

Action for Girls

Newsletter of the NGO Committee on UNICEF Working Group on Girls (WGG) and its International Network for Girls (INFG).

An Analysis of the Outcome Document of the 52nd Commission on the Status of Women

Small steps were made in the fight to increase the visibility of girls in the Outcome Document of the 52nd Commission on the Status of Women. As a whole, however, the Agreed Conclusions of the 52nd CSW (http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw52/adv_unedited_AC_resolutions.html) represents limited progress for girls. Admittedly, chances for a full consideration of girls

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seemed bleak in the light of the priority theme of "financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women." In spite of these challenges, the Agreed

Conclusions represents a good example of what can be accomplished when girls and their various advocates join forces and lobby consistently.

The Working Group on Girls (WGG) recommended that CSW 52 give full consideration to girls in their deliberations. As girls' advocates, the WGG argued that (1) the term "women" is not universally understood to include girls; (2) if girls are grouped with the general categories of "women" or "children," their particular needs are often overlooked; (3) the empowerment of girls are of concern to the CSW because they are

included in the Beijing Platform for Action (Section L); and (4) concern for gender equality must include all females from the youngest girl to the oldest woman.

The WGG is pleased that the Agreed Conclusions of the CSW 52 has fourteen paragraphs which treat girls directly. The Agreed Conclusions focus on the mainstreaming of gender equality for women and girls including increasing investment in gender equality, acknowledging the diversity of needs of women and girls, ensuring women's and girls' rights to education and health, and addressing the feminization of HIV/AIDS. However, it is difficult to understand exactly how member-states determine when they speak exclusively of "gender equality and the empowerment of women" and when they choose to use the more inclusive "gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls." The WGG was further disappointed that the Commission on the Status of Women failed to include girls in the initial paragraphs of its outcome document where it reaffirmed previous commitments to gender equality and empowerment that have been made to women. In only addressing women directly and the issue of girls peripherally, the CSW allows policies affecting girls to be strengthened only indirectly.

The omission or indiscriminate use of "girls" throughout much of the document renders them invisible and may continue to marginalize them within the UN system. Girls' perspectives and experiences are essential to the effective design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting of national economic policies, including national development. To the extent that they are able, girls have a right to participate in political, social, and economic decisions which affect themselves and their families; they can offer a new perspective to what they need in order to sustain their education, health, and security. The needs of girls must be identified as specific and different from those of women. One cannot assume that because a policy addresses women's equality that it will also address girls' equality.

Ann Sholtz --School Sisters of Notre Dame
Ellen Yokowenko--Chrictain Children's Fund



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Keeping Our Promises to Girls - Using the Toolkit

The 51st Commission on the Status of Women was special for us in that it focused on the girl child. The Working Group on Girls (WGG) held two parallel events at CSW52 to ensure that our promises to girls are not forgotten.



women and girls to address these promises by becoming catalysts of action.

Our hope is that by networking with civil society, the

We also developed a user-friendly toolkit, which has two aims:

1. To raise awareness of the promises made to girls at CSW51;
2. To motivate

private sector, and governments, these goals will be achieved.

The toolkit consists of a Summary of Agreed Conclusions for girls aged 14 and older. After reviewing the Agreed Conclusions, groups (NGOs, schools, boys/girls clubs, faith-based groups, etc.) can use the Indicator Cards. These cards contain twelve “promises” in the areas of education and financing for girls’ rights (protection and health will be addressed next year). Under each “promise,” several simple questions are listed to help identify which promise needs attention in that specific community, state, or country.

For example, question # 5 speaks to gender-sensitive education by asking the “yes” or “no” question, “Are the educational methods and materials used for children both gender-sensitive and empowering?” The aim is not statistical analysis, but rather identification of actions needed to eliminate discrimination and violence toward the girl child. We have received much support from several UN agencies that see the need to follow the outcomes from each CSW so the work of the Commission and its promises are not forgotten. These tools are at: <http://www.girlsrights.org>.

Mary Jo Toll -- Sisters of Notre Dame

Report from Denise Milice, Mozambique

I am thankful for the opportunity to represent again the group of Grail adolescents in Mozambique at CSW 52.

Last year I received a Mary Purcell \$100 grant for a “back home” project. I created a strongly bonded group that wishes to grow more and more in a healthy and autonomous way. The group took as its main theme, “Elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child and empowerment of women,” the theme of CSW 51.

This year at CSW 52 I came to understand that we can only talk about the emancipation of women and girls when girls have access to Education and Funding. It is not enough to know the source of the funding, but girls also need to know the purpose of the funding

and how it will be used. For that end it is necessary to build capacity among the beneficiaries of the funds.

I also learned at CSW 52 that many documents have been ratified by our governments, such as the Paris Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, but they have not been implemented for lack of monitoring. Also it is important to educate the girl child so she may join the workforce in nontraditional careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math.

At CSW 52 I was able to meet girls and women I knew from the previous year and see Mary Purcell, who was happy to know that I had created an active group.

(This piece was translated by Abida Jamal.)

Rights and Responsibilities

Sindisiwe Qwabe from South Africa, one of the Mary Purcell girl grantees for CSW 51 sponsored by The Grail, held a workshop at the Reichnau Mission Primary School in September 2007 on empowering girls to know their Rights and Responsibilities and fight Discrimination. Here is an excerpt from her report:

This workshop is one of five I facilitated at home using the information I gathered from CSW 51. It was a big challenge for me because the children's ages were different so I had to keep on repeating what I said. There were about 25 children, both girls and boys.

I told them a story about a girl who was discriminated against in her home. She was told to leave school and do all the childcare and housework while her father and her older brother were not helping her. I asked them what would you do if your parents did the same thing? The boys were proud that they had more power than the girls. The girls did not respond, so I asked the boys questions. If they had to do the jobs that are called "women's work," such as house work and cooking, would they be able to do them? They said it wouldn't be easy.

I explained to them that the aim is to empower women and girls to know their rights and responsibilities and to fight discrimination against women and girls. There were both girls and boys present because we need to be together in order to make this a success and to make sure that we all see these problems and take action.

I asked them to mention the rights and responsibilities that they know and I added the ones I know. I explained to them that a responsibility goes with a right.



Sindisiwe Qwabe who attended the UN Girl Child hearings.

Some of the Rights and Responsibilities that they mentioned:

- + Right to go to school and a responsibility to learn;
- + Right to live and a responsibility to take care of your life;
- + Right to enjoy my freedom and a responsibility to not abuse other people's freedom.

After that they wrote poems about who I AM. Here is one of the poems:



Who I Am

I am a woman

Full of dignity and sympathy.

I am young and proud of that.

I appreciate who I am because God created me for a reason

And that's why I think we should all fight against discrimination.

We must stand up and build a free country.

Nozuko Qwabe, age 11, South Africa

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Rima Salah is New Deputy Special Representative for Chad and Central Africa

Rima Salah, the former Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, has accepted a new position as Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General for Chad and Central Africa, where she will spread the WGG message that girls' rights are human rights.

Working with peacekeepers from the European Union and the government of Chad, Salah will oversee approximately 13 refugee camps in Chad with almost 500,000 uprooted refugees from Sudan's Darfur region. Rima Salah's concerns are closely tied to the concerns of the WGG and include ending violence against women and girls and maintaining a focus on

gender mainstreaming. She joins three other women who currently hold similar leadership positions in Africa.

In 2007 Rima Salah led the task force which created the Toolkit for Follow up to CSW 51 and organized the speakers for the panel "Keeping our Promises to Girls: Implementing CSW 51" for CSW 52.

In late April 2008, members of the Working Group on Girls held a farewell luncheon celebration for Rima at which she pledged she would work closely with NGOs in Chad to protect civilians and facilitate their leaving the refugee camps to return to their villages. The WGG is honored to count Rima Salah among our members, and we honor her bravery.



Visit the WGG Website To Be Informed

The Working Group for Girls website is located at: <http://www.girlsrights.org>. On the home page are the WGG abbreviated Mission Statement and General Aims, the Latest News, and links to What's New. You will also find WGG Newsletters, Girls' Situation with fact sheets on topics such as education, health, and trafficking, History of WGG, and Working Groups with a list of WGG NGO Member Organizations. Doris Schapira, Web Manager
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