



Notes from the field...

May 2016

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

Social Work Day at the United Nations 2016

The theme of Social Work Day at the United Nations, held April 4 2016, was “Refugees and Displaced Persons: Ensuring Dignity and Worth.” Given the current outpouring of refugees from Syria and several other countries, the theme was timely and highly relevant to social workers around the world. It links closely with the second major theme of the *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development*—promoting the dignity and worth of peoples. The program featured an introduction by Ninette Kelley, Director of the New York office of the UN High Commission on Refugees. She was followed by Ambassador Nazifullah Salarzai, Deputy Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and then by the Head of Mental Health, Psychosocial Response and Intercultural Communication of the International Organization for Migration, Guglielmo Schinina. The final panelist was Patricia Talisse, MSW student at Fordham University. Patricia shared perspectives from her home city of Aleppo, Syria and the difficulties of watching your once peaceful city disintegrate under attack.

Social Work Day at the UN 2016 was the 33rd annual program. This popular event draws a large crowd of hundreds of social workers, filling

Conference Room 4, the largest conference room at UN headquarters. It is cosponsored by IASSW and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW). IASSW representative Shirley Gatenio-Gabel introduced the program; she was followed by a commentary from IASSW President Vimla Nadkarni, delivered by video. Nadkarni welcomed the audience and commented on the need for social work policy and practice attention to the refugee crisis. IFSW President Ruth Stark integrated the presentations in a wrap-up commentary.

IASSW was represented on the planning committee by Carol Cohen of Adelphi University, Martha Bragin of Hunter College, and Shirley Gatenio-Gabel of Fordham University. Gatenio-Gabel co-chaired the committee with Robin Mama of IFSW.

NGO Committee Updates Committee on Social Development

The Grassroots Taskforce of the committee continues to receive strong support for its report on grassroots projects around the world. The sub-committee, having already presented its report at both the 54th Commission for Social Development and the 60th Commission on the Status of Women, is considering a presentation at the High Level Political Forum at UNHQ this July in New York, which would be an impressive opportunity to expand support for bottom-



up development in the 2030 Agenda. The full report will be available soon at <http://ngosocdev.org>.

Working Group on Girls

At the April monthly meeting of the Working Group on Girls, new interim co-chairs were named: Victoria Edmonds, of the Salvation Army, and Hourri Guedekian, of the Armenian Relief Society. There was much focus on CSW60 and the co-chairs specifically requested feedback on the Working Group on Girls' events and involvement in the commission.

Financing for Development

After much deliberation and consideration, the NGO Committee on Financing for Development has identified its priority advocacy themes for the year. There are three main platforms for framing their strategy and outreach.

1. *FFD is a moral issue as well as an economic one. FFD should be the voice of conscience at the UN, constantly reminding policymakers of all the reasons that financing for development must be a top priority. Within this platform, key issues around development as a human right, building strong political will and grassroots efforts and proper financing of the 2030 Agenda are highlighted as critical for advocacy.*
2. *Reform of International financing institutions and economic forums is long overdue.* The committee on Financing for Development believes that in order for reform to be effective, all people and states must be fully and fairly represented at global economic forums. Additionally, under reform, the need for full transparency and accountability for all

global economic forums and public/private partnerships is critical.

3. *Economic policies that contribute to poverty and inequality must be changed and illicit financial flows can and must be stopped.* In order to effectively activate this platform, the committee believes that external debt must be reduced in many states, and that international tax and trade policies must be re-examined to create equal opportunities for all, not just the wealthy.

The committee continues to identify ways in which the advocacy strategies can be strengthened and welcomes feedback from IASSW.

Other Notes

A Reflection on the CSW60 Outcome Document

Strengths

The [Agreed Conclusions of the 60th Commission on the Status of Women](#) overall provided a strong statement on the importance of women's development in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and international development in general. The document focused on the effects of climate, migration, education, and leadership opportunities on women and girls' development. Importantly, the document also acknowledged the impact of women and girls' educational, social, political, and economic participation on local, national, and international societies. In sum, the conclusions of CSW60 provide strong and fairly comprehensive arguments supporting the emphasis of women's development in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Weaknesses



That being said, there was one major weakness of the CSW60 Agreed Conclusions—despite the strong emphasis placed on women’s place and importance in the 2030 Agenda, little was said about the rights or specific needs of girls. Other than the inclusion of the phrase “and girls” behind most (but not all) mentions of women’s rights and needs in international development, little was said about the rights and needs of girls as girls. One small mention was the recognition of early and forced marriage, a problem that by definition mostly affects girls. Other than this small inclusion, much improvement could be made in the consideration of girls in the document.

Farewell—And Thank You

Unfortunately the time has come for the 2015-2016 UN Interns to pass our torch to next year’s representatives. It has been an honor to serve as representatives of the International Association of Schools of Social Work to the United Nations, and we believe we have served you well. We thank you for the opportunity.

Respectfully,

Sarah Johnson

MSW Candidate 2016

IASSW Representative to the United Nations

UConn School of Social Work

Email: sarah.johnson@uconn.edu

Christi Holmes Staples

MSW Candidate 2017

IASSW Representative to the United Nations

UConn School of Social Work

Email: cgsholmes@gmail.com

Member Spotlight

Prof. Orit Nuttman-Shwartz, Ph.D, MSW, and Group Analyst, is an associate professor, Founder and former Head of the School of Social Work at Sapir College in Israel. She is Chairperson of the Council for Social Workers in Israel, a statutory council established under the 1996 Social Workers' Law which advises the Minister of Social Affairs and Social Services. She has received numerous awards, including the prestigious “Katan Prize” from the Israeli Association of Social Work (IASW) as well as from the Israeli parliament (the Knesset), for her academic scholarship and groundbreaking work with needy communities.

In 2003, Prof. Nuttman-Shwartz established a new School of Social Work at Sapir College, which is located on the geographical and social periphery of Israel, in a border area that has been subject to a continuous security threat. As such, the program developed by Prof. Nuttman-Shwartz focuses on the needs of the community, and includes areas such as: social and national trauma; international social work and globalization, and employment and social work.

Working near the Israeli border, Prof. Nuttman-Shwartz studies the effects of ongoing exposure to threat on individuals, communities, and organizations and the impact of a shared-trauma environment on students, supervisors, and social workers. Her main contribution in that area were the concepts of "shared traumatic reality" (STR); and “resilience in shared traumatic reality” which focuses on the specific challenges faced by therapists who live in areas that are exposed to continuous terror and simultaneously work with victims of trauma. In addition, she develops a new theoretical definition of “continuous traumatic situations” (CTS) and their effects.

In addition, Prof. Nuttman-Shwartz promoted the development of new curricula and training programs in the field of International Social Work, focusing on local and international needs and rights of refugees, asylum seekers and unrecognized populations in Israel. She was also involved in developing new curricula and training on transnational children and youth welfare and on Social Work in the Context of Political Conflict, using a grant from IASSW.

The importance that Prof. Nuttman-Shwartz attributes to promoting social justice and equality is expressed in her role as Chairperson of the Israeli National Council for Social Work as well as in the constant pressure that she exerts on policy-makers to deal with the issue of social gaps in general and the issue of poverty in particular. She has promoted an agenda that emphasizes disadvantaged populations, as well as the efforts that need to be made to enable these populations to break the cycle of poverty and receive their social rights.