

IASSW TEAM AT THE UNITED NATIONS SPRING 2024 SECOND NEWSLETTER



Kicking in off the CSW68 at the Teen orientation to Prepare Girls and Boys for the Future

By Diana Dupuy-Faustin

It was a beautiful sunny, but cold Sunday morning as over 70 girls and boys gather to kick off the CSW68 at the teen orientation in New York. Many of the participants came from all over the United States. New York, Colorado, Washington State, and Florida were among the States present. Ritah Muyambo, UN Women Representative, started off the day with a history of the UN Women and the work they do worldwide. Next, Winifred Dorehty, a faithful member of the Working Group on Girls, inspired us with her wisdom encouraging girls and boys to use their voices to advocate for what they believe in. Then, the girls and boys participated in different sessions discussing how to do advocacy, reviewing the priority theme: “Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective”, reviewing the review

theme: “Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls”, and deliberating on how to engage during and after the CSW68.

The girls and boys expressed their ideas to improve education for girls by providing safe transportation, improve hygiene safety by providing clean pads in the girls’ bathroom, and advocate for the girls’ right to education. It was certainly a moving experience to see young girls using their time and voice to advocate for girls’ rights. As a member of the planning committee for teen orientation, it was truly an inspiring sight to see so many young leaders in the making voicing their concerns to advocate for girls’ right worldwide. Teen orientation was truly an unforgettable experience, a moment of reflection, and certainly an amazing start to kick off the 68th year of the Commission on the Status of Women.

Advocating for Girls’ Rights

By Diana Dupuy-Faustin and Dr. Rebecca Davis

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) occurs every year in March. This year, CSW68 occurred from March 11 to March 22, 2024. I had the opportunity to represent IASSW during the Commission (CSW68) at the parallel event organized by Dr. Rebecca Davis from Rutgers University School of Social Work in New Jersey. During this side event, I spoke about the United Nations Women (UN Women) and the work they do worldwide for young girls

and women. I, then, tied it to the Sustainable Development Goal number 5, Gender Equality, and the lack of progress that 49 countries are making to protect women against domestic violence. Furthermore, I explored the work that the Working Group on Girls (WGG) is doing to raise the voices of girls, with a special focus on girls ages 10-18. WGG hosted a Teen Orientation for 75 teens (boys and girls) about the United Nations and the upcoming Commission on the Status of Women.

Dr. Rebecca Davis reviewed the literature on girl's empowerment within the context of the SDGs and right-based approaches, summarized the evidence that links social service workforce strengthening and achieving global goals 3 (health & well-being), 4 (quality education), & 5 (gender equality), and highlighted effective grassroots girls' empowerment programs such as mentor-led safe space groups, services, & community engagement models. The next speaker, Veerja Mehta, an MSW graduate student and research assistant from Rutgers University, presented on the impact of caste apartheid on girls and their education in India. Lastly, we heard from Professor Sam Slewion, Director of Social Work at United Methodist University (UMU) and a member of the National Social Work Board of Liberia highlighting some of the work on gender equality in Liberia. To bring the voices of new social workers who are committed to youth and gender equity, Professor Slewion presented pre-recorded interviews of four (4) recent Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) graduates from UMU in Liberia. The students were asked about their work, their future hopes and dreams, and their hopes for the youth they work with. Thompson Temitope supports youth to continue their education, Melissa Gishy and

Siah Tengbeh provide support and education for pregnant girls and women, and John Carpenter works with youth in a drug recovery program. The passion, skills, and hopefulness of these new social workers and students are the future of our global profession. They highlighted the importance of shared problem-solving on gendered issues and advocating for youth empowerment across genders.

The event was attended by approximately 50 people from around the world working and advocating for girls' and women's rights. Feedback highlighted learning about the Empowerment Theory of Change and being motivated by the presentations. To watch and hear more about this event, please click on the [link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04Y7zyzdYDs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04Y7zyzdYDs)

Networking for Social Change

By Diana Dupuy-Faustin

On March 28, 2024, interns from the International Association Schools of Social Work and the International Federation of Social Work organized a networking event for social work students to meet social workers who are working and impacting change in their respective fields. We had different speakers and attendees from around the country and world attending this event. Warren Lewis, founder of Indigenous Training Collective, spoke about his advocacy work for the rights of Indigenous people in Canada. Amanda Arroyo Cabezas, the director of programs for Nosotras Women Connecting, explained her work for women's justice and women's and girls' rights in Costa Rica. Erick Da Luz Scherf is a macro social

work researcher from Brazil whose areas of expertise are immigration and refugees, health disparities, public policy, and human rights practice. After the speakers presented, students had the opportunity to network in the breakout room with facilitators who presented their work in the community. Among the facilitators were Brent Peterkin, who is a social impact leader fighting against gun violence, Jasmira Colon, an environmental justice activist, and Ausirys Alvis and Maria Panjoj, who are activists for Indigenous Rights. Students had the opportunity to speak and network with leaders from different backgrounds and learn steps to becoming a licensed master social worker (LMSW) and licensed clinical social worker (LCSW). Networking for social change was an inspirational event for all future social workers who attended the event.

Team Presents on UN Advocacy at the Panama Conference

By Dr. Lynne Healy



Members of the IASSW Team of Representatives at the UN presented a panel at the Global Social Work & Social Development conference in Panama on April 5. Lynne Healy kicked off the session by explaining the association's consultative

status and how IASSW uses this to advocate for our priorities with UN bodies. She described the formal and informal ways our access to the UN allows us to share our perspectives. Coalitions with other NGOs are also important; we often work through specialized committees of NGOs. She reminded the audience that change at the UN happens through the actions of governments. Therefore, all social workers have a role in influencing global policy by working at the national level.

Rebecca Thomas focused on her work with the NGO Committee on Migration, a group with participants from 50 different NGOs. Her particular interest has been with climate-induced migration. Migration affects all parts of the world, with both international and internal displacement increasing. She explained how women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change. She urged a number of action steps. First, countries need to fulfill the commitments they have made under the Global Compact for Migration. It would help to collect and report data on those who move because their environments have been negatively affected by climate change. She also encouraged more dialogue with people from Small Island Development States to increase our understanding of their plight. Finally, an end to the use of fossil fuel is needed.

Shirley Gatenio-Gabel, who organized the session, then spoke about our advocacy on SDG 1—the elimination of poverty. The status of the goal at the midpoint of the 15-year agenda is discouraging. The first target is the elimination of extreme poverty, but it has actually increased and reaching the target by 2030 is also certainly impossible. Estimates are that 575 million people will

remain in extreme poverty by 2030. Another target was for all countries to reduce the number of people living below national poverty rates by 50%. Only one-third of countries are on pace to do this. There are many contributing factors, including the impact of the pandemic, conflict, especially the war in Ukraine that disrupted food shipments, and climate change. But political will or lack thereof is the most critical factor. Shirley reported that our advocates at the UN speak to governments through statements and side events. She encouraged all to participate in the Voluntary National Review process and to lobby their own governments.

Representing IASSW at the UN- Focus on Children

We continue to be actively representing academic social work around the world as a member of the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. We are represented on the following Working Groups and Task forces:

- ◆ Assessment, Measurement and Evidence Working Group
- ◆ Community Led Child Protection Task Force
- ◆ Children on the Move Task Force
- ◆ Children Affected by Armed Conflict Task Force

Products created this year included a new document on the rights of children affected by armed groups designated as terrorist; a document on the rights and needs of unaccompanied children at the US Southern Border, and a study that advocated for the professional education and compensation for community volunteers asked to perform social work

functions.

Another activity is making UN and INGO agencies aware of our IASSW school members in countries in conflict or affected by disaster, so that these partners can provide locally based expertise.

On March 7 IASSW participated with the NGO Committee on the CRC in a program titled Education from the Inside Out: A Conversation with Educators” Ronke Odusanya, 2nd year MSW student at Silberman School of Social Work Hunter, with a BSW from Nigeria. She participated in a conversation/ panel among school personnel regarding Diversity Equity and Inclusion, explaining the role of school social workers and social work education as an international product, helping her to understand and support and also critique the practice of DEI in US schools.

Dr. Martha Bragin

Professor, Hunter College and IASSW UN Team member

World Autism Awareness Day

By Diana Dupuy-Faustin



A coaster design by one of Autism Hearts Foundation’s artists: Paolo Brent Ricardo from Baguio City in the Philippines

The mission of the Philippines and Autism Hearts Foundation hosted the World Autism Awareness Day at the United Nations on April 4, 2024. I had the opportunity to attend the in-person event and listen to ambassadors from Philippines, Qatar, Ghana, Malaysia, and Zambia speak on their advocacy work to include persons with disabilities in their society. Ambassador Antonio Lagdameo, permanent representative of the Philippines, reported that “Autism is globally prevalent with about 1 in every 100 persons identified to be in the spectrum. That number could be more as many are not diagnosed. Every observance of the World Awareness Day on April 2nd should celebrate the triumph of persons with autism, their families and communities while raising awareness on their rights and needs; we must take concrete steps to ensure that persons with autism realize their rights and achieve their full potential.” Ambassador Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif Al-Thani, permanent representative of Qatar informed the audience that on April 2, 2024, “the city of Qatar and Autism Speaks hosted an event on the intersection of health equity and emerging technologies, such as AI and machine learning, exploring opportunities to improve the lives of people with autism around the world and Qatar national autism plan launched in 2017 is recognized in the global report for its sustaining commitment to improving the quality of care and social participation of people with autism as well as for engaging policy makers, healthcare leaders, and civil society organizations in its elaboration and implementation. This multisectoral approach is regarded as a key action area to accelerate change and policies in healthcare.”

Additionally, Ambassador Harld Agyeman from the permanent mission of Ghana narrated that Ghana has seen an increased

incidence of autism. He stated that Ghana “has prioritized the education sector and adaptation of school systems to accommodate specialized curricula and training aimed at catering to the unique needs of individuals with autism. Furthermore, Ghana has reinforced communal responsibility and empathy as a foundation upon which national reforms are implemented.” On the other hand, Ambassador Dr. Chola Milambo from the mission of Zambia recounted that it is important to invest in human capital. He mentioned that “We need people who can take care of the persons with disabilities, people with autism. In many developing countries, we have a situation where specialists are in short supply. Intervention needs to address cultural gaps, policy gaps, and institutional gaps. We need to give support to caregivers, families. We need a society approach, family approach, individuals to fill in those gaps.” Ambassador Dr. Ahmad Faisal bin Muhamad, permanent representative of Malaysia calls for inclusive social protection, such as providing vocational training for persons with autism.

Aside from hearing from the ambassadors, Dr. Raoul Bermejo from UNICEF NYHQ calls for member states to listen to the voices of youth self-advocates and parents. Among the youths’ self-advocates, Calvin, an 18-year-old youth self-advocate from the Philippines, described the fight he had to fight for his right to obtain a driver’s license. Kay Quandus, a 23-year-old from Aruba, described how she had to advocate by teaching her teachers and peers about neurodivergence. Parents’ advocates were in the room also and among them was Joyce Lin, who is a Chinese mother to two teenage girls with autism. She advocates as a Parent

Peer Leader at Charles B. Wang Community Health Center by sharing her story with parents who have children with disabilities.



Ambassador Antonio Lagdameo and Diana Dupuy-Faustin

The SDGs need your help! Explaining the High-Level Political Forum and Voluntary National Reviews

The future of humanity and of our planet lies in our hands. It lies also in the hands of today's younger generation who will pass the torch to future generations. We have mapped the road to sustainable development; it will be for all of us to ensure that the journey is successful and its gains irreversible. (2030 Agenda, paragraph 39)

The UN High-level Political Forum (HLPF) is the central United Nations platform for the review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the global level. This year, the HLPF will meet from Monday, 8 July, to Wednesday, 17 July 2024, at the UN headquarters in New

York. Each year, several of the SDGs are selected as the theme for reviewing progress across all countries. The 2024 theme will be "Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions." Countries will share their progress in achieving the following SDGs:

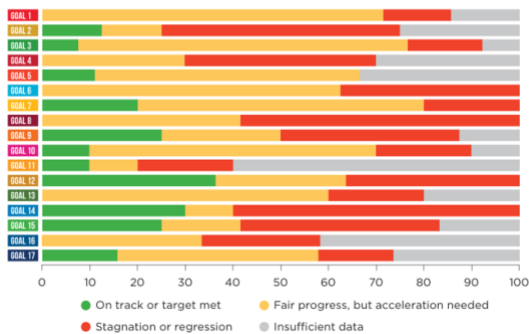


Each year, a cohort of nations commit to voluntary national reviews (VNRs). VNRs aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences and lessons learned, as well as to strengthen the policies and institutions of governments, and to mobilize multi-stakeholder support for the SDGs. The following states have committed to VNRs of their implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the 2024 HLPF: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belize, Brazil, Chad, Columbia, Congo (Republic of the), Costa Rica, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Georgia, Guinea, Honduras, Kenya, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Libya, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Namibia, Nepal, Oman, Palau, Peru, Samoa, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands, South Africa, South Sudan, Spain, Syrian Arab Republic, Uganda, Vanuatu, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

The 17 SDGs have 169 targets and reliable and valid data is available for at least 138 of the 169 targets. However, a midpoint evaluation of SDG progress reveals disturbing trends. Among the 138 targets,

only 15 percent are on track to be achieved by 2030. Nearly half—48 percent—of the assessable targets show moderate or severe deviations from the desired trajectory. And, over one-third—37 per cent—of these targets have experienced no progress or, even worse, have regressed below the 2015 baseline. The impacts of the climate crises, wars and conflicts, COVID-19 pandemic and an ensuing weakened global economy have hindered SDG progress. We all lose because of the lack of SDG progress, but the world’s poorest and most vulnerable are experiencing the worst effects. This goes against the SDGs’ general principle of “leaving no one behind.” These trends underscore the urgent need for intensified efforts to ensure the Sustainable Development Goals stay on course to 2030.

Progress assessment for the 17 Goals based on assessed targets, 2023 or latest data (percentage)



Source:

<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2023/progress-chart/Progress-Chart-2023.pdf>

What can we do as social workers?

While annual HLPF meetings take place at the UN, months of preparation go into these meetings, providing many opportunities for advocacy. Keep in mind that unlike its predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the participation of stakeholders – business, civil society, science, labor, and many others was part of the process of formulating the SDGs and their

participation in monitoring and achieving the SDGs is considered crucial. We know, too, that in a rights-based approach, the voice of those affected by social problems must be part of the societal solution. Challenges such as poverty, hunger, education, and sustainable development can be addressed successfully only when we hear and incorporate the experiences of people whose access to income-generating opportunities, tools and institutional support for doing business, equal education, better working conditions, and green technologies have been limited. The SDGs are an opportunity to implement public policies designed foremost to reach the most marginalized or vulnerable populations and to remind governments of their responsibility to all people.

The SDGs create a common accountability framework for all countries, and many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are instrumental in holding governments accountable for achieving the SDGs. Many social workers work for or are part of NGOs or other civil society communities. For example, IASSW has six representatives at the United Nations in New York who participate in advocacy and community building in concert with various NGOs, on issues that are important to social work education and practice. Social work is also represented by two other organizations at the United Nations – the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and the International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW).

NGOs hold governments accountable and raise awareness on issues that have been insufficiently considered. **NGOs can write shadow reports.** Shadow reports generally provide a critical analysis of the state of progress of SDGs in specific countries and

often share a different perspective from the VNRs that the government produces. For example, a coalition of German NGOs, presented their shadow reports at the HLPF in New York to attract the attention of the international community to the problems of sustainable development implementation. NGOs from countries in Central and South America came together to write a shadow report on how corruption was affecting the implementation of the SDGs.

Other NGOs have used the SDGs' key indicators to compare their country's performance **with that of neighboring countries**, such as in the 2030 Watch project carried out by the Open Knowledge Foundation in Germany.

Social workers often engage with local communities and understand their needs and aspirations. This knowledge can be important in developing sustainable solutions and provide valuable knowledge toward achieving the SDGs.

The **SDGs provide targets for communities that have been long neglected by government**. For example, in France, SDG 10 on inequalities was the impetus for France to commit to growing the incomes of the poorest 40% of the population at a faster pace than the national average income.

Here are some of the ways social workers can participate in pushing forward SDG progress.

- Be part of a group writing a **shadow report** to the VNR in your country on a topic you have expertise.
- Ask to attend **Regional Forums** on Sustainable Development leading to the HLPF in July. The Regional Forums include multi-stakeholders where Member States, UN agency representatives, and civil society

(through the regional civil society engagement mechanisms) come together to share their reflections on progress. The aim of the regional forums is to strengthen the national governments' implementation efforts, exchange experiences, promote cooperation, and articulate regional inputs to HLPF.

- Work with a local, national, or global NGO to write a **position paper** on this year's thematic focus of the HLPF. Stakeholders are invited to submit a position paper that is published on the UN website outlining the policy demands, analysis, and recommendations.
- **Write letters** of support or of concern to NGOs involved in SDG advocacy or governments.
- If you are in NY, **join in on a Civil Society Forum** held the day before the HLPF. These forums are organized by the Major Group Organizations to discuss advocacy strategies, program and mobilization during the HLPF.
- **Attend a side event** organized by NGOs or UN agencies around SDG progress and raising awareness. Some of these are in person and some are held online.

Social workers should be involved in influencing knowledge and advocacy efforts at the UN by directly participating in proceedings, working with NGOs and UN Major Groups or Commissions, working within their own countries, nationally or locally, and lobbying other member countries. This is an opportunity for social workers to affect changes in the process to increase participation of those whose voices are often not heard.

Shirley Gatenio Gabel, Ph.D., MSW
Mary Ann Quaranta Chair for Social Justice
for Children
Fordham University Graduate School of
Social Service
IASSW Representative to the United Nations
in NY

Thank you to IASSW

By Diana Dupuy-Faustin

To Dr. Lynne Healy, members, and the Board of Directors of the IASSW, thank you for choosing me to represent the IASSW at the United Nations for the academic school year 2023-2024. It has been a once in a lifetime experience that I will cherish for the rest of my life. Global advocacy for the rights of girls', women, migrants, persons with disabilities, indigenous people and so many more, is a fight that is continuous, it is a fight that must be fought with courage, determination, and surely patience. This internship has opened my eyes on so many global issues that I may not have otherwise thought of because I am residing in a developed and privileged country. There are so many non-profit organizations (NGOs) in the world working for the betterment of its people and those NGOs are bringing the voices of the people to government leaders, hence change can occur step by step. It has been a remarkable year representing IASSW at the United Nations. Again, I want to thank you for the opportunity, and I hope that I can continue advocacy work in my career after I graduate this coming May.

Thank you!

