



Partnership for Global Justice

April 2016

Partnership For Global Justice Monthly Newsletter

Welcome to the Partnership for Global Justice Monthly – a newsletter about PGJ programs, news from the United Nations and its briefings, and information about the activities of our participating membership. With this Monthly, we invite our members to provide updates of their social justice initiatives and share their related experiences. Please respond to this posting with a comment on our blog or send your thoughts to partnershipforglobaljustice@gmail.com.

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LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

Dear Partners for Global Justice,

It has been a month since I attended the UN Commission on the Status of Women. It is always exciting to go to the UN where one can meet people from all over the world working for justice and a better world. It always gives me hope.

It was said that ten thousand women gathered for this commission. Each one brought here concerns and desires for equality for all women and girls. The [agreed outcomes](#) of the commission reaffirmed goals such as these: the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls, gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls as a necessary prerequisite to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and the elimination of poverty, as well as for the achievement of human rights for all people, including men and boys.

We, as world peoples, have come far and yet have far to go. When we can still read of the continued violence against women, the kidnaping of girls for sex slavery and for use as suicide bombers; inequality of income for women; the absence of women in positions of decision making; honor killings and child brides, and more and more violations of human rights of women, we know that we must continue to work together to influence society to take action and to hold civil and church leaders accountable. We do that through our Partnership for Global Justice.

Someone once said that if we are for injustice anywhere, we are for injustice everywhere. Perhaps the same can be said if we even tolerate injustice anywhere without speaking out and doing what we can to relieve the suffering of others, of women and men and girls and boys. Pope Francis, in his call for a year of mercy, reminds us that mercy is opening one's heart to wretchedness. . . . He calls for all people to concentrate on dealing with poverty and inequality, and insists on the need for political leaders to commit to the common good, to build "a society of authentic justice, solidarity and peace." This is what we, as Partners, are about.

We want to know what you and your Congregation, as members of PGJ, are doing to achieve this equality and empowerment of persons. We ask that you send pictures to JoAnn Mark for the website, so that others may know of the good works that are being done. If you have anyone who could volunteer to help JoAnn in her work at the UN or have ways that we can increase our funding, please, again, let us know. As Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to God. Together, we can change the world for good.

Thank you,
Mary Ellen Loch, CSJ
Board Chair
Executive Director



Signing of the Paris Climate Agreement



By far, the biggest event of April was the April 22 [signing of the Paris Climate Agreement](#). A record 175 national leaders signed the Agreement to rein in global-warming producing activities, the most ever to sign an international agreement.

The Seychelles and Gambia have also signed since then, bringing the total to 177. Other nations are expected to sign as their governments agree.

[World leaders](#) including US **Secretary of State John Kerry**, **Princess Lalla Hasna** of the Kingdom of Morocco, presidents, prime ministers, and ministers of the environment opened the gathering before the ceremonial signing.

Mr. Kerry spoke of the increasing urgency of action on climate change, noting that the past three years were the hottest on record, and this year is on track to surpass them.

Cheering the leaders on were representatives of business (private sector), non-governmental groups (civil society), and children (“who will breathe the breath of climate change”). Ms [Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim](#), an Indigenous woman from the Mbororo pastoralist community of Chad and Civil Society representative, spoke of the temperature of over 100 degrees when she left for the UN, and the effects of climate change on the poor in Chad, who are often without water and forced to migrate to live. The final speaker was UN Ambassador of Peace Leonardo DiCaprio.

The **Indian businessman** spoke of this moment as similar to the Great Churning of Indian tradition, by which the elements were stirred and the world as we know it created. Our challenges, he said, are perhaps equal to that moment, to create anew or to destroy the planet.

Perhaps the most touching moment came as 197 [children blue UN tee shirts](#), representing the 197 countries who approved the terms of the agreement in Paris last December filed into the packed General Assembly Chamber. **Getrude Clement**, 16-year-old radio reporter from Tanzania and youth representative and climate advocate with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) addressed the assembly, asking, “Who is asking for action on climate change?” The [197 children lining the aisles](#) answered, “We are!”.

The country leaders then individually approached the dais and formally signed the agreement, beginning with French President Francois Hollande. US Secretary of State [Mr. Kerry](#), holding his granddaughter, was the twenty-third signer.

Our task now is to convince the US Senate to ratify this agreement and make achieving [our pledges](#) part of our national agenda for the next fifteen years. While this agreement is a historic first, we must also work for high goals, since scientists tell us that if all the pledges are kept, the planet will still increase warming by twice the margin considered necessary to preserve life – including human life – on Earth.



The 49th Commission on Population and Development

A Reflection on the Commission on Population and Development

by Eileen P. McGann, ATR-BC, LCAT, Director of the Arts and Creative Therapies, MercyFirst

The 49th Commission on Population and Development: Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development agenda was held at the United Nations, April 11-15, 2016. Having the opportunity to attend the Commission for the first time was an honor and an inspiring experience. Opening remarks by **Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon** were followed by keynote address from **Lisa Bersales**, National Statistician of the Philippines; **“The demographic evidence base and indicators for the 2030 agenda: a Global Overview.”** The integrative approach to identifying and understanding trends in population with next step plans for implementing programs to support needs was addressed.

Besides the General Assembly meeting, an opportunity to attend two events provided more in-depth perspective on the working forums of Member delegates and the passionate commitment to helping those in need.

A Special event on **“Trafficking in Persons: Eliminating Forced Labour”** co-organized by the Permanent Mission of Belarus and the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking was held on April 14, 2016. Esteemed members of the panel included United States **Ambassador Sarah Mendelsen**. Each panelist addressed aspects of human trafficking and forced labor identifying the varied reasons this develops and the vulnerability of 21 – 35 million people enslaved today: poverty, lack of education, lack of information, exclusion and varied means by which people are trapped and vulnerable in what Pope Francis identifies as ‘Crimes Against Humanity.’

The complications of combating the “third most profitable crime” (following sale of drugs and arms) in the world is a formidable task, and the commitment of members to educate companies and consumers regarding clean supply chains, along with interventions and programs to work toward the elimination of forced labor was noteworthy. Comprehensive integration of services is needed, requiring combined efforts of the consumer, company, private organizations, governments, academics and people of all ages.

The last speaker, **Ranie Hong**, shared her experiences of being kidnapped as a seven-year-old child and sold into slavery, as well as her husband’s experience of being forced to be a child soldier at the age of nine. Compassionate, courageous and resilient, Ranie and her husband Trong founded **The Tronie Foundation**, a unique non-profit organization devoted to fighting human trafficking, ending slavery and helping victims. It was a moving experience to hear her witness and learn of their life and work.

Ms. Hong discussed the **Freedom Seal** and advocated for its use worldwide: “The Freedom Seal is a visual marker of ‘freedom’ from human trafficking, developed with insights from world thought leaders, supply chain experts and through insights and expertise of approximately 30 major companies across Europe and North America, representing a market cap of one trillion dollars.”

The proposed implementation of a Freedom Seal that would be included in packaging/labeling of goods that are free from forced labor would provide testament from companies of their commitment and raise awareness among consumers. The power of the consumer to demand products that are free from forced labor through all chains of supply is something each one of us can embrace.

The power of the individual to make change in the world was further demonstrated in the documentary **“Waves of Hope”** by Pambos Charalmbous, George Vasiliou, and journalist Constantinos Constantinou. The screening of this documentary was a special event organized by Permanent Missions of Greece, Cyprus and the European Delegation to the United Nations, held in The ECOSOC Chamber on April 14, 2016. For those who attended, the impact of compassion and humanitarian efforts in response to devastating struggle and world wide crisis of refugees had great impact. The documentary makes visual the perils that so many face, the horrific conditions under which they travel and are forced to live or lose life. Subtitled in English, this film portrays both the individual experience and global crisis, including how the refugees arrive to the Island of Lesbos, the response of volunteers from around the world, and the ongoing need for continued intervention. Mr. Charalmbous spoke of the life-altering effects this has had on him. His hope for the future and power of each person to make a difference is clearly evidenced in his work and the documentary.

<http://www.troniefoundation.org/AdoptTheSeal>

By Mary Ellen Gondeck, CSJ

What a stretching study on how progress cannot be optimal or even possible without knowing the reality. And how does one assess the reality without data? And how does one collect data in environments of chaos, mass migration, war, poverty, and displacement?

The hope is in knowing that there is an earnest attempt on the part of many to tackle this challenge and put all of their resources to accomplish the goal. Within the United Nations, as with any human organization, there are many areas that need to be improved, and there are many areas that are contributing untold energy to make it happen. Faces, languages, cultures, dress are so different and sometimes hard to grasp, but the goal is the same – to make the world a better place for all.

During our week, we heard input and testimony from many countries, both governments and civil society – always a stretching experience – about the reality in the perspective of each speaker and reality.

The gathering at the UNNGO office, organized and facilitated by Justine Senepati, CSJ, of the Congregations of St Joseph NGO, provided an opportunity to see the bigger picture of the work at the UN and to make connections with specific issues related to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda. The whole experience made our oneness a reality. Issues are so intertwined that one cannot look at one without seeing another – poverty and trafficking, water and migration, social development and education.

A second gathering was organized and facilitated by the Holy See and several NGOs. It was so encouraging to experience the presence of the Church addressing issues related to migration, population and the SDGs.

A third gathering was with Archbishop Azua at the Holy See. It was inspiring to see the depth of experience and knowledge of the diplomatic corps of the Vatican and to share with Fr. Roger Landry his experience as a parish priest ministering to those who were marginalized. He certainly brought an understanding and commitment to the work we do every day. The Archbishop, too, is so dedicated to the ministry of Jesus.



Entrepreneurship in Iran March 16, 2016

by M. Doretta Cornell, RDC

This fast-moving session – jam-packed, with younger observers sitting on the floor in the center of the tables – began with a vivid presentation about *Nowruz*, the Iranian celebration of Spring. A table of flowers and decorative fabrics graced the entrance, as the joyous music played, lending a much more festive note than we find in most UN presentations.



The Entrepreneurship Development Foundation has created what they hope will be a model for other groups to encourage women and young men to build their own businesses.

Working in poor areas, like those in informal settlements of Zahedan, in South East Iran, the Foundation teaches basic skills like discovering their dreams, researching the needs of the community, training in business practices and banking, and consultation with experienced business people. Participants are then connected to resources and guided through to implementation.

This is no small enterprise. In Zahedan, for instance, they worked with 900 residents in eight informal settlements. The area was in dire straits, in conflict and with many of the men dead or imprisoned. They began by researching the local value system, social and environmental context, and opportunities (for instance, it was near a popular birding site). Working with local businesses, municipal and religious organizations, the participants developed created jobs ranging from growing mushrooms, to photography, embroidery, plumbing, and hair dressing.

When sanctions against Iran were put in place, much of their funding dried up, so they approached local businesses and NGOs for sponsors. Aside from the business created, the program has led to the establishment of libraries, commuter centers, banking opportunities (mobile banks to outlying areas, e.g.), and, recently, introductory programs in schools to interest children in their futures.

The program ended with a “tourist” video of the beauties of Iran; it was enough to make me want to go home and book a flight!



ENGAGING FAITH COMMUNITIES TO IMPLEMENT THE SDGS

Achieving Gender Justice and Eliminating Violence against Women and Girls March 16, 2016

by M. Doretta Cornell, RDC

Organized by the Permanent Observer Mission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the US Federation for Middle East Peace, Islamic Relief Worldwide, and The Lutheran World Foundation, this panel presented views I am not ordinarily exposed to.

Moderator **Salwa Kader**, president of the US Federation for Middle East Peace, explained that the OIC was founded right after 9/11 to foster dialogue among peoples. The group works against human trafficking and for the empowerment of women in 17 countries.

Jesca Mnari, a young Tanzanian leader at World YWCA, spoke of challenging gender inequality by using her faith. As a child, she saw that the Bible says all are equal in eyes of God and wondered why women had to submit to men. As she grew up, she wondered further why faith communities are not committed to protecting the human rights of girls and women, which she sees as a “faith call.” In her work, she encourages women to have their own opinions, even when society demands that they submit to their husbands, and works to promote education to achieve true equality between men and women.

Pastor Cibele Kuss, a Brazilian with the Lutheran World Foundation, spoke of the human rights crises in Brazil. Of the 207 million residents, 15 women are killed each day, homosexual people are murdered each day, and there is a rape every few minutes. She sees much of this violence coming from the shift to messianic evangelical religions, with faith-based violence increasing by 460%, according to the official registry. Policy is not helpful, as rape has been a crime in Brazil only since the 1990s, and in 2014 a Supreme Court suit took action against an official for saying that she did not deserve to be raped.

She cited an increasing evangelical movement to degrade women’s rights, reduce financial support, and give little legal support for those who speak out against abuse. She called on religious organizations to speak for gender justice and to make interfaith efforts to change policies and practices. Particular efforts are needed to protect indigenous people, who are being targeted, as was a little girl who was stoned as she returned from worship.

An Interfaith coalition is beginning to gather to press for human rights policy, to commit public acts of solidarity, and to publicize the violations by fundamentalist groups

Ms. Sharifa Abdulaziz, a Gender Advisor for Islamic Relief Worldwide, from London, spoke of the need for capacity-building in communities, to ensure they have the power, knowledge, confidence, and skills to participate in decision making, directions and development.

Faith-based organizations, she said, can be very influential in making changes because they are at the grassroots and embody the values of the community, and especially because they incorporate the spiritual into health, education, politics and other phases of human development.

This first-hand knowledge can be invaluable in making advances. For instance, one challenge in the Ebola crisis was convincing local people to hand over the bodies of infected relatives for safe burial. Faith-based groups worked with the health organizations to develop safe and religiously acceptable burial rites.

Dr Azza Karam, a UN Senior Advisor to the UN Population Fund, spoke of the need to learn from the differing traditions in Africa, the Middle East and the West, for instance in developing relations between military and religious groups, ways of forming policy, and identifying the needs of young people. The UN Population Fund is concerned with much more than reproductive health; a current focus is on migrating peoples and where they will live. People from third world countries, she said, cannot understand that some pregnancies might not be wanted.

She spoke of the need for the UN to pay more attention to religious groups in achieving its goals, citing the fact that 30-40% of all basic services are provided by religious organizations. The UN is only beginning to understand the importance of involving religious leaders in their work. A great need is to expand the conversations about terrorism to include other kinds of violence, such as gangs and violence against women. Religious and secular women’s groups are beginning to take action on this. She advised us all to start the dialogue with our neighbors.

The Question and Answer period ranged from early contributions of women in Islamic countries, such as Sultanas founding educational institutions and women contributing to developing Egypt’s university even before they could attend, to misconceptions about religion as an excuse for violence against women. Dr. Karam suggested that women need to emulate the “old boys networks” to develop faith-based resistance to violence. She cited as inspiration a line from the Koran in which Allah speaks of creating differences among people so that we would get to know each other more deeply.

A person from Somalia explained that this country just developed some sexual laws because religious leaders were involved in the process from the start. This mirrors the SDG principle that all sectors of society should be involved in any changes that will affect them.

PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

Canadian Students Attend 3-Day Orientation



From April 6 through 8, Sr. JoAnn hosted a three-day Orientation to the UN for a group of 51 high school students and faculty from four Catholic schools in Toronto: The Mary Ward Centre, Madonna, St. Mary's and Loretto Abbey. Canadian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN, Marc-André Blanchard, met with and addressed the students.

Here are two of the **student responses**:

1 – *"The trip was an eye-opening experience that has helped me to become a more conscientious global citizen. I was able to hear*

from a variety of passionate speakers and witness sights that were awe-inspiring. A once in a lifetime opportunity with peers that were just as passionate about global issues as I was. Would highly recommend this trip to my fellow students!"



2 – *"Overall, the trip was an amazing experience. Being in the heart of New York itself was a sight for the eyes but being in the presence of the Canadian Ambassador himself was also a great opportunity. There was so much learned from this trip as well such as what major problems are occurring here and elsewhere and how we, as people, can help each other in making the world a better place for everyone."* (Matthew Villanueva)





Let's Keep Connected:

Please link the Partnership for Global Justice Website to your community's website.

2016 PGJ Annual Meeting

Don't Forget to sign up for **The 2016 PGJ 2016 Annual Meeting** will be held at the Maryknoll Mission Center in Ossining, NY on October 15, 2016. (The first Global Justice Foundation Member attendant receives complimentary registration.)

Watch UN Events Live

As always, you can watch live coverage (and often stored videos) of major UN events at the UN WebTV channel. Click the language button to hear them in English). A list of daily events is listed in the UN Journal at 11pm the day before. Webcasts are indicated by a small red icon of a camera.

DPI/NGO Conference in Korea – May 30 through June 1. We hope that some members of the Partnership will attend this first DPINGO Conference to be held in Asia. For more information, see the press release. Registration and other information is available through the Conference logo icon at <http://outreach.un.org/ngorelations/>

