



# Notes from the field...

## March 2016

By the IASSW Interns at the United Nations, New York, 2015-2016

### The 60<sup>th</sup> Session on the Commission of the Status of Women



The 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place from 14 to 24 March and consisted of official meetings, side events sponsored by governments and UN agencies, and parallel events hosted by NGOs (IASSW co-sponsored two parallel events – see below). The theme of CSW60 was women’s empowerment and its link to sustainable development, and its review theme was the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. There were hundreds of events held over the course of the 10 days, the schedules for which can be found [here](#) (side events) and [here](#) (parallel events). Many side events were recorded and can be watched online at [webtv.un.org](http://webtv.un.org). Some examples of these events include:

#### Girls at the Table: Implementing the SDGs

An event sponsored by the Working Group on Girls and the Missions of Canada and Panama that focused on the importance of engaging all members of society for the successful implementation of the Global Goals with an emphasis on girls. The program highlighted the importance of bringing girls to the table; it provided girl activists an opportunity to speak about their efforts to address local challenges within the

context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Girl activists also advocated for the on-going inclusion of girls and girl activists in the development of SDG National Action Plans.

#### Equal Pay Roundtable

This high-level event, organized by UN Women and which completely filled the UN’s ECOSOC chamber, consisted of two parts: the first a high-level dialogue on gender equality; and the second a moderated interview-style discussion with UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and key stakeholders on a global call to action on equal pay for work of equal value. This event featured notable speakers, including Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and football star (and 2015 world champion!) Abby Wambach. You can watch a recording of this impressive event online [here](#).

#### Women and Girls: From Adversity to Hope

This event put on by the Department of Public Information (DPI) at the UN showcased the resilience of women and girls and their ability to move forward from extreme adversity. A panel of women, which included a survivor of the Rwandan genocide, a former child bride, the survivor of a terrorist attack, the survivor of an acid attack, and video featuring Malala Yousafzai and Winona LaDuke, an indigenous women leader, talked through their experiences in first surviving adversity and then discovering ways they



could help other women do the same. A recording of the event can be found [here](#).

### IASSW at CSW60

#### IASSW Workshop at CSW60

IASSW was the lead sponsor of a parallel event at this year's United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in March. The March 23rd event, "Empowering Women through Local Economies Projects: Voices from the Grassroots," emphasized



Panel members speaking about "Empowering Women through Local Economies Projects: Voices from the Grassroots"

the importance of economic empowerment of women at the local level. Shirley Gatenio Gabel, IASSW representative to the NGO CSW Committee, chaired the session and IASSW intern Christi Staples was the first speaker. She presented the results of a survey of grassroots economic projects; these wide-ranging projects included cooperatives, community farming, savings groups, micro finance, and small-scale industries. Ms Staples was followed by speakers from our collaborating NGO partners, who presented case examples from Fiji, Albania, Zimbabwe and India. In Fiji, for example, a local NGO taught women how to create useful items from plastic trash. The attractive purses, bags, mats and jewelry have sold well. This project helps to clean up the environment while increasing family income. Some of the participating women are now trainers, helping others learn the craft. The successful projects reported by survey respondents show that economic empowerment is closely linked to many benefits for women and their communities. These include increased income, self-esteem, new

knowledge and skills, a strengthened sense of agency and voice for women, and improved community relationships. Income is used to improve living conditions and to send daughters to school. Lessons learned can inform the implementation process of the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Panelists identified as many as 10 goals addressed by a single project. The survey was conducted by the Grassroots Task Force of the NGO Committee for Social Development, of which IASSW is an active member. A full report will be available later in

Spring 2016 at <http://ngosocdev.org/>

#### IASSW/IFSW Event with Fordham Students

IASSW also co-sponsored an event with IFSW and Fordham University. Fordham international social work students from China, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Syria and Vietnam discussed the status of women in their countries of origin. Faculty members Elaine Congress (IFSW) and Shirley Gatenio Gabel (IASSW) organized the event.

#### Other Events at the UN

##### UN Postal Administration Advances LGBT

##### Equality

On February 6, the UN Postal Administration issued its stamp series on Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender



equality. The series, "Free & Equal," comprises 6 stamps highlighting sexual minority populations, the coming out process, and gay families. This bold step raises the profile of the drive to include LGBT populations in the move to respect



human rights for all. UN stamps can be used for mailing only for mail posted at UN offices in New York, Geneva, or Vienna. They are issued in currencies of these offices (U.S. dollars, Swiss francs, or euros).

According to the UN Human Rights Office, “Free & Equal is a global public education campaign dedicated to raising awareness of homophobic and transphobic violence and discrimination globally” ([www.unstamps.org](http://www.unstamps.org)). The campaign urges all nations, regardless of politics or culture, to protect the human rights of all peoples. For more information on the Free & Equal campaign, visit [www.unfe.org](http://www.unfe.org).

### **Request for Input**

If you know an IASSW member (including yourself!) whose work should be highlighted, please contact Sarah Johnson so she can recognize that member in the monthly spotlight. Additionally, if one of the committees is working on a topic that is within your expertise or area of interest, please reach out to us so that we can make social work’s voice heard.

Respectfully,

**Sarah Johnson**

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### **Member Spotlight**



Dr. Martha Bragin is Associate Professor at the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College and the Doctoral Program in Social Welfare at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She is Chairperson of Global Social Work and Practice with Immigrants and Refugees. She joins the faculty after 25 years of experience supporting governments, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations to address the effects of war, violence and disaster on children, families and communities in New York City and around the globe. She is a member of the IASC Reference Group (UN-NGO) on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, which developed the first international consensus guidelines for the field of mental health and psychosocial support in humanitarian crises. She also serves as technical advisor to the International Network for Education in Emergencies.

Dr. Bragin has helped foster sustainable change in countries in crisis by supporting governments to develop locality based social work standards and culturally relevant social work curricula, including an ongoing partnering with the Ministry of Higher Education in Afghanistan. Her work engages local partners to support women, children, and young people affected by violence and disaster to participate in the transformation of the communities in which they live. Current research projects include a participatory study defining and operationalizing the concept “psychosocial wellbeing” among war-affected women, a study on classroom based interventions to improve educational outcomes for adolescents affected by war and community violence.

To ensure the effectiveness of these programs, she has developed and published culturally sensitive ways to measure their effectiveness, including the Community Participatory Evaluation Tool (CPET) for use to determine baseline indicators of children’s well-being and development in cultural context.