justice. The full-day workshop was divided into 5 panels, featuring UN and civil society representatives from around the world reporting on efforts to promote a convention. Panel topics included updates and lessons learned from national campaigns in Mongolia and Tanzania; strategies for increasing civil society's impact at the 7th Session of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA); widening the advocacy network; working with member states; and next steps. Mateo Estréme, Deputy Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations and Chair of the OEWGA gave an address regarding the process, expectations, recommendations and opportunities for civil society in promoting a

convention at the OEWGA. Overall, the general consensus was that a convention would not be adopted at this year's OEWGA, due to a variety of factors, including "convention fatigue" from some member states due to the reporting requirements of approving yet another convention, as well as a perception that the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), along with existing human rights conventions, are sufficient to promote and protect the rights of older persons. It was noted, however, that the MIPAA is non-binding.

#### Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA):

The OEWGA held its 7th session from 12-15 December 2016 and set a new precedent by adopting a decision ([A/AC.278/2016/L.1](#)) inviting the participation of national human rights institutions in its deliberations. The OEWGA followed up on the July 2016 Report of the Independent Expert (Ms. Rosa Kornfeld-Matte) to the Human Rights Council on the Enjoyment of All Human Rights by Older Persons, which analyzed the current status of implementation of the non-binding 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), assessed existing best practices and gaps, and made recommendations to promote and protect the rights of older persons. There was a robust civil society presence at the OEWGA, with 19 NGOs formally invited to participate. The summary report from the Chair of the OEWGA on the outcome of deliberations reflect a hopeful and encouraging tone as well as a call to action, citing the need for the creation of a multilateral legal instrument



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to comprehensively protect the rights of older persons; noting that the existing international legal framework is insufficient to this end; and advocating for a human rights-based approach in the creation of an international instrument. Three areas of focus were prioritized for discussion at the 8th OEWGA Session, to be held in July 2017: equality and non-discrimination; neglect, violence and abuse; and autonomy and independence. For more information, see the following:

Report of the Independent Expert: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/147/83/PDF/G1614783.pdf?OpenElement>

Report of the OEWGA:  
[http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/AC.278/2016/2](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/AC.278/2016/2)

**News Update!** IASSW has officially signed onto a statement put forth by the NGO Committee on Migration. The Committee on Migration advocacy letter opposes the ban on individuals from predominantly Muslim countries as ordered by the President of the United States. The link to this statement will be included in the next newsletter and will be available on the website as soon as it becomes available electronically.

### **Upcoming Events**

January 30-31: The Civil Society Forum

January 30-31: [The ECOSOC Youth Forum](#)

February 1- 10: [The 55th Commission on Social Development](#)

March 7-10: [The 60th Commission on Narcotic Drugs \(Vienna\)](#)

March 13-24: [The 61st Commission of the Status of Women](#)

April 3-7: [The 50th Commission on Population and Development](#)

April 17: Social Work Day at the UN

April 24- May 5: [The 16th Session of the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples](#)

Respectfully,

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