



GWI UPDATE CSW62 EDITION



Commission on the Status of Women 62nd session: Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls

— GWI at CSW62 —

The intense excitement surrounding CSW62 may be over but GWI's work continues on behalf of all women and girls. Beginning in 1947, the two weeks during which the Commission on the Status of Women meets annually in New York City has always been a time for like-minded women to gather, discuss, learn from each other, advocate and coalesce around the rights of women and girls

This year was no different. Our heartfelt thanks go to Hazel Bowen, VP Advocacy and Education, for organizing our delegation, providing relevant information, making arrangements for meetings and overseeing the process; Louise McLeod, VP Marketing, for attending all the Zero Draft meetings, working with Hazel on the many drafts of the Agreed Conclusions document and conducting morning briefings; our tireless UN NY representatives, Sophie, Maureen, Mick and Maryella for their year-round service and knowledgeable support at GWI's morning meetings; to our undeterred CSW delegates who paid to travel to and stay in one of the most expensive cities in the world, braved the bitter cold, attended meetings all day and wrote reports; Stacy, our Executive Director, whose dedication knows no bounds and has once again demonstrated, with the many tasks she undertook, that where there is a will, there is a way.

Thank you everyone for exemplifying the determination, leadership and single-mindedness that it takes to achieve our collective vision for a just and equal society.

*Sincerely,
Geeta Desai, GWI President*

GWI President CSW62 introduction and Ministerial Roundtable reviews

Graduate Women International (GWI) President, Geeta Desai, commenced GWI's participation in the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW62), *Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls*, with a detailed and motivating introduction. "Rural women are not a homogenous group: they may be small farmers with ownership rights, farmers or forest users on collective or common land, waged farmers, workers in secondary and non-farm industries, pastoralists, fishers, and peasants. They also may be girls, parents, widows,

Indigenous women, women with disabilities, women living with HIV or other diseases, and women of diverse sexual orientations and/or gender identities. The social and economic injustices rural women continue to experience should not be inevitable; they are the result of global and local policymaking intersecting with entrenched patriarchal practices. As you know, preparations for this annual meeting begin much in advance of the meeting itself and these preparations notably include The Expert Group Meeting which is responsible for framing the issue within the most current research on the social, economic and political factors that impact the issue”, said Desai. Her information-rich [CSW62 Introduction and Framework](#), summary of the [first Ministerial Roundtable](#) and Parts [1](#), [2](#) [3](#) and [4](#) of her series summarizing the second Ministerial Roundtable can be read by clicking the afore-referenced links.

GWI at CSW62: an overview

submitted by Hazel Bowen, GWI Vice President Advocacy and Education

The CSW is a major focal point on the GWI Advocacy calendar as CSW is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. For the Commission’s annual two-week session, representatives of United Nations (UN) Member States, civil society organizations and UN entities come together in New York to discuss progress and gaps in the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the key global policy document on gender equality, and the 23rd special session of the General Assembly held in 2000 (Beijing+5). GWI participates in the activities of NGO-CSW New York (NGO-CSW NYC) through its UN Representatives and involvement in drafting the Zero Draft Document. Developed by members of NGO-CSW NYC, the Zero Draft Document raises issues of concern to civil society with the hope of their inclusion in the CSW final conclusions. Certain input from GWI was taken up for CSW62’s Zero Draft Document. GWI also encourages its members to participate as GWI delegates. This year, 14 delegates from nine countries were representing GWI at CSW, along with Louise McLeod, GWI Vice President Marketing, Stacy Dry Lara, GWI Executive Director, and the four GWI New York UN Reps. Geeta Desai, GWI President, attended the social dinner as well as wrote reports on several key roundtables and discussions taking place at CSW62. Hazel Bowen assisted in co-ordinating activities remotely from South Africa. Eighteen additional members, at CSW62 for other purposes, attended the two breakfast briefings and the social dinner held in the first week. A few delegates were not able to attend due to visa difficulties or family/work commitments. Please click [here](#) to read Hazel’s full report that also includes a summary of the GWI New York UN Reps participation and more.

GWI submits CSW62 written statement with the support of leading organisations

GWI believes that the most efficient way to overcome the challenges rural girls face when trying to gain an education is by increasing the number of female teachers in rural schools. To this end, GWI submitted a written statement for CSW62 on education as a precondition to the empowerment of rural women and girls. The statement also underscores that the time is now for global, multilateral action and the importance of agricultural and financial training for rural women and girls. Statement co-sponsors are the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW), the Federation of American Women’s Clubs Overseas, Make Mothers Matter, Soroptimist International, Women’s World Summit Foundation and Zonta International. The full written statement can be read [here](#).

GWI New York UN Reps at CSW62 and beyond

submitted by Hazel Bowen, GWI Vice President Advocacy and Education



*GWI New York United Nations
Representative, Sophie Turner Zaretsky*

The GWI New York UN Reps attended CSW62 and engaged with the GWI Delegates/members. They were part of the two breakfast briefings.

GWI New York Rep, Sophie Turner Zaretsky, provided a background on the work of the GWI UN Reps in New York. They participate on several committees such as the NGO-CSW NYC, UNESCO and UNICEF. The NGO-CSW NYC is an important coalition of hundreds of organizations and individuals working within the UN community to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, and interacts with CSW, UN Women, Member

States and other UN agencies. GWI New York UN Reps are intensely involved as this is a major network to ensure that GWI's aims and mission are realized. They work on the Planning Committee, which in turn operates through a number of sub-committees, such as Consultation Day, Handbook Preparation, Rally, Artisan Fair, Parallel events, Logistics and Review of the Zero Draft Document. UNICEF is comprised of approximately 60 organizations advocating for the promotion and protection of children's rights. It has currently 5 Goals to its draft Strategic Plan 2018-2021. Of particular interest to GWI is the acknowledgement that access to and attendance in school alone is not enough – there is an emphasis on schooling must lead to learning.

Maureen Byrne, GWI New York UN Rep, provided some feedback on the meeting held on 23 March 2018 where CSW62 was analysed—what was gained; what remains to be done. From the floor, concern was expressed about the lack of government accountability, women's knowledge of their own rights and sufficient attention given to education.

As part of NGO CSW62 Forum Planning Committee, GWI New York Rep, Maryella Hannum, served as Co-Chair of the Logistics Committee, which was one of the nine planning subcommittees. This is a vital (and new) sub-committee as its purpose is to ensure all venues and events run smoothly. It works in conjunction with volunteers, interns and the NGO CSW office manager to staff each venue and all events that are part of NGO CSW62 Forum (parallel events).



*GWI New York United Nations
Representative, Maureen
Byrne*

Each of the GWI NYC UN Representatives submitted noteworthy individual reports as well that can be read [here](#).

GWI President evaluates CSW62 review theme

The CSW each year evaluates progress in the implementation of the Agreed Conclusions on a priority theme of a previous session, as its review theme. Reviewed at CSW62 was the theme contained in the Agreed Conclusions of the 47th session of CSW in 2003: Participation in and access of women to media and information and communications technologies and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women. Sri Lanka, Kenya, Germany, New Zealand, Belgium, Colombia, Saudi Arabia, Bulgaria, Argentina, Sudan, Costa Rica, Slovakia and Nigeria presented.

Following are a series of actions taken by these countries, since 2003, in the use of media and information and communications technologies as instruments to empower women:

1. Broadening women's access to benefits of information and communications technology; increasing women's participation in the media.
2. Increasing women's decision-making roles within print and audio-visual media.
3. Reducing sexist stereotypes.
4. Reducing media's role in the perpetuation of pornography and violence against women.
5. Developing data on women's presence and influence in media and in the use of ICTs.

The full examination of CSW62 review theme by GWI President, Geeta Desai, is [here](#).

UN Women releases *Turning Promises into Action* report

Recently, UN Women released a global monitoring report evaluating gender equality progress in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This landmark report, *Turning Promises into Action*, lays the basis for robust, gender-responsive monitoring and examines ongoing trends and challenges in achieving the 2030 Agenda. Using a monitoring approach, *Turning Promises into Action*, considers both the ends (goals and targets) and the means (policies and processes) that are needed to achieve gender equality in the context of the 2030 Agenda. This approach intends to set the path forward for Member States and stakeholders to track progress and increase accountability for gender equality commitments as implementation takes hold. Using micro-level data, the report examines how, across countries, women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination are often left behind and excluded from progress.

Australia and New Zealand are featured in the *Turning Promises into Action* report as positive case study examples for their successes in improving women's issues as related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Notably, Australia and New Zealand report the lowest maternal mortality ratio since 1990 (SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being) and have a higher proportion of female representation in national parliaments than the global average (SDG 5: Gender Equality). New Zealand ranks higher than the global average in the ratio of women to men in research positions (SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure). Some 60 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) across the country are funded by the Ministry of Social Development to provide education and life, parenting and relationship skills to women who have experienced violence (SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals). The full *Turning Promises into Action* report and links to the Australia and New Zealand fact sheets are [here](#).

Youth Dialogue at CSW62

submitted by Maryella Hannum, GWI New York UN Rep



*GWI New York United Nations Representative,
Maryella Hannum*

A Youth Dialogue took place at CSW62 on Saturday 17 March. The dialogue focused on the theme *Leave No One Behind*, and discussions centred on challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of young women and girls living in rural communities. The daylong session was led by UN Women in collaboration with the UN Youth Envoy and nine civil society organisations. More information is available about the day's program [here](#). At the end of the day, a set of "urgent" policy recommendations (Youth Declaration) was presented by the youth to influence CSW62 discussions and its priority theme. A youth report entitled "Leaving no one behind: ensuring the inclusion of girls and young women from rural communities in the implementation and achievement of the SDGs" was presented. The report

addresses seven key issue areas including: Education; Health; Violence; Economic Justice; Environment; Climate Change and Land Rights; Media; ICT; Data and Political Participation and Agency. Maryella's full GWI Advocacy Report is [here](#).

GWI CSW62 Delegate Hally Siddons shares a summary of CSW62 attendances

GWI delegate Hally Siddons, of the Canadian Federation of University Women, shares a comprehensive summary of her participation and experience at CSW62. "It was a privilege to once again join GWI members from around the world as a delegate from Graduate Women International to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York. It was an inspiration to work with these women – women from Nigeria, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, Zimbabwe, USA, Canada, and South Africa, and to learn more about their countries and how they were using their expertise to empower women and girls and to help meet the SDGs. We shared and promoted GWI's transparent and powerful vision, its commitment to girls' education" says Siddons. Her report provides an introduction to the procedures, themes and goals of this year's session. We invite you to read Hally's very appreciated account of CSW62 [here](#).

Intersecting grassroots radio and new technologies to reach rural and refugee women

Judith Saror and Nneka Chiedozie Udeh, from the Nigerian Association of University Women (NAUW), attended the parallel event *Intersecting Grassroots Radio and New Technologies to reach Rural and Refugee Women*, organized by Women Graduates-USA (WG-USA), which included a presentation by Louise McLeod, GWI Vice President, Marketing and WG-USA member. Attendees benefitted from the opportunity to discuss how new technologies interconnect with traditional radio and modern mobile apps to inform marginalized and underserved populations of their human rights and increase their access to education. "The use of technologies and apps is very complimentary to education and should be encouraged. This is because the world is fast-advancing and technology advancement is at the forefront", said Saror and Udeh in their personal observations from the sessions. The two also noted that the parallel event echoed the GWI mission that "access to education is both an internationally recognized human right, as well as a fundamental enabler to achieve economic growth, human development, peace and stability". The intersection of radio and new technologies significantly helps empower rural women economically and socially through the broadcasting of information ranging from employment opportunities, agricultural extension programmes, credit facilities and public health care systems to epidemics and climate change. What's more, "apps that are able to show the users areas of imminent danger can be used by women to preserve their lives and that of their children by avoiding such dangerous zones. Ultimately, an informed community can bring about the changes that are being advocated in Governance as democracy cannot exist without information", adds Saror and Udeh.

Education and ICT with rural women in Rwanda and Australia draws multinational support

Members of GWI from several countries attended the CSW62 parallel event conducted by Professor Shirley Randell Order of Australia, Convener of International Relations (CIR) of the Australian Federation of Graduate Women (AFGW) NSW, Professor Jaya Dantas, CIR of AFGW WA and Josephine Nyiranzeyimana, Member of Rwanda Association of University Women (RAUW) and Government Chief



From left to right: Judith Saror, NAUW, Josephine Nyiranzeyimana, RAUW, Shirley Randell, AFGW, Mediatrice Kagaba, RAUW, Jaya Dantas, AFGW, Nneka Chiedozie Udeh, NAUW, Chizuko Suzuki, JAUW, Marianne Singh-Waraich, CFUW

Information Officer at Rwanda Information Society Authority. The event, sponsored by GWI, AFGW and RAUW, examined education and ICT among rural women in Rwanda and Australia. Drawing on examples from rural and remote areas, this panel highlighted the potential for ICTs to improve educational outcomes for rural and remote women through online education and improve their health and well-being through the use of telehealth interventions. Jaya showcased Centres for Rural Health and outstanding regional universities in Australia. Josephine and Shirley discussed the successes of the government of Rwanda in implementing ICT initiatives, the University for Health Equity and open source decision-making health support systems used especially for rural women. The event demonstrated the interconnectivity of SDGs 3, 4, 5, 15 and 17, and was linked to the CSW62 priority and review themes focused on advancing the rural and remote women's agenda. It was suggested that a framework on ICT and online education for rural and remote women can perhaps be translated into other contexts. This photo shows GWI members from Nigeria, Rwanda, Australia, Japan and Canada who were among the some 40 attendees. This was the third presentation at CSW62 by Shirley, who also represented Zonta International at a Government of Zambia Side Event on Harmful Traditional Practices in Africa, including FGM and child marriage, and a parallel event on disaster preparedness using technology, sponsored by Stree Aadhar Kendra and including members of GWI NFA Indian Federation of University Women, Pune Branch.

Consultation Day

Submitted by Marianne Singh-Waraich

What is different this year At UN Women? A new representative for rural women. We understand now that issues are interrelated: health, education, food, violence, a concept known as intersectionality. We need to look at these problems holistically. We also understand the need to implement quickly. Our job is to create political will for change! We must create the legal framework. The co-operation and power of the NGOs is critical to delivery on this. Even when there is that legal framework, too often it is not implemented on the ground. Marianne's interesting account of Consultation Day can be read [here](#).

Zambia and Malawi co-host The Road to End Child Marriage in Africa side event



GWI Executive Director, Stacy Dry Lara, and Malawi Senior Chief Theresa Kachindamoto

Zambia and Malawi are among the top 20 countries with the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world, with an average of two out of five girls being married by the age of 18. The governments of Zambia and Malawi have emerged as champions at the local and global levels in efforts to eradicate child marriage, with demonstrable progress at the national and community levels, in which traditional leaders play a lead role within communities. Both countries have developed national strategies and launched campaigns to end child marriage (ECM), signalling political will at the highest level, which is critical for the promotion of the status of women and girls, and thus the achievement of the SDGs.

During CSW62, delegates from Zambia and Malawi held a joint side event titled, *The Road to End Child Marriage in Africa*, to raise awareness on the issue of child marriage and explain how cultural practice is being successfully reduced in their countries through both formal and informal frameworks. Presenters at the side event included Malawi Senior Chief, Theresa Kachindamoto, who presented her main challenges in changing culture norms in Malawi, where she has faced major pushback from community leaders. In direct response to naysayers, Chief Kachindamoto directed her efforts towards changing Malawi's policies and child marriage laws. She obtained 50 sub-chiefs' signatures on an agreement to abolish early marriage under the customary law and to annul any existing

unions in her area of authority. In recent years, her efforts have reversed some 840 child marriages, and many girls (and boys) are back in school because of this success.

Preventing Gender Based Violence (GBV) in rural South Sudan

The overarching theme of empowering rural women and assisting in their ascension to autonomy was present throughout CSW62. On 13 March, Judith Saror and Nneka Chiedozi-Ude of NAUW attended a parallel event on the Nonviolent Peaceforce which focused on preventing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in rural South Sudan. The parallel event connected discussions to GWI's core concern to increase women and girls' safe access to quality secondary, tertiary and continuing education and emphasis that education is integral to a woman's economic advancement.

Participants discussed the work of trained civilians who use an Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) system and collaborate with a Women Protection Team (WPT) who educates women on techniques of conflict prevention and detection of impending situations of domestic violence. The WPT solution brought forward to be used in situations of sexual violence against women was, in fact, education.



Preventing Gender Based Violence (GBV) in rural South Sudan

In their personal narratives, Saror and Udeh account that “The SDGs cannot be sustained if the abuse against girls and women continues unabated.

However, it is important to point here that the perpetrators of the GBV against women are in most cases young men. Therefore, it has become paramount that Gender Equality Education be extended to the boys/male gender. Families should be encouraged to educate their boys to appreciate and respect the feminine gender. This will help achieve gender parity and build stronger communities where each gender is free of abuse”.

Human Trafficking and CEDAW: Meeting Challenges and Utilizing Opportunities

Due to the bias against women as victims, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) identifies trafficking in persons (TIP) as a form of gender-based violence. During CSW62, Judith Saror and Nneka Chiedozi-Udeh from NAUW attended a parallel event organized by the United Nations Association of United States of America Kentucky Division titled, *Human Trafficking and CEDAW: Meeting Challenges and Utilizing Opportunities*. Article 6 of CEDAW declares “State parties shall take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to suppress all forms of traffic in women, exploitation and prostitution of women”. “However, the key point to human trafficking is that it is demand related. There is also a disconnect between adjudication and sentencing of the offenders. The offenders always get a few years sentences while the victims live with a lifelong stigma”, said Saror and Udeh.

Among the new approaches to combat TIP discussed was the Nordic Model approach. This model, sometimes referred to as the Sex Buyer Law, the Swedish, Abolitionist or Equality Model, decriminalizes all those who are prostituted. This innovative model rests on the idea that criminal legislation has the primary purpose of making it clear what a society considers to be unacceptable. In addition to Sweden, this approach has now been adopted in Canada, France, Iceland, Northern Ireland, Norway and, most recently, the Republic of Ireland.

Personal observations submitted by Saror and Udeh, suggest that, “GWI and its NFAs can join in a large-scale educational campaign that is required to change in a positive direction the attitudes towards the law against exploitation of women and that of men buying women’s bodies. A holistic approach, which includes a widespread public information campaign and education, programmes in schools that explain honestly the damage that prostitution causes is required. Also, GWI and its NFA can incorporate in their advocacy campaign for national governments to prioritize the Nordic Model with an in-depth training for the police, judiciary, frontline education workers, social services and the local governments”.

Voices for All Rural Women Leaders

During week one of CSW62, Judith Saror and Nneka Chiedozi Udeh from NAUW attended the parallel event, *Voices for All Rural Women Leaders*. Central to the event was recognising the leading role rural women play in agriculture, food security and overall sustainable development for their communities. Saror and Udeh note that rural women “contributions are, however, too often, unrecognised and unpaid for since they work in family farms or carry out subsistence farming to feed their families. And this work is in addition to domestic duties, their care giving work and education within the family”.



GWI attendees of Voices for All Rural Women Leaders

This CSW62 event called attention to rural women’s transferrable organisational and problem-solving skills, niche expertise and community influence, and examined ways to encourage their inclusion in planning and partnership with governance bodies to help achieve the SDGs. Rural women were commended for adapting their traditional roles in order to play larger parts in their own communities.

Personal observations and key points taken from the event by Saror and Chiedozi-Udeh are that, “rural women are very organized; they are problem solvers, they contribute to the SDG13 Climate Action through their agricultural practices; they are experts in their own ways and want to be part of planning and hence need to partner with the government to achieve the SDG 17 Partnership to achieve the Goals.” The two also noted that extension services do not take into consideration the small-scale farmers who are mainly women; that the market areas rural women go to sell their produce are markedly poorly sanitized; that rural women are coming out of their traditional roles to get involved in the community’s activities and that rural women are increasingly in trade mapping.

CSW62 GWI Social Dinner

GWI hosted a social dinner during CSW62 on the night of 15 March. The guests included GWI representatives from many NFAs, both delegates and those attending on behalf of other organizations. This dinner provided the opportunity to share stories from CSWs past and present and enjoy a night of fellowship. A huge thanks goes out to Hally Siddons for putting together this wonderful event!



GWI social dinner guests

Follow us on social media!



Empowering women and girls through lifelong education for leadership, decision-making and peace. GWI, formerly IFUW, is in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1947 and is an NGO maintaining official relations with UNESCO and ILO.

Graduate Women International

48, Chemin du Grand-Montfleury, CH-1290, Versoix, Geneva, Switzerland

E-mail: gwi@graduatewomen.org Website: www.graduatewomen.org

Copyright© 2018 GWI. All rights reserved.