



# NGO NEWS

BY TERESA KOTTURAN SCN APRIL 2019

## 63rd Commission on the Status of Women and Children

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established in 1946 and is the principal

global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The CSW examines the progress and gaps in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, considered the blueprint for global women's rights.

CSW is one of the major UN meetings that attract thousands of women and a few men for participation. More than 5,000 representatives from civil society organizations around the world, along with 2,000 Member State delegates and 86 ministers, attended.

The CSW 63 had its priority theme on, "Social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls." The theme acknowledges the importance of Sustainable Development Goal 5.4: "recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally as appropriate."

In her opening remarks on the first day, Geraldine Byrne Nason of Ireland, the Chair of the Commission, said, "We are tasked to achieve a new global understanding of how social protection, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure can help empower women and girls and achieve gender equality... these are vital bread and butter, day-to-day real issues that matter to women." She hoped that the commission can break new ground and agree on new normative stan-



dards without falling back on old rivalries or ideological arguments, to build on the achievements of

Beijing Declaration and let women to lead the way.

Universal social protection is part of the integral vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, calling for the eradication of poverty through the implementation of nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, especially for the poor and vulnerable. "Social protection or social security is a human right and is defined as the set of policies and programs designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability throughout the life cycle. Social protection includes benefits for children and families, maternity, unemployment, employment injury, sickness, old age, disability, survivors, as well as health protection..." (World Social Protection Report 2017) Only 29 percent of the global population is covered by comprehensive social protection systems that include the full range of benefits, while 71 per cent (5.2 billion) people are only partially protected.

Because of increased social protection coverage in the past, more girls are in school today than before; more women have access to essential health services which has resulted in improved maternal and child health. In spite of the many gains, 131 million girls around the world are out of school. Globally women have only three-quarters of the legal rights of men, and more than one billion women have no legal protection against violence and their participation in education and employment are limited. Women are also

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*Sponsoring NGOs with the presenters: Teresa Kotturan, SCN; Veronica Brand, RSHM; Jean Quin, DW; Beth Blissman, SL; Cecilia O'Dwyer, IBVM; Dr. Miriam Therese Winter, MMS; Dr. Azza Karam, Celine Paramunda, MMS; and Grace Ezeonu, SNDdeN*

## Federation co-sponsors CSW parallel event

SC Federation was one of the co-sponsors of a Parallel event organized by Medical Mission Sisters during the Commission on the Status of Women on March 14, 2019. The topic was: Transformative Spirituality: Living in and Through the Spirit. An emerging planetary reality demands a shift in consciousness to a more inclusive way of being in the world as individuals and as a species. What is required of us is a radical reorientation of behavior and beliefs, which can only happen

when we opt wholeheartedly to live in and through the Spirit. The eminent speakers were Dr. Azza Karam, a Senior Advisor on Social and cultural development at the UN Population Fund, where she coordinates the outreach with faith-based partners and chairs the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Religion and Development. The second speaker was Dr. Miriam Therese Winter MMS, a feminist theologian, writer and songwriter or a singer of songs. She teaches at Hartford Seminary and is the Faculty Associate in Transformative Leadership and Spirituality and Director of the Women's Leadership Institute. The Federation NGO moderated the session, which was well attended.

## Federation participates in Commission for Social Development

Seven Federation members attended the Commission, which was held from Feb. 11–22, 2019. “Addressing inequalities and challenges to social inclusion through fiscal, wage and social protection policies,” was the priority theme of the Commission. Social protection is a core human right under international law as specified by the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights. Article 22 states: “Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation...” In an increasingly unequal world, while many enjoy the benefits of economic growth and technological progress, 1.6 billion people still live in multidimensional poverty. Today, a lack of basic social protection is one of the



*Clockwise from top left: Teresa Kotturan, SCN; Carol DeAngelo, SC; Faith Colligan, DC; Romina Sapinoso, SC; Griery Hidalgo (intern), Marion Sheridan, CSM; Melissa Gibilaro*

main reasons why people have been left behind in poverty. When governments adopt austerity measures, social protection measures to people living in poverty are the first to go.

Persistent advocacy efforts from the Vincentian Family NGOs and the Working Group to End Homelessness both prior to and during the Commission managed to include the issue of homelessness and the priority theme: “Social protection systems and affordable housing for all towards eradicating homelessness,” for the 58th session of the Commission in 2020.

A few highlights from the outcome document are given below.

It “stresses that the benefits of economic growth should be inclusive and distributed more equitably

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# Connecting at the UN

By Sister Romina Sapinoso, SC (Cincinnati)

For the past two months, I had the blessing and the privilege of being part of the Sisters of Charity Federation United Nations NGO in New York City as an intern. During this time, I had the opportunity to know more of the United Nations system, have a more in-depth take on world issues, get a sense of the history that has given way to policies and development goals as we know them now and the different movements and ways in which countries, governments and civil society are working to achieve these goals.

Navigating the UN took quite a bit of time and I am pretty sure I barely scratched the surface of learning. Quite a bit of my time was spent attending the many committees that work on various issues. It was encouraging to connect with other religious organizations working together to add to the voices that are petitioning for the plight of those on the margins. The two big commissions also happened during my time at the UN: the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women. It was a wonderful opportunity to be inspired and connected to so many around the world who are seeking to create space for peace, cooperation and the uplifting of those on the margins—women and girls, immigrants, indigenous people, those caught in the violence of war and conflict, and many others. Watching and hearing about grassroots nonprofits and various groups initiating projects to alleviate suffering and answer needs reminded me of how our own ministries in our local communities, especially those who were started by women religious, have done the same life-changing work.

For me, the UN exists because of the work that is being done on the ground by so many and in turn, the UN empowers and supports the work by advocating for and providing a high level forum by which we can



come together and influence policies in every country to bend towards human rights and sustainability.

This experience has given me much faith and hope in humanity and our desire to truly care for one another. Sometimes, the daily grind of justice and direct service work can make us lose sight of the many others who are in solidarity with us across the world. The UN represents the best of humankind and serves as a good reminder of what we are capable of when we come together as brothers and sisters to one another.

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and that, in order to close the gap in inequality and avoid any further deepening of inequality, comprehensive social policies and programs, including appropriate social transfer and job creation programs and social protection systems, are needed.”

‘Encourages the Member States to promote affordable and equitable access to basic services, like formal

and non-formal education, healthcare, access to affordable housing, nutrition and food, employment and decent work, informational and communications technology and infrastructure, through advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Governments are encouraged to combat discrimination and social exclusion by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices.



## Federation NGO in India

The Sisters of Charity of Nazareth invited Sister Teresa Kotturan, SC, to address the Vincentian Family gathering in India and Bangalore in February. Sister Teresa also spoke to the sisters in Patna Province.

## Harvard students spend spring break at the UN

The SC Federation NGO Office had the opportunity to host a group of Harvard Students for a short UN Orientation on March 22, 2019. The students, members of the Phillips Brooks House Association, a student-led organization that fosters social justice, were with LifeWay Network for a week for their Alternative Spring Break Service Learning Program. They were eager to learn about the global advocacy issues that we NGOs are concerned about and asked a lot of questions on poverty eradication, inequalities and global financial issues. These students were accompanied by Lima James, Education and Development Manager for LifeWay Network.

LifeWay Network provided them the opportunity for a deeper knowledge and understanding of the issue of human trafficking through direct interaction and work experience with LifeWay staff and participation in workshops and events on human trafficking during the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 63) at the UN. They also engaged with the frontline leaders



*Harvard students with Lima James of LifeWay Network*

of New York State Anti-Trafficking Coalition.

LifeWay Network, based in New York City, provides long-term transitional housing for women who have been trafficked. The Sisters of Charity-Halifax and the Sisters of Charity of New York have been supporting LifeWay Network since its inception in 2007.

For more information, visit their web site at [lifewaynetwork.org](http://lifewaynetwork.org).

# Vincentian Family welcomes NGOs

The International Coordinator of the Vincentian Family Office in Philadelphia invited the NGOs to meet with the Vincentian Family Executive Committee on Jan. 16, 2019. Sister Grace Hartzog, SC, executive director of the Sisters of Charity Federation, and Sister Eileen Haynes, SCL, were part of the Executive Committee. They gave a short presentation on the focus of their individual organization as well as the collaborative efforts in global advocacy, especially on the Vincentian Family focus on Homelessness. This interaction was to “help the Vincentian Family to grow in awareness of the international organizations who are champions on behalf of people living in poverty and help the Family form collaborative relationships with them.”



*From left: Ed Keane, SSVP; Guillermo Campuzano, CM; Natalie Boone, AIC; Pattie Hughes, SSVP; Margaret O'Dwyer, DC; Teresa Kotturan, SCN; and Catherine Prendergast, DC.*

## UN visit ‘insightful, informative’

*By Donna Schroeter, SC Associate*

On Nov. 14-16, 2018, we had the opportunity to visit the United Nations and meet the Sisters of Charity Federation NGO, Sister Teresa Kotturan, SCN. Sister Pat and I were joined by John Shively, the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Coordinator for the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas.

Our time together was filled with learning about the Operations and Systems of the UN, Role of Religious and NGOs at the UN, Sustainable Development Goals, Catholic Social Teaching and Human Rights, Understanding Migration, Immigration, and Refugees, Financing for Development, and the 70th Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights. We sat in on an NGO Mining Group meeting and listened to them speaking on Fracking, Gendered Impacts of Mining and Transnational Corporations. Without a

doubt, our tour of the UN, standing in the General Assembly Conference Room, seeing the podium that so many political and religious leaders and activists spoke from, walking among the sculptures on the grounds that symbolize human journeys and sacrifices, seeing and



hearing the varied cultures—these are just a few of the many memories that we will treasure.

“My experiences at the UN taught me how necessary it is to call countries to accountability and to advocate not only for the world and its vulnerable peoples, but for Mother Earth Herself.” (Pat Poole, SCIC)

“As I reflected on all the information, my awareness heightened... truly a memory dear to my heart... we all need to speak and take a stance... that takes courage.” (Donna)

“I am continually drawn back to the imagery of the sculpture ‘Let Us Beat Swords into Plowshares’ when I reflect on my time at United Nations. Its message of transforming the weapons of war into tools of peace is at the core of what the UN does as an institution. The United Nations agenda is ambitious in working to secure a more peaceful, equitable, and sustainable world. My time there was incredibly insightful, and I enjoyed attending the NGO Mining working group meeting. I saw firsthand the role of people of faith working to protect the economic and social rights of indigenous peoples and their water resources. It was an incredibly informative and eye-opening experience, and we are blessed to have Teresa helping us advocate on the global stage and teaching us how to do so ourselves in our local communities.” (John Shively)

disadvantaged in social protection systems. Women face lower coverage rates and receive substantially lower benefits.

Women are responsible for 75 percent of all the unpaid care and domestic work, which is unrecognized by any governments. According to McKinsey Global Institute, the unpaid care work performed by women accounts for 13 per cent of the global GDP: \$10 trillion. Child care responsibilities force women to work part time; this in turn affects their pension contributions, and in retirement they end up in poverty. For women to thrive, they should be ensured maternity protection and sharing of domestic responsibilities, along with flexible work arrangements.

Migrant women and girls are another group that faces increased risk of poverty, exploitation and exclusion. They are vulnerable to trafficking and sexual exploitation. They, along with older women and women and girls with disabilities need adequate protections and access to public services to stop their march into extreme poverty.

Phumizile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Under-Secretary-General for Gender Equality and Executive Director of UN Women, said, “Families and communities who are most likely to be left behind are those who lack access to adequate infrastructure, who have restricted mobility and those who cannot afford private services, such as child care, water, education and telecommunications infrastructure.” So, what is required is a stronger gender-responsive, human rights based and integrated approaches to the design, implementation and funding of social protection systems, public services

and sustainable infrastructure, which are critical to free up women’s and girls’ time, support their mobility and access to economic opportunities.

In his address, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, “For far too long, women have been systematically marginalized, ignored and silenced” and he thanked the participants for raising their voices. He also warned about the “deep, pervasive and relentless pushback on women’s rights” and the increased violence against women human rights defenders, women running for political office and the online harassment and abuse against women who speak out.

Negotiations for the agreed conclusions of CSW 63 were prolonged due to the attempt by a few countries to dilute the language and remove the term “gender” from the document. Some of the key recommendations from the Agreed Conclusions are:

- Invest in social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure to support the productivity of women’s work, including in the informal economy;
- Ensure that progress in women’s access to social protection, public services and sustainable infrastructure is not undermined by budget cuts and austerity measures, and levels of protection previously achieved are not reversed;
- Build on multilateral commitments to gender equality, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), to strengthen access to social

protection, public services and infrastructure for all women and girls;

- Recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and domestic work by ensuring access to social protection for unpaid caregivers of all ages, including coverage for health care and pensions;
- Scale up investment in quality public care services that are affordable and gender-responsive;
- Identify and remove barriers to women’s and girls’ access to public services, such as physical distance, lack of information and decision-making power, stigma and discrimination;
- Guarantee the availability of safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation, including for menstrual hygiene, in homes, schools, refugee camps and other public places;
- Ensure that transport policies and planning are sustainable, accessible, affordable, safe and gender-responsive, taking into account the different needs of women and men, and adapted to be used by persons with disabilities and older persons;
- Promote the full and equal participation and leadership of women and women’s organizations in policy dialogues and decision-making relating to social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure;
- Strongly condemn the impunity and lack of accountability rooted in historical and structural inequality that accompanies pervasive violence against women.

# My internship

By Greiry Hidalgo



I must confess that I was fearful of what was to come when I was approached about interning at the United Nations. I felt unprepared, and I was definitely not ready. I was aware of my surroundings and all its issues, but I never tried to make a difference. Being an intern at the UN has taught me

that I don't have to take on the world on my own. I've learned that by supporting, encouraging, and spreading a word or two I can make an impact on many lives. I have attended numerous meetings now, specifically the Commission for Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women. Both these commissions have opened my eyes to a whole new world; a world that I had never seen or experienced. I am now able to see the cruelty that surrounds all of us, and how it impacts every life differently. The commission on the Status of Women showed me that women go through so much more than is ever publicized. We, women, have to go through many more obstacles than men ever do to reach every one of our goals. We are belittled by our choice of clothes, our background, but most importantly we are brought



From left: Sister Carol De Angelo, SC; Greiry Hidalgo, Sister Romina Sapinoso, SC (Cincinnati)

down for being a woman. The commission on the Status of Women has taught me that I should never give up on myself or other women because no one else is rooting for us, for our success. I can feel myself growing due to this internship; I feel myself becoming a part of a community that has always been available, but that was never reachable.

*Greiry Hidalgo is a student at the College of Mount Saint Vincent.*

## - UPCOMING - EVENTS & NEWS

April 22-May 3, 2019 | 18th Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

May 14-15, 2019 | Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for SDGs

June 13 – 16, 2019 | SC Federation Assembly of the Whole – NGO Liaison meeting on June 13

July 8-18, 2019 | High Level Political Forum 2019

August 26-28, 2019 | 68th UN Civil Society Conference (DPI/NGO) at Salt Lake City, USA

**If anyone would like to attend any of these meetings, please contact the NGO Representative**



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