



## **CSW62 Advocacy Report**

Submitted by **Dr Jaya Dantas**, PhD

**NFA represented:** Australian Federation of Graduate Women, also a member of the Rwandan Association of University Women and Graduate Women, Western Australia.

### **Reflections from Professor Jaya Dantas – Dean International, Curtin University, Western Australia**

I was privileged to attend the 62<sup>nd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women as a delegate of Graduate Women International (GWI, headquartered in Geneva) and also represented the Australian Federation of Graduate Women, Curtin University, and the Public Health Association of Australia. I was one of two Australian GWI delegates the other being **Professor Shirley Randell**.

#### **The consultation day – 11 May 2018**

The Commission commenced on **11 March 2018 in New York City** with the **consultation day** organised by NGO CSW. Phumzile Mambo-Ngcuka, Under Secretary General and Executive Director, UN Women with HE Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason, Permanent Representative, Mission of Ireland and Bureau Chair of the CSW welcomed us. Keynote speaker, **Sizani Ngubane**, Founder of Rural Women's Movement South Africa won the Women of Distinction Award. The consultation day focussed on ***Gender Equality, rural women and land rights***. The message was to focus on local knowledge, involve women in peace and security and engage with levels of intersectionality at both rural and urban contexts. There was discussion of class, gender, violence & deprivation and that the connections created by the **#metoo & #timesup** global campaigns are vitally important.

There was a call to encourage and validate women and the need to have a **Global Compact** *that would create a space for women and also protect them*. A compact in every sphere where there is representation of women and that no decisions about women should be taken without women (decisions about infrastructure, access to health and reproductive health) – the compact needs to be responsive, inclusive, data and person centred, and have platforms of identification and diversity. There was a call to have conversations, narratives and stories as stories work – most people are not only driven by facts but rather by powerful stories.



Regina from the Netherlands, Shirley and Jaya on consultation day



Ex Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mambo-Ngcuka & Sizani Ngubane, who won the woman of distinction award

## **Reception at the Australian Consulate to the United Nations in New York**

On **11 March evening**, HE Gillian Bird, Australian Ambassador to the UN welcomed Australian government and NGO delegates to the UN Commission on the Status of Women 62 to an evening reception. Australian Minister for Women, Hon Kelly O'Dwyer welcomed us in the company of the Human Rights Commission's Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins, Janelle Weissman, UN Women National Committee of Australia; HRC's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Jane Oscar AO, Elizabeth Broderick, Global Co-Chair of the Women's Empowerment Principles (UN Global Compact) and Dr Sharon Stone, the Australian Ambassador for Women and Girls. The Minister and Human Rights Commissioners spoke brilliantly in several side events during CSW62. It was a wonderful evening to meet and network with many familiar fellow delegates and meet new strong women.



Jaya, Shirley and Catherine with Hon Kelly O'Dwyer, the Australian Minister for Women



Jaya and Shirley with Kate Jenkins and Janelle Weissman, UN Women National Committee for Australia



On **12<sup>th</sup> March 2018**, Shirley and I sat in the overflow chairs for some of the CSW general assembly meetings. We were there when Dr Sharmen Stone, Ambassador for Women and Girls spoke for Australia on the work Australia is doing in the Pacific. We also heard presentations from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Sri Lanka, Mexico, Norway and several other countries.

On **12 March 2018**, Jaya attended a side event sponsored by the Canadian Government on the '**ELSIE INITIATIVE FOR WOMEN IN PEACEKEEPING.**'

Following the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the UN set targets to increase participation of women in peace operations. However, women's deployments as peacekeepers have fallen far short of these targets. While gender equality in peace operations is a vital and important component, the inclusion of more women within peace operations has important benefits for operational effectiveness. This side event discussed how to increase the number of women in peacekeeping. In particular it highlighted the **Elsie Initiative for women in peace operations**, an innovative and multilateral pilot to develop, roll out and test a combination of measures to overcome barriers to women's participation in UN peace operations and operations more sensitive to the needs of women peacekeepers. There was a call for Gender champions and Gender advisors, and participation from female military officers.

There was another Side Event on 12 March 2018, in partnership with Zambia, Ministry of Gender and Zonta International on the same day in the evening on "**Challenges for Rural Women and Girls: lack of access to Education, economic Empowerment and the Impact of Harmful Traditional Practices**" and Prof Shirley Randell, presented at the session on Harmful cultural practices and their impact on gender.

### **Town Hall meeting**

On **13 March 2018**, Shirley and I attended a Town Hall meeting held in the ECOSOC Chambers of the United Nations Headquarters when the Secretary General answered questions from participants fluently in three languages (English, French and Spanish). He stated he had achieved 50:50 parity in the senior management of the United Nations. He gave a powerful message that Gender Equality is a question of power, and a cultural issue, power and we need to create conditions for power to be taken. For the first time since its creation the Executive office of the UN has 56% women. The senior management group has 23 women and 21 men. People need to understand that gender parity is important. We need to change training, investigate problems in member states, and engage with states.





Jaya at the Town Hall meeting

84 countries have signed a compact to expose and investigate instances of sexual violence. Leadership commitment was needed by member states to change conditions on the ground. The UN now has a special team on sexual harassment (specialised women), a survey on sexual harassment and a common approach across agencies.

On **14 March 2018**, Shirley and I attended a parallel event sponsored by Zonta:

**Little Stones** – a documentary by Emmy Award winning director Sophia Kruz presented four female artists: it unites the personal narratives of four women around the world using art to create positive change in their communities.

- **Pamela Castro** from Brazil – a graffiti artist creating positive change,
- **Sohini Chakraborty** from India, using dance to rehabilitate sex-trafficking survivors
- **Sister Fa** using rap music from Cameroon to Germany to provide messages of gender empowerment and is working within African diaspora communities to end female genital mutilation throughout Europe.
- **Anna Taylor** (American fashion designer) works in the slums in Nairobi, Kenya. There, Anna met an unemployed seamstress Judith, who she hired for her high fashion clothing line, Judith & James. Inspired by Judith's transformation, Anna founded the James127 Foundation, a non-profit that trains Kenyan women to become tailors.



From second left – Sister Fa from Cameroon, Sohini from India, Anna from the US and Pamela from Brazil on the right is Sophia Kruz the documentary director

### **Women in Leadership: Lessons from Australian companies leading the way.**

Shirley and I attended a side event at the UN headquarters, where Australia's Minister for Women, Hon Kelly O'Dwyer spoke with Libby Lyons, Director of the Workforce Gender Equality Agency, Christy Forrest, Principal Adviser, Business Council of Australia and Alex Archila, President of Shale and Global Diversity and Inclusion Committee, BHP on **Women in Leadership: Lessons from Australian companies leading the way**. I was immensely proud to note that the **Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre** from my university Curtin University, received a mention at this session at the UN, especially the **Gender Equity Insights (the gender pay gap)** report from **Libby Lyons**, Director, Workplace Gender Equality Agency, who was one of the panellists. **Hon Kelly O'Dwyer**, Federal Minister for Women who is leading the Australian delegation to CSW62 chaired the session. The key points of the session were:

- 1) Flexible working across the sector – helps retain men and women, enables leaders and employees make changes,
- 2) Reducing and mitigating bias in recruitment in HR, policy design, practice, recruitment, retention (policy on paying super during unpaid parental leave), promotion –
- 3) Swapping expertise where needed, list the specific attributes, pool of potential employees increased),
- 4) STEM for girls and increase in indigenous recruitment
- 5) Supply chain companies around the world redesigning equipment to ensure that it can be done by many people and genders. WA created a work environment – increased women and indigenous participation, workplace was a community.

We need to do more in helping our leaders engage with a male dominated workforce, do more to retain the young female talent and empower women.



From left to right: Dr Sharmen Stone, Alex Archila, Libby Lyons, Hon Kelly O'Dwyer, Christy Forrest

Jaya was given the opportunity to speak briefly and mentioned she worked at Curtin University and knew the Bankwest Curtin Economic Centre (BCEC). **Dr Sharmen Stone**, Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls was also present at the session and spoke after the session about skilled migrants and selection biases.

On **14 March 2018**, another session Jaya attended was **Advancing Women's Health and Well-Being Using Information and Communication Technologies: Focus on Non-Communicable diseases**.

Currently, Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the greatest burden of disease worldwide and are anticipated to increase over the next decades, especially in resource poor countries. Depression and mental health are projected to be the number cross-cutting factor. The use of very large databases to determine risk factors and develop policy with examples related to diabetes and women in a large global research project from Australia was presented. There were introductory remarks from H.E. Mr. Courtenay Rattray: Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Jamaica to the UN and H. E. Mr. Virachai Plasai: Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations. The participants were:

- **Dr. Nata Menabde** - Executive Director, WHO Office at the United Nations, World Health Organization UN (WHO/UN), New York
- **Dr. Gita Mishra** - Director, Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, Biostatistics Division, Deputy Head, School of Public Health, The University of Queensland
- **Sean Southey**, CEO, PCI Media Impact

#### **Education and ICT with rural women in Rwanda and Australia.**

On **15 March**, along with Prof Shirley Randell, we presented a parallel session on '**Education and ICT with rural women in Rwanda and Australia**.' We were supported by Josephine Nyiranzeyimana from Rwanda, Government Chief Information Officer at Rwanda Information Authority. Drawing on examples from rural



Australia and Rwanda, our session highlighted the potential for ICT to improve educational outcomes for women through use of on-line education and improve health and well-being through use of Telehealth interventions.

The session demonstrated the interconnections with Sustainable Development Goals 3, 4, 5, 15 and 17 and highlighted the links to education and health and consideration for rural women. We provided recommendations and a framework that can be replicated in other contexts.



Josephine Nyiranzeyimana, Shirley, Dr Mediatrix, & Jaya



Part of the audience, GWI delegates from around the world

The conclusions of the **Commission on the Status of Women, 62<sup>nd</sup> session** held from **12 – 23 March 2018**, under the theme: **Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls** were presented on **23 March 2018**.

[available at <http://undocs.org/en/E/CN.6/2018/L.8>]

The Commission calls on Governments to strengthen, as appropriate, the authority and capacity of national mechanisms for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, at all levels. To place this at the highest possible level of government, and to mainstream a gender perspective across all institutions, including labour, economic and financial agencies, in order to ensure that national planning, decision-making, policy formulation and implementation, budgeting processes and institutional structures contribute to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, including in rural areas.

Once again CSW62 highlighted that networking, and the commitment of delegates especially women from around the world was an important part of the experience and a testimony to the strength of advocacy, voice, and ongoing lobbying at all levels: the government, non-government, religious and civil society.