

# Action for Girls

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

## WGG Advocates for Girls With Differing Abilities

*"Break the barriers which segregate people with disabilities forcing them to the margins of society."*

- Chin, Director General, World Health Organization, Report on Disabilities, 2011

WGG has as its purpose "making the girl child visible in documents, parallel events, and high level meetings: with permanent missions and UN agencies". On behalf of girls with differing abilities, WGG will accomplish this work by raising awareness and advocating for key

policies around girls with differing abilities.

As a result of this activity, WGG has created a fact sheet on Girls with Differing Abilities citing important considerations to be taken into account as one supports the development of best practices for girls with

disabilities <http://girlsrights.org/fact-sheets/> We have found that more than one in four children in the world live with disability and that there is a lack of data as to how many girls are born with or acquire disability. Girls of all abilities, however, can achieve their potential cont. p. 2



Kim Robey/2011

Malin Johansson, Youth Representative, National Council of Swedish Youth and Youth Representative of Sweden to the UN General Assembly 2011, addresses the October WGG meeting



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### The Working Group on Girls Inc.

A historic moment: On August 30, 2011 'Working Group on Girls of the NGO Committee on UNICEF' took a new identity and became 'The Working Group on Girls Inc.' Over the past two years the WGG membership has given considerable thought to becoming an independent organization; and the WGG Steering Group has actively pursued questions concerning the incorporation of the Working Group on Girls. Should WGG become incorporated as a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization? When the NGO Committee on UNICEF underwent evaluation and reconstitution with Task Forces, and not Working Groups it became clear that the Working Group on Girls, NGO Committee on UNICEF, could no longer continue to exist within the NGO Committee on UNICEF.

The move to become a self-sufficient entity was encouraged by Mr. Andreas Guerrero-Feliu, NGO Focal Point at UNICEF. WGG agreed and filed the papers to become a 501(c)(3) organization. To this end we acknowledge the work of Ballard Spahr, LLP, <http://www.ballardspahr.com/> who provided pro bono legal services for the incorporation.

The new identity provides the Working Group on Girls Inc. with rich opportunities to fulfill our dreams of actively empowering girls and bringing them to the table to speak on their own behalf. The Working Group on Girls Co-Chairs and Past Chair are members of the newly formed Board. The Board also requires members with additional skills in the areas of visioning, social media, public relations, fundraising and finance in order to implement its mission statement and develop fully the capabilities which incorporation has brought us.

As a first step the Board is attending to the administrative aspect of incorporation: bylaws enacted, corporate seal, bank account, registration with IRS and various necessary insurances. We invite our member organizations to contribute the more technical and professional services required to fulfill the dream of The Working Group on Girls Inc.

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## Girls With Differing Abilities, cont.

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with coordinated support. Therefore,

- WGG objects to stigmatizing girls with differing abilities insofar as they have varying strengths, weaknesses, abilities and deficits, thus deserving equal respect and access to opportunities.
- WGG fosters the potential leadership role of girls with differing abilities.
- WGG seeks to partner with girls with disabilities and other stakeholders of the international UN community to help girls with differing abilities achieve their individual and collective goals and aspirations.
- WGG champions the rights of girls with differing abilities and promotes a framework of inclusion of girls with differing abilities in all aspects of life, rather than one that focuses on their impairments.
- Support Services for girls need to be coordinated and integrated into the fabric of their local community. These services include medical, social, educational, economic and environmental expertise.

In order to bring attention to the serious needs of girls with differing abilities, WGG representatives are meeting with leadership at the UN to fact find and learn of practices currently occurring around the world. WGG continues to review the literature and has brought a girl with differing abilities onto its research team. WGG's focus coincides with the Resolution of the Rights of the Child's review of children with disabilities for the 66th session of

the General Assembly in October 2011.

In June 2011, WGG attended the launch of the first World Report on Disability, sponsored by the World Health Organization and the World Bank. This report supports implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) 2008, now ratified by 100 countries. WGG also attended the UNICEF & European Union Delegation Interactive Panel Discussion for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Children with Disabilities in June.

In addition, on September 9 WGG attended the concluding session of the 4th Conference of State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which highlighted efforts by the state parties signatories to the Convention to implement the agreed upon commitments and reviewed the challenges and gaps that still need to be addressed. Finally, representatives of WGG had meetings with Marta Santos Pais, the Special Representative to the Secretary General on Violence against Children, and with representatives of UNICEF, the European Union Delegation and GRULAC's Uruguay Mission to learn about and to advocate for the needs of girls with differing abilities.

Dian Marandola

--The Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd

## ECPAT-USA Is Working to Eliminate Sexual Exploitation of Children

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ECPAT-USA (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking) in partnership with local advocacy groups is working to promote the adoption by all fifty states of a bill at least as strong as the 2008 landmark New York legislation that provides that sexually exploited children not be treated as criminals but receive the help and support needed to rebuild their lives. In addition to New York, Connecticut, Illinois, Minnesota, Vermont and Washington have passed similar bills.

ECPAT-USA is the United States affiliate of ECPAT-International, one of 81 groups in 73 countries dedicated to eliminating the commercial sexual exploitation of children. ECPAT-USA focuses on raising awareness of the estimated 200,000 children in the United States at risk of being trafficked each year; on training law enforcement and members of the judicial system to facilitate the provision of appropriate services for children who are victims of trafficking; and on advocating for more resources to ensure that every child in the United States is protected from sexual exploitation.

ECPAT-USA is a leader in protecting children from sex tourism. Over 1.2 million children are forced into the sex market every year. It is estimated that 25% of travelers who sexually exploit children

worldwide are from the United States and Canada.

ECPAT-USA organized trainings in Mexico with local providers of tourist services and with local law enforcement to increase their capacity to recognize, report and prosecute incidents of sexual exploitation of children. A similar project is currently underway in Brazil.

ECPAT-USA and other ECPAT International affiliates have vigorously promoted The Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism. The Code is a voluntary set of guidelines that travel and tour companies agree to implement to prevent child sex tourism. Over 1,000 companies worldwide have signed on to The Code, most recently in the United States, Hilton Hotels and Delta Airlines.

This year ECPAT-USA is celebrating the 20th anniversary of its important efforts to ensure that every child can enjoy the right to grow up free from commercial sexual exploitation. Visit the ECPAT-USA website, <http://ecpatusa.org> to find out how you can get involved.

--Jackie Shapiro, ECPAT-USA

# Action for Girls

## We are Agents of Social Change!



Annmary of the International Presentation Association, Lungowe and Chilenga at the CSW in at UN Headquarters in New York.

I am Lungowe Mufungulwa, from a rural village in Mongu, a western province of Zambia. It was a lifetime opportunity for me to participate in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW55) 2011 as a girl delegate along with Annmary Andrews, as my chaperone, and Chilenga N'Guni, another girl delegate. We represented the International Presentation Association (IPA) at the UN, whose members were instrumental in enabling hundreds of men and women, boys and girls in Zambia to actively engage in the consultation organised by the Working Group on Girls on the review theme of CSW 55: 'The Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against the Girl Child.'

At the UN during two parallel events on Girls Voices - Promises made: A Review of CSW 51, I shared my story which reflects the stories of many girls of Zambia. I was an 18-year-old girl, a single mother who cared for my 10-month old son, a 9th grade student who spent until the wee hours of the morning doing my homework and who earned my livelihood. Hearing my story, many participants' eyes filled with tears. I also spoke of my hopes and dreams that having been educated on the commitments to girls made by my government and having had the exposure to an international forum, I am empowered and am convinced that we the girls can be the agents of social change in Zambia and in the world.

Since my return to Zambia, I have shared my UN experience with groups of women and girls in my neighbourhood and in the nearby villages and towns. With the monetary aid from the NGO, along with other girls who had dropped out of school, I am continuing my education. We go to afternoon school and earn our livelihood in the mornings making fritters, selling tomatoes, fish and other seasonal products. We also do piece work like digging, planting and harvesting. We try to save Kwacha 1,000 (US \$ 0.20) per week in the hope of doing small businesses during our vacation and in order to continue our education.

I hope that the UN negotiations on the priority theme of CSW56, 'Empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges,' and on the review theme, 'Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women,' will have an impact on girls like us in Zambia and in the world, enabling a dignified life for all.

Lungowe Mufungulwa, Mongu, Zambia  
--International Presentation Association

## UNICEF Moves to Equity Approach

The UNICEF Equity Approach challenges us to look at excluded populations, such as rural girls, and not rely on country averages when we assess their progress. This approach also recognizes that although the needs are the greatest in the most deprived areas/populations, the benefits of concentrating on them outweigh the greater costs in reaching them.

The gains made toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been impressive. They have, however, been based on national averages. These statistics do not tell the whole story. See UNICEF's: *Narrowing the Gaps to Meet the Goals*.

Country X might have reduced infant mortality by 30%, but if

the poorest one-fifth of the population was not reached in those efforts, the infant mortality rate among that lowest quintile, might still be as high or higher than before the MDGs began. Country Y might boast that it has achieved a rate of 90% primary school enrollment, but what if the rural areas of country Y remain without any access to education?

Since many of the targets require universality, like primary education or the eradication of polio, these goals will only be met when all populations are served. Gender based violence, discrimination and educational disadvantage will only be ended when they are addressed universally. Secondly, since most child deaths occur in the most deprived areas, MDG 4, reducing the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds, will only be achieved by extending outreach to those areas. Thirdly, technological

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## New Co-Chairs for the WGG

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### Beth Adamson

Beth Adamson became involved with the Working Group on Girls in 2006 as preparations were made for girl delegates to come to the United Nations for the 51<sup>st</sup> Commission on the Status of Women. She was the point person for the Anglican Women's Empowerment to bring 12 girls from each region of the globe and each major ethnicity in the US to New York as girl delegates. At the conclusion of CSW51, Adamson joined WGG members Rima Salah, Mary Jo Toll and Jill Marie Sen in creating a

Task Force committed to helping WGG members hold global discussion groups for girls to give feedback of their experience of the agreed conclusions of CSW51. Adamson also serves on a Working Group for the Office of the Anglican Observer, where she organized and facilitated a Consultation in Hong Kong on the Trafficking of Girl Children in 2009, and sits on a Coalition on Violence against Women and Girls under the Archbishop of Canterbury. She also served as Co-Chair of the Planning Committee for NGOCSW's 55<sup>th</sup> session.

Adamson holds a graduate degree from Yale Divinity School in Pastoral Counseling. She and her husband, Ned Strauss, have a leadership Consultancy, Greystone, Inc., dedicated to helping Executives lead with the over-arching principle that "People Matter". Through this work, she has travelled to over 30 countries, and is committed to executive coaching of women who lead. She is the mother/stepmother of two grown daughters and is a "Mimi" of two granddaughters. She also counts as "daughters" each of the young women that she brought to the UN in 2007. In 2009 she was honored with the Clara Barton award, the highest honor bestowed by the Red Cross, and in 2011 with the AWE-some Woman award by members of her UN community. She is excited to join her cherished colleague, Winifred Doherty, in co-chairing the Working Group on Girls, walking in the footprints of strong past leaders whom both greatly admire.



### Winifred Doherty

Winifred Doherty, Irish by nationality and a member of the Congregation of our Lady of Charity for the past 44 years, was appointed their main NGO representative to the UN in January 2008. She served as secretary of WGG from September of that year until June 2011. She had been introduced to WGG by her predecessor, Clare Nolan, many years before joining the NGO community in New York. For 16 years she worked in Ethiopia advancing the cause of the girl child

and women through the provision of kindergarten facilities for the under 7's, the sponsorship of programs from school to university, skills training programs for girls and young women, saving and credit programs for mothers, and community infrastructure and awareness programs. All her efforts aimed at empowering the girl child and young women to confront extreme poverty and the many discriminatory practices that continue to

persist such as FGM, early marriage, kidnapping of girls, violence, sexual exploitation and abuse and other practices related to the health and well-being of the girl child.

Winifred is a social worker by profession graduating from University College Cork, Ireland. Her work has enabled her to meet with girls and women who experience extreme poverty in Europe, Asia, Africa, and recently in Colombia, Latin America. She is also the Chair of the NGO Committee for Social Development and belongs to the newly established NGO Committee against Trafficking in Persons. In her leadership role with co-chair Beth Adamson and with the active participation of each WGG member, she looks forward to advancing the rights of girls worldwide because 'Girls rights are Human Rights.'

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VOLUME III, NUMBER 11, October 2011

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Please address questions about the articles to the authors at [wggcontact@gmail.com](mailto:wggcontact@gmail.com) Reprinting of articles is encouraged with credit given to Action for Girls. We welcome articles by NGOs.

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## Equity Approach, cont.

improvements make it more feasible to monitor all quintiles of the population and to target their specific needs. In 2012, the CSW focus on Rural Women (and girls) is a wonderful example of how this equity based approach can lead us all to moving beyond averages as we assess global progress for women and girls.

Eileen Reilly

--School Sisters of Notre Dame