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International Association of Schools of Social Work
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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...

November 2016

By the IASSW Interns at the United Nations, New York, 2016-2017

IASSW Team Meeting

The IASSW team of UN representatives met in New York on October 6 to organize for the year's work. The team discussed NGO committee assignments and identified priority areas for attention.

There are numerous NGO committees in New York that follow the work at the United Nations and most of these are of interest to IASSW. This year, the team will cover most of the critical committees as follows: Migration—Dr. Rebecca Thomas and interns Melanie Berzins and Chelsea Cornwell; Committee on the Status of Women—Dr. Shirley Gatenio Gabel, Berzins, Cornwell; Committee on Social Development—Dr. Lynne Healy, Berzins, Cornwell; Committee on Ageing—Dr. M.C. “Terry” Hokenstad, Berzins; Working Group on Girls—Berzins, Cornwell; Committee on Mental Health—Dr. Rebecca Davis; Committee on the Rights of the Child—Dr. Martha Bragin. When her sabbatical ends, Dr. Bragin will also cover the Committee on the Family.

The group had a good discussion of key points for our IASSW advocacy. Two categories of priorities and principles were identified: (1) priority areas that emerge from the IASSW/ICSW/IFSW *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* (and also informed by UN priorities and world events); and (2) overarching principles that emerge from our Global Definition of Social Work and Statement of Ethical Principles. We tentatively agreed on the following

priority areas: **Climate and Sustainability; Social Protection; Mental Health and Social Support; and Migration.** In our advocacy work and in any statements issued on behalf of IASSW, the principles of **Inclusion, Human Rights, Equality and Participation** will be emphasized.

The results of team discussions will be shared with the Board of Directors in January for further comment. Members are also invited to give their input. Please send comments to the Main Representative, Lynne Healy, at lynne.healy@uconn.edu.

UN Team Presents on the Sustainable Development Goals

“Promoting and Teaching the United Nations 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals” was the focus of a panel presented by members of the IASSW UN team at the annual conference of U.S. social work educators. The conference was held in Atlanta Georgia in early November.

The 2030 Agenda will be a major driver of global and national efforts to address a wide range of issues of concern to social work, including poverty, gender equality, climate change, and more. Panelists encouraged educators to ensure that all students become familiar with the content of the Agenda. Beyond basic familiarity, social workers should gain enough knowledge to advocate for the SDGs locally and to translate the goals into programs and



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practice. Lynne Healy provided a brief overview of the SDGs and the process that led to their adoption, including IASSW’s advocacy on issues of equality and human rights. Rebecca Davis shared lessons that address environmental and community sustainability. Goal 13 is the specific goal on climate change and environment, but she noted how complementary goals on water and sanitation and sustainable energy, production and consumption also fit into social work core curriculum. Terry Hokenstad spoke about elements of Goal 11 that promote sustainable, safe and inclusive cities, with emphasis on environments that enable healthy living for older persons. Case studies from the global Age-Friendly Cities effort and active learning projects can be effective teaching tools. Shirley Gatenio Gabel concluded the session with a focus on gender equality, Goal 5, with global and local examples of such issues as violence against women, the world of work, and role of women in government. She concluded by noting the interdependence of the 17 goals.

The PowerPoint presentation from the session will be made available on the IASSW website later in December. Team members are pictured here with IASSW President Anna Maria Campanini, who also attended the conference.

Climate Change

Habitat III

Habitat III is the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development that took place from 17-20 October 2016 in Quito,



IASSW UN Team at the Atlanta Conference
From left to right: Dr. M.C. “Terry” Hokenstad; Dr. Rebecca Thomas, Dr. Rebecca Davis, IASSW President Anna Maria Campanini, Dr. Lynne Healy, Dr. Shirley Gatenio Gable

Ecuador. This conference has occurred every 20 years since 1976 to discuss sustainable human settlements and adequate housing in an increasingly urbanizing world and this year focused on the adoption of the New Urban Agenda. The New Urban Agenda lays out a series of guidelines seeking to strengthen the relationship between urbanization and development. Using strong

human rights-based language and emphasizing environmentally conscious practices, the Agenda focuses on ways that urbanization can generate growth using national urban policy, urban economies, and government systems. It also seeks to support sustainable urban development by laying policy guidelines focusing on local fiscal systems, urban planning, and basic services and infrastructure. The Agenda addresses urbanization trends by discussing mega-regions and urban corridors that change the traditional view of what a city is. Additionally, the document includes a focus on how to determine equity in regards to demographic factors, and global positioning. Specifics on how to track and monitor



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these concerns are likely to be decided in the coming year following debates and negotiations by the 2017-2018 General Assembly. Visit <https://habitat3.org> to learn more about the strategies and visions discussed.

CSWE Disaster & Climate Change Panel

On 28 October, The Council on Global Social Issues, a council of the Commission on Global Social Work Education, hosted a forum sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN entitled “International Post-Disaster Recovery and Relief: Why Social Work Matters”. Speakers included a representative from the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and a diverse panel of social work professors from schools across the United States whose work and experiences have centered around disaster and trauma. Speakers discussed a range of issues including gender disparities found amidst the emergency management, safety and security actions, participation and planning, and recovery efforts that negatively impacted women in Sri Lanka following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. Other topics included best practices in Bangladesh model for preventing loss of life in natural disasters, the disruption to communities by a changing climate, the effects of trauma on children’s brains and the consequences in educational settings, and the strength and benefits of strong, connected, and cohesive communities in managing disasters.

The key message coming out of this event was the need for social workers to be involved in all phases of disaster management due to their intimate knowledge of the communities in which they work, the

needs of the people, and the strengths present in communities. The ability of social workers to navigate systems, organize people, and adhere to social work principles such as participation, empowerment, and social justice make social workers ideal stakeholders in disaster responses and preparation activities.

Looking forward, two global frameworks will be important in addressing disaster risk reduction: The [Sustainable Development Goals](#), where 25 of the 169 targets list disaster risk reduction goals, and the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) 2015-2030, a document produced last year to address better disaster risk management practices and knowledge.



NGO CSW - Climate Justice Breakout Group

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women (NGO CSW) met in November to brainstorm mobilization

tactics for building a strong feminist network to promote human rights, gender equality and climate justice. The committee divided into breakout groups by topic including protecting women’s bodies, climate justice, human rights-based leadership, migrants and refugees, education against intolerance and xenophobia, and building a gender inclusive gender equality movement. Chelsea Cornwell attended the breakout group on Climate Justice where the members participated in a free range discussion focused mainly on regional environmental issues surrounding New York and the United States, sparked by concern over the environmental policy intentions of the country’s



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new President-Elect. There was some discussion surrounding the need for environmental protection efforts to involve the private sector and how lifestyle adaptations paired with technological advances, such as energy generating exercise bikes in gyms, could be effective daily tools for individuals to engage with emissions reductions.

Xenophobia

NGO CSW - Education Against Intolerance and Xenophobia Breakout Group

Along with several other members of the Committee on Migration's subcommittee on Xenophobia and Inclusion, Melanie Berzins joined the Education Against Intolerance and Xenophobia group at the NGO CSW meeting described above. The group brainstormed recommendations and activism strategies for combating xenophobia on college and university campuses and through social media, and compiled a list of local, regional and national organizations that fight racism and xenophobia and promote equity and inclusion. The group's list and action items and the other groups' recommendations will soon be added to [NGO CSW's website](#).

Committee on Migration's Xenophobia and Inclusion Subcommittee

The xenophobia and inclusion subcommittee has drafted a preliminary working document to serve as a roadmap for a statement regarding the UN Secretary-General's announced "TOGETHER" campaign against xenophobia

(<https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/together>). The roadmap includes definitions of xenophobia and racism and highlights goals and areas of concern in the context of the SDG commitment to "safe, orderly, regular and responsible migration." The subcommittee also created a document to outline the proposed scope and timeline of the subcommittee's own social media campaign, expected to be launched in March 2017. Several members of the xenophobia subcommittee met again in November to develop responses to questions posed by the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS) to elicit feedback from civil society for an informal meeting with UN Member States on modalities for UN intergovernmental negotiations on a Global Compact on Migration. The meeting, held on 22 November, permitted feedback from civil society in three areas: best practices for including migrant voices in international deliberations; promoting government awareness of civil society processes regarding migration to inform the intergovernmental negotiation process; and expertise offered by civil society to the intergovernmental negotiation process toward the creation of a global compact.

Committee on Social Development

The NGO Committee on Social Development has decided upon social protection as its theme for the upcoming Civil Society Forum, which will precede the 55th Commission for Social Development in February 2017. In preparation for the Forum, the Committee is in the process of finalizing its Civil Society Declaration that promotes universal social protection systems, including Social Protection Floors (SPFs), as



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a key strategy for poverty eradication, and advocates for the universal endorsement and adoption of social protection systems by member states. The research-focused declaration highlights effective social protection practices in place.

In other preparations for the Civil Society Forum, the subcommittee on Education presented at



the Committee on Social Development's October meeting on the definition, history, and implementations of SPFs. The presenter emphasized the need for SPFs that are culturally and nationally defined in accordance with the economic, social, and political realities of each country, and that SPFs should be considered a starting point, rather than an end point, in eradicating poverty. The seminal documents in defining and advocating SPFs are the [International Labor Organization \(ILO\) Recommendation 202](#) which outlines mechanisms for implementing basic and comprehensive social security systems; and the [RIO + 20 outcome document](#), which emphasizes the need to provide minimum social security and social insurances to all, especially the most vulnerable members of society.

Other Events at the UN

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and Mental Health

On 10 November, IASSW interns Chelsea and Melanie attended a side event organized by the Global

Mental Health and NCDs Working Group entitled “Comprehensive Healthcare: Integration of Physical and Mental Healthcare for the Prevention and Control of NCDs Across the Lifespan.” The event was co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Jamaica, The World Health Organization (WHO), The NGO Committee on Mental Health (CMH), The International Council of Women (ICW-CIF); the Communications Coordination Committee for the United Nations (CCCUN), and the NGO Forum for Health. The event emphasized the connection between mental and physical well-being as made explicit in SDG Target 3.4: “By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being”.

The event's speakers highlighted the connection between the global disease burden of NCDs and mental illness, particularly depression, and the need to incorporate comprehensive, equitable, sustainable, health networks and multi-pronged community-based programs into the treatment and prevention of mental illness and NCDs. Panelists illuminated the connection between certain NCDs and mental health diagnoses and highlighted best practices for incorporating mental health services into healthcare delivery systems through policy change, program development and resource mobilization at the national, international, and local level. Several speakers noted the rising rates and costs of mental and neurological illnesses, particularly depression, Alzheimer's disease, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and cautioned against the staggering economic and social



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costs associated with inadequately addressing NCDs and mental health. Other cautions included the strong connection between depression and disability status over the course of a lifetime and the threat posed by NCDs to reverse economic and social development progress in lower income countries through economic and life costs. For mitigating these risks, speakers advocated for increased funding for preventative, community-based mental health programs, especially those which employ comprehensive, holistic interventions to increase physical activity, improve nutrition and food security, promote inclusion and social support, and increase income. Speakers also noted the need to address the stigma of mental illness through education and inclusion and to correct common misperceptions that mental illnesses are untreatable, affect only a small percentage of the population, and that sufferers are violent and unstable. Other recommendations included mental health care training programs for traditional health workers; greater data collection on mental illness prevalence

and treatment and the disaggregation of data by age and gender; and a need to shift perspective from viewing NCDs as a problem affecting older adults to a recognition that the development of NCDs begins during youth and occur across the lifespan. More details about the event and the full list of speakers and panelists can be found at

<http://www.ngomentalhealth.org/events/>

Respectfully,

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