



# Notes from the field...

## October 2016

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

### Greetings from the 2016-17 IASSW Interns!

Chelsea Cornwell and Melanie Berzins are the interns representing IASSW for the 2016-17 academic year.

**Chelsea Cornwell** is an MSW student at University of Connecticut, concentrating in Administration with a focus on International Issues. She is also working through a Master's degree in Disaster Resiliency Leadership at Tulane University. Chelsea first became interested in global issues during her semesters abroad in Northern Ireland and The Gambia, focusing on peace studies and social work respectively and has since traveled to 13 countries across the Middle East, Latin America, Eastern and Western Europe and West Africa. Chelsea has professional experience working with children's educational programs, women's empowerment, victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, community organizing, and fundraising. Chelsea's passions include refugees and migrants, climate change, disaster preparedness and mitigation, women's empowerment, access to education, and youth mentorship. She is thrilled to have this opportunity to serve at the UN and looks forward to representing IASSW in this capacity.



IASSW Interns Chelsea Cornwell (left) and Melanie Berzins (right)

**Melanie Berzins** is a first-year MSW student at University of Connecticut with a professional background in older adult services, program

coordination and community outreach. Her method concentration is Policy Practice and her focused area of study is, of course, International Social Work. Melanie's relevant background experience includes teaching English and civics to immigrants studying for the U.S. naturalization exam and volunteering in community development projects in Guatemala. She is thrilled to have the opportunity to represent IASSW at the UN and to learn and contribute all she can.

Melanie ultimately hopes to work in program development and/or evaluation with a particular interest in improving access to services for immigrants and refugees.

### Migration

#### **Summit on Refugees and Migrants**

On September 19th, a High Level Summit for Refugees and Migrants was convened by the heads of state for the first time in order to address the large scale movements of people occurring across the globe and was attended by IASSW representative, Dr. Rebecca Thomas. During this gathering, the General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for



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Refugees and Migrants which outlines a series of commitments to increase the protections refugees and migrants should be given. Among these protections include the right of every child to attend school, prevention of sexual assault in movements, the reaffirmation of the human rights of every individual regardless of status, and increased efforts to support countries receiving large influxes of migrants and refugees. To further explore the events of the day, please visit <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/summit> for access to official statements, UN WebTV and photos. Outcome documents from the Summit, including the New York Declaration, can be found at <http://refugeesmigrants.un.org/summit-documents>.

### **Committee on Migration**

The Committee on Migration is strongly represented by Dr. Rebecca Thomas and both of this year's interns. Below is a brief summary of the subcommittee on which they serve. The Committee has divided its work for the coming year into 4 subcommittees: New York Declaration Follow-up; Climate-Induced Displacement; Refugee Children; and Xenophobia and Social Inclusion. Overall, the committee has been largely focused on the implications of the Summit for Refugees and Migrants and the language in the New York Declaration. Some positive attributes from the document include strong human rights-based language, the reaffirmation of the universal application of human rights, provisions to train border control agents, the commitments to the education of migrant children, the denouncement of xenophobic attitudes, the plan to develop guidelines for the treatment of migrants and

refugees, and the consensus to keep momentum towards adopting the global compact on safe, orderly, and regular migration in 2018. As historic as this document is, there are some points that draw disappointment from civil society members. These include the weak language of the commitments, the provision that lays forth the acceptability of detaining children if the detention is in their "best interests", lack of clear plans for determining the level of shared responsibility of governments, and the pervasive attitude that problematizes migration.

### **Migration Subcommittee on Xenophobia: IASSW Representative, Melanie Berzins**

The migration subcommittee on xenophobia and social inclusion met on 8 September and discussed their direction for the year. The committee shared documents to collectively situate themselves within the conversation on xenophobia and inclusion, including best practices and policy recommendations at the local, national and international levels. At their subsequent October meeting, an agenda was set to develop a concept paper that will define xenophobia and delineate some of the major challenges to inclusion and integration. The main points will be translated into an infographic, which can then be used as one tool in a social media campaign to combat xenophobia and promote inclusion.

### **Migration Subcommittee on Refugee Children: IASSW Representative Chelsea Cornwell**

The migration subcommittee on children has big plans for the year. The committee is writing a position paper



Bangladesh occurring in December. This paper will outline the necessity for early childhood development action to be included during refugee and migration activities as well as provide recommendations to government bodies on how to do this based on a set of best practices. Additionally, this subcommittee will be hosting a musical benefit in early February to financially support activities directed towards addressing early childhood development in these spaces. The subcommittee is also planning to host two side events in the spring during the Commission on the Status of Women and also the Forum for Social Development to further represent the need for early childhood development considerations.

**Migration Subcommittee on Climate Change:  
IASSW Representative Dr. Rebecca Thomas**

This committee is a newly formed subcommittee, born out of the recognition that climate change contributes greatly to human migration for a number of different reasons. The committee has decided to focus their efforts this year on connecting the dots between climate change and migration movements. They plan to produce materials this year addressing this issue and highlighting the fact that migration is a symptom of environmental violence. The goal of this work is to increase awareness of the particular plight that climate induced migrants face.

**IASSW at the United Nations High Level  
Political Forum**

IASSW co-sponsored a workshop at the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development in July, 2016. Our presentation was titled: “Implementing the SDGs, Ensuring that no one is left behind: Evidence from grassroots economies.” This presentation was the culmination of a project conducted under the auspices



of the NGO Committee on Social Development and marked the launch of the Committee’s final report on grassroots local economies projects. IASSW Main Representative Lynne Healy presented highlights from the

grassroots survey and colleagues from other participating NGOs gave case examples from diverse countries. IASSW Team members also attended several of the plenary panels and other side events at the HLPF.

The report, *Grassroots Matter: Lessons Learned from Community-based Local Economies Projects*, summarizes findings from 70 local, collaborative projects in which people assessed their own needs and developed economic strategies to meet them. We believe that the lessons learned can be helpful for implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Survey results indicate that a community-based participatory approach is particularly effective in achieving social and economic results, including more income, enhanced community relations and more engagement in community affairs. It is essential to gather wisdom



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from the grassroots in order to meet the challenge of “leaving no one behind” in achieving the Agenda. The full report is available at the [website for the NGO Committee on Social Development](#). The HLPF is an annual event held under the auspices of ECOSOC, the UN Economic and Social Council. The theme of the 2016 session, the first following adoption of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), was “Ensuring that no one is left behind.” 22 countries volunteered to be the first ones reviewed for progress toward the SDGs, a process that will continue each year. Information about the Forum, the final report, the Ministerial Declaration, and a summary of the reports of the countries reviewed can all be found on the UN [website for Sustainable Development](#).

### **Other Events at the UN**

#### **International Day of the Girl & Girls Speak Out**

The NGO Working Group on Girls has been very active over the past few months preparing for the 5th annual International Day of the Girl (IDG) Summit which was held on 11 October. Projects for the event included 11 Days of Action leading up to the IDG and a Girls Speak Out event, organized by the governments of Canada, Peru and Turkey and the NGO Working Group on Girls. Girls Speak Out featured girl advocates, performers, and panelists from around the world speaking about girls’ rights, the marginalization of girls, girls in politics, and girls supporting girls. The full webcast of the event can be



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viewed at <http://dayofthegirlsummit.org/idg-2016/girls-speak-out/>.

#### **International Day of Older Persons**

The 26th anniversary celebration of the United Nations International Day of Older Persons was held on October 6th. The theme for the event was a call to action to “Take a Stand Against Ageism” and featured a keynote address by author Ashton Applewhite and a panel discussion on “Combating Ageism in Different Contexts” which highlighted challenges and best practices in combating ageism around the globe. The event was organized by the NGO Committee on Ageing in cooperation with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Focal Point on Ageing and was sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations. Dr. M.C. “Terry” Hokenstad, IASSW Representative to the NGO Committee on Ageing, was in attendance. The webcast of the event can be viewed at <http://m.webtv.un.org>.

Respectfully,

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