



# Notes from the field...

## IASSW at THE HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM, JULY 2017

### IASSW Participation

IASSW, through the representation by the New York UN team, participated in the 2017 High Level Political Forum (HLPF) at United Nations Headquarters in July. During this two-week event, IASSW co-sponsored two side events with partner NGOs.

The first was “Poverty to Prosperity: Shared Stories from NGOs Working with Communities.” It was held on July 11, 2017 at the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the UN, with the Irish Mission as



Lynne Healy, IASSW, speaking at the co-sponsored HLPF parallel event, July 2017. On her left, Margaret O’Dwyer, Daughters of Charity; to her right, Jocelyn Quijano, International Presentation Association and Veronica Brand, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary.

a co-sponsor. Presenters included Ambassador David Donoghue, Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations, and speakers from New York and India representing partner NGOs. It emphasized community level efforts to address extreme poverty as an essential strategy to meet SDG 1.

During the second week of the HLPF, IASSW co-sponsored a second event: “Grassroots Perspectives: Reviewing SDG Implementation.” IASSW Main Representative Lynne Healy spoke and moderated the discussion session. Speakers in this session presented the preliminary findings from a survey of grassroots organizations conducted by a subgroup of the NGO Committee on Social

Development. The survey was circulated to IASSW membership in spring 2017 and some members responded. The intent of the survey was to assess the level of awareness of the SDGs at the grassroots level among those countries scheduled to present their voluntary reviews in July 2017. The survey therefore examined involvement of NGOs in country voluntary reviews of progress in achieving the SDGs. Findings suggest moderate levels of awareness of the SDGs among NGOs, but very limited involvement in government efforts to address them. Most responding organizations were aware of the SDGs, but only 41% thought that people at the grassroots in their area were aware. Only half the responding organizations knew that their country was being reviewed this year and very few had been involved in the review. This is concerning in light of the requirement in the 2030 Agenda for *inclusive reviews* to be conducted at the national level.

Overall, the results of the survey suggest the need for much more outreach and publicity about the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda. The Agenda promises to “leave no one behind” and to reach the most vulnerable. It is clear that this is not happening to date. Social workers are among those who can assist their governments to reach people in need. Social workers also have data—both quantitative and qualitative/anecdotal—that can assist the process.

In 2017, 44 countries submitted their voluntary reviews: Afghanistan; Argentina; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Belarus; Belgium; Belize; Benin; Botswana; Brazil; Chile; Costa Rica; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; El Salvador; Ethiopia; Guatemala; Honduras; India; Indonesia; Iran; Italy; Japan; Jordan; Kenya; Luxembourg; Malaysia; Maldives; Monaco; Nepal; Netherlands; Nigeria; Panama; Peru; Portugal; Qatar; Slovenia; Sweden; Tajikistan; Thailand; Togo; Uruguay; Zimbabwe.



To access these reports, go to: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>

This site will also tell you which 48 countries will be reviewed in 2018. Check the list to find your country. If your country will be reviewed in 2018, we encourage you to investigate how to get involved.



Representatives of NGOs participating in the survey of Grassroots organizations.

### The Forum:

The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) is an annual intergovernmental meeting organized by ECOSOC (the Economic and Social Council). The focus now is on the 2030 Agenda and progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals. This year’s meeting highlighted specific SDGs: #1 (poverty); #2 (hunger); #3 (health); #5 (gender equality); 9 (Industry), 14 (oceans), and 17 (partnerships and implementation). The topics were explored through several plenary panels, statements by governments, and side events—workshops organized by governments, UN agencies, and NGOs. In the second week, the voluntary reviews of 44 countries were presented and discussed.

In 2018, the session will focus on the goals related to environment, including access to water and improved human settlements.

All information about the SDGs is available at the portal: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org>

### IASSW Welcomes New Interns to the UN

Greetings, My name is Justice Konowe, one of two IASSW interns at United Nations headquarters for 2017-2018. I am an Advanced Standing student in the University of Connecticut MSW program with a concentration in Community Organizing and a focus on International Studies. I will be interning with the IASSW as a part of the UN team. My past experiences include working in the area of refugee resettlement as well as working with nonprofit agencies to provide services for those living with HIV/AIDS. Throughout the year I plan to be involved with the NGO committees such as the Working Group on Girls, the Committee for Migration, and the Committee on Social



Development. I look forward to a great year and keeping the IASSW up to date on the work being done at the UN!

Left: Katherine “Shrevie” Shepherd; Right: Justice Konowe

My name is Katherine Shepherd (Shrevie) and I am one of this year’s IASSW interns at the United Nations. I am in the process of getting my MSW concentrating on International Social Work and Community Organization from the University of Connecticut. I am very excited to participate on the committees working on the status of women, working group on girls, migration, social development and mental health. As part of the Social Development Committee, I am helping the Grassroots Sub Committee interpret the data collected in the survey on SDG implementation, completed last spring. We will also be helping to organize Social Work Day at the UN this spring. I am looking forward to learning more about NGO advocacy work within the UN and how to promote



the goals outlined by the Sustainable Development Goals. I hope this experience will help guide me in my future community organizing work internationally. I spent ten years living in Nigeria and Botswana working on small community projects, with a focus on HIV/AIDS, which I hope to continue after my graduation from UCONN.

### International Day of the Girl



On October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017, the UN celebrated the International Day of the Girl with several events focusing on the rights of the girl child. Here are a few highlights from the day.

#### Girls Breaking Barriers- CSW Statement

The IASSW has officially signed on to the Working Group on Girls’ (WGG) statement to the Commission on the Status of Women. The statement is titled “Girls Breaking Barriers” and highlights the barriers rural girls face, such as access to education, safety, and health supports. The document points out that these barriers have long term impacts for women and communities and states that gender equality and women’s empowerment must begin with girls’ rights. Girls must be included in decision making in all levels, including family, community, and policies. By doing so, we will see exponential benefits to society.

WGG’s statement calls on the UN and all member states to take action with a number of recommendations. WGG recommends the commitment to a human rights- based approach to girls, the investment in girls’ education while ensuring safe passage and adequate facilities. They call on member states to implement social protections schemes that will ensure girls and women have equal rights to economic resources and services, as well as ensure the health of rural girls.

Additionally, the WGG recommends combating stereotypes regarding rural girls and eliminating abuse, trafficking, and all forms of violence, including harmful traditional practices, against rural girls.

This statement will be reviewed during the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women which will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 12 to 23 March 2018. For more information, please visit <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw>

#### SafetiPin- Technology for Safer Cities



During the International Day of the Girl, UNICEF hosted an event that highlighted work being done around the world to advocate for and improve girls’ rights. Kathryn Travers, who gave one of the of the many

inspiring presentations of the event, is the Acting Executive Director of Women In Cities International (WICI). She described her work with Canadian youth to improve safety in cities and introduced a new innovative technology that is working to create a safer experience for women when walking alone through cities all over the world.

SafetiPin is a new App that allows users to perform safety audits of an area based on their own experience and feelings. The safety is measured using 9 parameters that contribute to the perception of safety such as lighting, access to public transportation, and security. The data collected is then utilized to improve the safety of cities by presenting information to government officials and non-government organizations.

The app also has features to increase the safety of the user. One allows the user to view the safety ratings others have provided to determine if they are in a safe area. There is also a tracking setting that allows the user to ask friends to track their movement through an area using GPS as well



as listings to nearby emergency services and resources.

IASSW UN Intern Representative, Justice Konowe, downloaded the App to test it out. She was able to perform a safety audit of her area in the US, but had limited access to information collected by others nearby. Currently, most of the data has been collected from cities in India, Kenya, Philippines, Colombia, and Indonesia. Hopefully, as more people around the world utilize the app, there will be information available in more countries, and as more data is collected there will be an increase in the safety of cities.

For more information on the SafetiPin app and to download it please visit <http://safetipin.com/>

### International Day of the Girl: Migration Side Event

On October 11, for International Day of the Girl, the Loretto Group and Sisters of the Sacred Heart co-hosted a side event on the importance of education for girls. Three young, female panelists spoke of the barriers they faced in attending school and how valuable their education has been in shaping their lives. The two African stories are particularly poignant and remind all of us social workers of the importance of the work we are doing. One girl grew up as a Mozambican immigrant into South Africa who was placed in a “homeland” that left immigrants in abject poverty. Her parents died of AIDS and as an orphan she was taken in by the Sisters of Sacred Heart who paid her school fees. She was chosen to attend Oprah Winfrey’s Leadership Academy and now attends Oberlin College in the US. She emphasized that she is a rare example of a girl from her background who has the opportunity to get a good education. The woman from Uganda told a horrific story of being orphaned at an early age, poisoned by a caretaker and eventually abandoned by her uncle. In her teens, she earned her school fees by selling bootleg gin across the border in Kenya. After a horrifying road accident, she was also taken in by the Sisters who paid for her education. She stressed that it is her education that gave her hope and resilience in her



Panel participants of the “Hope and Resilience” event listed from left to right: Betty Ogiel (Uganda), Thobeka Mnisi (South Africa), and Audrey Meloche (Canada)  
Photo Credit: Beth Blissman of the Loretto Group at the UN

life. She has started a foundation in Uganda which helps to educate young girls. Lastly, a 17-year old from Canada discussed how even in her progressive country, women face barriers to

pursuing science, engineering and math in school and work because this has traditionally been seen as a male subject. All three panelists emphasized the need to educate girls in order to achieve goals 4 and 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals

### Other Notes from the Field

#### Migration Committee

The monthly meeting of the NGO Committee on Migration was held on October 12, 2017. The meeting was very well attended with many different nationalities and organizations represented. The UN is going to be making a compact on the migration issue in September 2018 and many NGOs are very interested in getting statements and concept papers included in the discussions leading up to the meeting in the fall. The leaders (called the executive) of the migration committee have already had meetings with seventeen government missions who are interested in this topic and getting feedback from civil society on this problem. The committee members felt that this was very positive development.

The theme for the larger meeting was Children on the Move: Voices, Vulnerability and Solutions. This meeting was organized by the subcommittee on Child Migrants and Refugees. We heard quotes from



[www.iassw-aiets.org](http://www.iassw-aiets.org)

International Association of Schools of Social Work  
Association Internationale des Ecoles de Travail Social  
Asociación 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

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children from all over the world who are living in refugee camps away from their families, have experienced trafficking and exploitation and ultimately have lost hope of a childhood. Three panelists talked about how the US immigration system is broken and how President Trump's immigration rhetoric is affecting the "Dreamers"—those young people who were brought to the U.S. undocumented as children. The forum highlighted the issues of birth registration, family reunification and education which should be basic rights for these immigrant/refugee children.

Respectfully,

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