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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



# Notes from the Field...

## Social Work Day at the UN

On April 1<sup>st</sup>, Social Work Day took place in the ECOSOC Chamber at the United Nations. Faculty and students from many parts of the US and a few other countries traveled to attend this special event. The theme this year was “Strengthening Human Relationships: Policies and Programs to Protect Children” There was a panel of speakers to discuss social protection in relation to children. This year’s theme was aligned with the fourth priority area of the *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development*, that is, the importance of human relationships. Panel speakers discussed the vulnerabilities of childhood and social protection policies that were in place to protect children from the heightened risks they faced. Dr. Shirley Gatenio Gabel and Dr. Robin Mama made their opening remarks, and then a video was shown of Annamaria Campanini, President of IASSW, and Silvana Martinez, President of IFSW. The first panelist of the event was Georgi Panaytov, Ambassador to the Permanent Mission of Bulgaria who spoke on the working group on children at the United Nations he helped found that calls for the



effects for social policies on children to be part of the Sustainable Development Goals outcome measures reported to the UN. He also spoke about the social protection policies Bulgaria has put into place for its children including generous family leave policies, health care coverage and child care assistance. Next was Griet Cattaert, Policy Officer for the UN Office of the Special Rep of the Secretary-General for International Migration, who spoke about the hazards of child labor and how migrant children are most vulnerable on these hazards. Wenyan Yang, Chief of Global Dialogue for Social Development Branch at UN DESA spoke about child protection and the implementation of the 2030 agenda and spoke about child poverty. Mariama Diallo, from Sanctuary for Families spoke about her work with women who have experienced FGM. Bushra Husain, also from Sanctuary for Families spoke about child marriage both nationally and internationally. The last speaker was Aniruddha Kulkarni, Child Protection Specialist at UNICEF. He spoke about his work with UNICEF and their mission to promote and protect the rights of children. The closing remarks were done by Sergei Zelenev, Executive Director of ICSW. After the panelists spoke, there was time for the attendees to ask the panelists any questions that they had.

[Watch Social Work Day at the UN here](#)



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Presidents of IASSW and IFSW



### Student Conference

On March 31<sup>st</sup>, a student conference was held at Fordham University’s Lincoln Center Campus. The event was sponsored by IASSW, IFSW, and ICSW. This was an opportunity to bring social work student from all over the country together to discuss different social protection issues. The event began with five keynote speakers. Students had the opportunity to submit abstracts and do presentations during the event. Our keynote speakers were Dr. Yamile M. Martí Haidar, *Professor at Columbia School of Social Work; Former UNICEF and UNDP Consultant*, Jacqueline Martin, *Deputy Commissioner, NYC Administration for Children’s Services, Division of Preventive Services*, Danielle De La Fuente, *Founder and Chief of Happiness, Amal Alliance*, Dr. Siva Mathiyazhagan, *Founder-Director of Trust for Youth and Child Leadership International* and Consilee Nishimwe, *Author and Motivational Speaker; Survivor of 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda*. After the keynote speakers presented, there was time for a Q&A from the audience. We then had the students move into different classrooms for breakout sessions. Different social work students had submitted abstracts and presented on a variety of topics such as, child migrants, education, youth and the law, gender, sexuality, and reproductive justice, and child marriage and exploitation. The event ended with a networking session for all students.



### **Faculty Roundtable Discusses Internationalizing Social Work Curriculum**

Each spring, faculty members from across the United States and often several other countries accompany student groups to Social Work Day at the United Nations. Capitalizing on this, IASSW and the U.S. Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) teamed up to sponsor a faculty roundtable discussion on internationalizing curriculum. Held during the student conference on March 31, the faculty group explored the rationale for enhancing international content, then moved on to discuss good practices. In the United States, participants agreed that the main purposes are to address “astounding American ignorance” about the world and to de-construct the missionary approach to international work. All social work students need to appreciate that social problems are interrelated, that answers can come from other places, and that social work is an international profession. One step is to use social work literature from diverse countries. Educators can work with university librarians to make international literature more available and accessible. Several participants described their success in co-teaching an on-line course for students at Yerevan State University in Armenia and the University of Connecticut. Technology offers increased opportunities for international connections. Some also suggested disseminating important global documents more broadly, including both social work policy documents and essential human rights and development documents from the United Nations. Standards and guidelines can also play a useful role in assisting programs to develop international content and to ensure accountability for student learning. CSWE

has begun the process of updating its Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards and it may be appropriate to advocate for a specific competency on global learning. IASSW has also established a working group with IFSW to revise the Global Standards for Education for the Social Work Profession. This may be another avenue for strengthening global content and a focus on human rights and social justice. The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development is also due for revision to set priorities for the period following 2020. Participants noted the importance of translating the Global Agenda into practice-relevant knowledge and skills. Finally, the contribution of the projects initiated under the Kendall Institute grants in generating new models for global education was noted. The group recommended that this event be held annually and replicated at the 2020 IASSW/ICSW conference in Rimini to engage a more diverse audience.



### **The Sixty-Third session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63)**

“We must push back against the push back” on women’s rights, said UN Secretary General Guterres in opening the Commission on the Status of Women in March. The

CSW63 took place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 11 to 22 March 2019. The priority theme of the commission was “social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls”. The IASSW representatives to the UN attended the commission and were able to report on many of the events that took place. This newsletter will contain a number of articles about Commission sessions. The sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in March 2020. The main focus of the session will be on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly. The review will include an assessment of current challenges that affect the implementation of the Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and its contribution towards the full realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

To learn more about CSW 63 visit  
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw63-2019>



### **IASSW and Social Protection**

During CSW 63, IASSW co-sponsored a parallel event titled, “Social Protection for All Women and Girls: A Life Course Perspective on Policy Options” with ICSW, HelpAge, the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, and the Africa Platform for Social Protection. Dr. Shirley Gatenio Gabel represented IASSW on the panel who spoke on the vulnerabilities of girls and young women and how social protection can mitigate the heightened risks girls and women confront. This panel covered different issues that females face throughout their lifespan. Birth to 2 years is a critical time for development. As infants, girls are more likely to suffer from inadequate nutrition and more likely to be neglected. Around the age that children enter school is when they are learning gender roles, and their caregivers set the course for this. From age 5-6, many children have to stay home to help out with the household and to watch their siblings; in a way, they become domestic servants. There is a large drop out rate around middle school age for girls. Many girls around this age are married off for economic reasons, as many people feel they are one less mouth to feed, or the family is paid for their daughter to be married. Marrying young can cause health issues, and less skills. They have less opportunity to change their lives. In most developing countries, social protection is less than 20 years old. Overall, 35% of women worldwide have experienced some type of violence. With older women, prevalence is under estimated. Studies suggest that violence starts early in the life cycle. Experience of child abuse is now a risk factor for elder abuse. The speaker for APSP pointed out that while both men and women experience poverty, gender discrimination exacerbates

the situation of women. Gender discrimination in access to education is enhanced by cultural practices that disadvantage women such as Female Genital Mutilation, inheritance practices and the increased likelihood of women working in the informal sector with no social protection. This perpetuates gender inequities and keeps power within the males' realm. Other speakers shared how gender inequalities earlier in life facilitate the risk of women being abused, physically, financially and emotionally as they become older. It is important that awareness about these issues are widespread and that people around the world have social protection so that they can live healthy and full lives.



### **Exploring the SIGI to Measure Gender Equality**

Discussion of the SIGI, Social Institutions and Gender Index, can engage students in important conversations about the meaning of gender equality and ways to address it. A CSW side event sponsored by Burkina Faso and France presented updates to the SIGI and applications for measuring improvements in gender equality. The SIGI “measures how discriminatory laws, social norms and practices affect the lives of women and girls

around the world” (OECD, 2019). The Index has four dimensions: Discrimination in the Family (such as child marriage and rights to inheritance); Physical Integrity, including violence against women, female genital mutilation and reproductive rights; Financial Resources, such as access to land and credit; and Civil Liberties, such as right to citizenship and freedom of movement. The index was developed 10 years ago by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and has been refined several times.

Gaelle Ferrant, the “mother of SIGI” at OECD, pointed out that no country has achieved gender equality. Therefore, whereas the challenges may differ from country to country, the need for change is universal. To advance equality, the first step is to pass laws to make discrimination illegal. Then, community empowerment is needed to change attitudes and behaviors to ensure compliance with new laws. Finally, continuous monitoring and accountability are needed.

Burkina Faso has made gender equality a priority. It has passed a law to make the legal age of marriage 18 with no exceptions, another to allow women to make their own decisions about use of contraception, and is working to eliminate FGM. Presently, 63% of women have undergone FGM, but only 18% say the practice should be continued. This is evidence of progress at the important level of attitudes.

A summary “report card” of progress was presented at the side event, indicating progress on the dimensions since 2014 and the number of countries that still face challenges. For example, 140 countries have laws giving women and men equal rights to legal guardianship of children after divorce,



while 38 countries still have laws discriminating against women in divorce proceedings.

To learn more about the SIGI visit

[www.genderindex.org](http://www.genderindex.org)

[Data Base](#)

### **Toward Eradicating Child Marriage Globally**

Child marriage—two words that should never go together. As explained in a parallel event at the Commission on the Status of Women session in March, child marriage is common in many countries and each year 12 million girls marry before they turn 18. This almost always marks the end of a girl’s education and subjects her to limited life choices and the health risks of early pregnancy and childbirth. Speakers from several NGOs addressed child marriage in Afghanistan, India, Kenya and the United States. In Kenya, the law sets the age of marriage at 18, but it is not enforced. As many as 90% of Maasai girls are married by age 18. In India, child marriage has declined over the past 10 years from 47% of girls to 23%, a number that is still high in spite of a law. Poverty and concerns about girl safety contribute to parents’ desire to marry their daughters early. Probably most surprising to the audience was to learn that in the U.S., only 2 states outlaw marriage before the age of 18 and some states have no age restriction. Even more shocking is that in some states, although a child can be married before 18, she (or he) cannot petition for divorce or flee to a shelter because a child does not have the right to make these decisions. A target in Sustainable Development Goal 5 on gender equality is to end child marriage by 2030. What is the reality in your country? Passing laws is a first step, but work at the community level is essential to change attitudes and

behaviors. Improving educational opportunities for girls and encouraging parents to value their daughters’ education and futures is important. You can visit the websites of some of the sponsors for more information:

Girls not Brides at: [www.girlsnotbrides.org](http://www.girlsnotbrides.org)

Human Rights Watch:

[www.humanrightswatch.org](http://www.humanrightswatch.org)

Unchained at Last in the U.S.; and

Breakthrough India

### **Afghan Women and Sustainable Development: Achievements, Opportunities and Challenges**

“We know that women are powerful, but now it is time that we mobilize that power.” Asila Wardak, Director of the UN department, Afghanistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Afghan women have experienced numerous hardships during almost four decades of armed conflict in Afghanistan. Adela Raz, the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, “during the Taliban regime, women were deprived of their civil rights, forced to stay at home, abandon their work, and prevented from getting an education. Although there has been tremendous progress across many sectors in the past 18 years, women still face a lot of hardship in Afghanistan”. High numbers of women and children are killed or injured in terrorist attacks. Women and girls still face social, economic, and cultural barriers which prevent many from achieving their full potential. Marjan Mateen, Deputy Minister of Education, discussed some of the challenges that girls face to access education. Education is the key for sustainability and peace, investing in girls’ education is the most cost-effective way to achieve the social and the economic objectives, therefore the Ministry is committed to invest in education.



An estimated 3.7 million children of school age remain out of school, including 2.2 million girls and this is mostly due to lack of adequate school infrastructure, long walking distance to school, early marriage, low numbers of qualified female teachers, poor perceptions of the value of education, as well as economic challenges that force families to make difficult choices when it comes to education. The Ministry of Education has introduced a new policy “Girls’ Education” that aims at removing barriers to education for all Afghan girls and women. Mateen added, “so far, we have been able to build 600 new schools, we are trying to encourage or insure to have more female teachers, also changing the curriculum to make it more gender respondent. We have been able to partner with other organizations like UNICEF and some non-government organizations.” Anna Karin, Regional Director for Asia-Pacific, UN Women, added, “we cannot separate women economic empowerment from peace achievement. Our focus is on the economic empowerment, we encourage women to take leadership roles but we cannot achieve that unless we address the challenges they face. Landownership, access to loans, job training, and cultural norms that discourage women from working outside of their homes. Afghan women have always been resilient and been a key part of the development narrative in Afghanistan, it is time we mobilize their power and remove the barriers to social and economic development.”



**Responding to Women Refugees from Syria**

“We do not call them refugees, we call them our guests because that is what they are to us and we treat them accordingly” Nagla Al Adly, National Counsel for Women.

According to the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), Egypt hosts about 132,165 registered Syrian refugees, with a high percentage of them being women and girls. The National Counsel for Women

(NCW), is the highest specialized national machinery for the advancement of women in Egypt; its main target is to meet women's basic needs through increased access to recovery and livelihood opportunities, paired with comprehensive protection services and support to the justice sector to promote accountability for violence against women. Negla Al Adly indicated that NCW supports the displaced women by providing long-term humanitarian and development assistance that are more responsive to women's and girls' needs, increases their role and leadership. So far, they have been able to train about 400 women in different vocations like hair salon, jewelry, sewing, cooking and home décor. They also provide sexual and gender-based violence training and awareness sessions, as well as psychosocial training and support services. Ensherah Ahmad United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), discussed the work they do in Egypt to help women refugees. UNFPA provides quality reproductive health service and protection from gender-based violence (GBV), available to all refugees. It includes mitigating GBV protection risks for Syrian refugee women and girls in Egypt through the establishment of safe space, facilitating gender-based violence survivors' quality of life and timely access to lifesaving services, making sure the interventions are community based and integrating services available to both the host community and refugees. There is also emphasis on engaging men using creative arts, and drama tools because we think engaging men is very important in this intervention. Many Syrian women refugees in Egypt have been able to work and earn a good income, and in many cases, they become the main bread winners in the family; they have

proven to be capable of taking care of themselves and their families.

To learn more about UNFPA visit <https://www.unfpa.org>



**Empowering women and girls with disabilities: How intersectional research and policy development can impact women and girls, including women and girls with disabilities, in Canada and around the world.**

“The higher rates of gender-based violence, particularly childhood sexual abuse and sexual assault, committed against girls, particularly indigenous/black girls and girls with disabilities.”

According to the World Health Organization's 2011 report on disability, there are over one billion people with disabilities worldwide, more than half of which are women, making them the world's largest minority group. Bonnie Brayton, National Executive Director Disabled Women's Network (DAWN) in Canada, gave an overview of the many struggles women with disabilities face. Women with disabilities including deaf women are among the poorest populations in Canada, with an unemployment rate of up to 75 percent.





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Women with disabilities and deaf women are at a higher risk of being targets of violence due to social views and prejudices regarding disability. Persistence of certain cultural, legal and institutional barriers makes women and girls with disabilities the victims of two-fold discrimination: as women and as persons with disabilities. For women and girls with disabilities, their experience of violence often remains hidden and unaddressed due to the multiple barriers they face in accessing sexual and reproductive health, psychosocial, and criminal justice services. Brayton added that nearly half of all discrimination complaints in Canada are about disability. Canadians with disabilities face disproportionately high levels of discrimination in employment and when receiving services. Grounded in the lived experiences of women with disabilities and deaf women, and using an evidence-based approach, DAWN Canada focuses on four major pillars: Research, education, policy, and advocacy. As they explained, “we work to create change at a systemic level in order to directly improve the quality of life for women with disabilities. We strengthen the voice of women with disabilities and Deaf women by ensuring that they are represented at decision-making tables in the areas that matter most, including violence prevention, health equity, and access to justice.” DAWN works to increase the capacity of women with disabilities and Deaf women in their communities to support their leadership in articulating their needs. We emphasize the importance of celebrating resilience, building self-confidence and peer support networks in girls which are shown to be key pathways to social protection and self-empowerment. Dulamsuren Jigjid, World Federation of the Deaf, Mongolia, discussed some of the limitations in this area in research. As we do

more research we find that there is a lot of human rights abuse against girls and women with disability, there is still a lot to be researched and that is not easy, mostly because we do not have access to girls and women with disability. Girls and women with disability do not meet with researchers on their own, they are usually accompanied by family who are very keen to shelter and hold back to protect that disabled family member and they tend to be less authentic about their stories. To get their stories and struggles, we have to find ways to connect with them directly without having someone talk on their behalf. If we do not get a good understanding of the issues, we cannot find solutions.

<https://www.dawncanada.net/about/about/>  
<http://wfdeaf.org/who-we-are/our-team/>



**DAWN**  
Canada  
DisAbled Women's Network Canada  
Réseau d'action des femmes handicapées Canada

**Advocating for Girls through Mission Visits**



As IASSW representatives to the UN, we work with other Non-government Organizations to advocate for human rights and social justice. I have been working with the Mission Advocacy Sub-committee of the NGO Working Group on Girls, and part of our work is to visit UN state members at their offices or missions to advocate for the rights of girls. Recently, I had the opportunity to join other members of the Mission Advocacy Task Force in their visit to a member country government mission at the UN to advocate for



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girls' rights. This was a very unique experience; I got to talk to the Ambassador of the country we visited and ask questions about some of the challenges girls experience when trying to get an education or have access to health services. During the sub-committee meetings, we had to go through a series of steps to prepare for the mission visit, such as learn about the country, the issues girls face there, the effort and progress that have been made by the government to protect the rights of girls. One of the many goals of the mission visits was also to accomplish a friendly relationship with a member state. During our visit, we asked the ambassador if there is anything they would like us to do during the Commission on the Status of Women to support their efforts in advancing human rights. The ambassador was very happy to hear that and asked us to find a girl that could attend one of their events to share her thoughts about the challenges that stop girls from taking leadership roles. The Committee members were pleased to have a girl on the panel advocating for her rights and were very thankful for the opportunity. Being able to sit with the ambassador and ask questions was very intimidating because this was my first mission visit. As civil society, we attend UN meetings but we do not have the opportunity to engage in discussions and conversations with member states as they are a little out of reach and when I had the opportunity to talk to one, I found it hard to express my thoughts because I was not sure what would be the appropriate way to approach the topics being discussed. Later in the meeting, I realized that this was our moment to reach over to the member state and create an alliance to better serve the needs of the people we advocate for. The mission visit was very successful, a girl from our group

was able to attend the event that the ambassador talked about, we were able to take a group photo with the ambassador and the aide, and the ambassador said she was going to put our photo on Twitter.

<https://girlsrights.org>

(by Zozan Antar)



### UPDATES FROM IASSW REPRESENTATIVES TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Rebecca Davis has continued as a member of the NGO Committee on Mental Health, as well as the NGO Committee on the Family. As a member of the NGO Committee on Mental Health, Rebecca participated on the Working Group on Refugee and Immigrant Mental Health. This year's Program Meeting brought together a panel that explored internal migration and youth suicide in India, managing secondary stress of those working with refugees, and trauma experienced by victims of war and genocide, including a survivor of the Cambodian genocide. A member of the theater group, *Girl Be Heard*, demonstrated how writing and performance empower young women through the experiences of telling and performing their

stories. To highlight the growing research that supports the benefits of exercise on mental health globally (reduction of stress, anxiety, etc.), the Committee on Mental Health organized a non-competitive Fun Run/Walk in the Park in New York City. These activities and more continue to advance the agenda of the NGO Committee on Mental Health including raising awareness about the importance of inclusion of mental health issues within the broader context of global public health concerns.

The NGO Committee on the Family's side event at the 63<sup>rd</sup> Commission on the Status of Women focused attention on the family as the first and foremost social protection system and how empowerment of girls and women begin at home, highlighting the role of fathers. Another event provided information on country-specific legislation in Hungary and Nigeria that promotes pro-family policies such as comprehensive maternity benefits to mothers and fathers. Other events highlighted the importance of family support through policies and programs as key for meeting the SDGs including strong social security systems and cross-generational relationships. The Committee on the Family and the Committee on Aging jointly developed a side event for the Commission on Social Development that focused on cross-generational approaches to social protections across the life cycle.

The Committee on the Family participated in a side event for the 52<sup>nd</sup> Commission on Population and Development – *Positive Parenting and Social Inclusion: Vulnerability of Families and Children*. This brought together a panel that presented the evidence from different countries and contexts to support parent education as a prevention measure for breaking the intergenerational

cycle of poverty and violence. Rebecca plans to share some of the resources and information from this presentation in a new project she is starting with an international organization that develops curriculum and trains trainers on parent education in different countries.

Another informative Committee on the Family event was on Loss in the Family. The presentations expanded one's thinking about loss to include disruptions in family relationships as a result of parental and child substance use and addiction, parental inattention, the impact of technology use, and social loss due to migration.

Rebecca served as a member of Social Work Day at the UN Planning Committee. She participated in Social Work Day at the UN as well as the Student Forum with students from her Global Social Work Course.

*-Dr. Rebecca Davis, IASSW Representative to the UN*

*2019 NGO Committee on Mental Health;  
NGO Committee on the Family*

### **Report on Activities on Behalf of IASSW at the United Nations 2018-2019 (Martha Bragin)**

#### **The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action**

The Alliance is a global network of operational agencies, academic institutions, policymakers, donors and practitioners. The Alliance facilitates inter-agency technical collaboration on child protection in all humanitarian contexts. It sets standards and produces technical guidance for use by all stakeholders. Raising the profile of schools of social work and their professional social work



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colleagues is an essential part of the activity. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) currently co-leads the Alliance with rotating NGO partners. There is a regular academic presence, led by Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health’s Forced Migration Program. IASSW was asked to join to ensure a strong social work presence.

The Alliance implements its program through 4 working groups and 5 task forces. As IASSW rep, I am a member of the **Assessment, Measurement and Evidence Working Group** (AME WG) and the **Community Based Child Protection Task Force** (CBCP TF). These issues are specifically important for social work because it is our profession that can be sure that a full range of bio-psycho-social spiritual factors, as well as local cultures are taken into account. My activities:

- as part of the AME-WG, delivered the lecture and led the discussion at the group’s Annual Meeting on the subject of the nature of evidence in child development and protection, based on the bio-psycho-social-spiritual model of social work
- participate in the small steering committee directing the Alliance’ official review of and operational definition of child psychosocial wellbeing. This has specifically engaged IASSW member universities for their input.
- participate in the steering committee drafting the working paper on the nature of evidence that should be used to evaluate the bio-psycho-social-

spiritual well-being of children and adolescents in humanitarian emergencies from a contextual framework.

- The CBCP-TF promotes methodologies to support the implementation of participatory methods of engaging communities to help families to support children in emergencies
  - As part of the CBCP- TF, share social work methodology that helps implement a published global tool to help communities to monitor and evaluate humanitarian programs created to support children and families, based on community standards, and connects agencies to IASSW member schools

### **The NGO Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The committee works with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. This year the Committee focused on two issues-

- continuing its work to raise the voices of children and youth affected by the current U.S. anti-migrant and linked anti-child policies
- supporting the UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty with a focus on local children and youth detained through immigration policy and the conditions of children in custody in the New York Metropolitan area and the active inclusion of children’s voices



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