Terese Wong, delegate for Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui (the Anglican Church in Hong Kong), reflects on the 58th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, March 2014:

UN CSW58 had a momentous focus: ‘Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls’.

Women are still not empowered. As the Anglican Communion delegation’s Statement says, women currently account for about two-thirds of the 1.4 billion people who live in extreme poverty. One in three women experience violence in their lifetime. Gender equality and women’s rights are the essential precursors to meeting global challenges, which have disproportionate and burdensome impacts on women and girls, including poverty and hunger; access to healthcare, especially neonatal and postnatal care and non-communicable diseases; climate change and environmental degradation; the prevalence of sexual and gender based violence; the need for universal birth registration.

Women’s Empowerment: A Gospel Issue

The issues are not just for women and girls! UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka stated that ‘widespread and persistent gender inequalities are holding back progress for all’, and called for full engagement of men and boys in the effort to promote and achieve gender equality. This is an issue for humanity, which cannot leave out men and boys who are half of humanity.

Faith-based organisations are increasingly perceived as key partners. The churches of the Anglican Communion have a vital part to play in exemplifying the transformation we long to see by transfiguring our communities and ending suffering.

The CSW58 Agreed Conclusions reaffirmed that gender equality is crucial to accelerate sustainable development beyond 2015. They also call for ‘gender equality, the empowerment of women and human rights of women and girls to be reflected as a stand-alone goal and to be integrated through targets and indicators into all goals of any new development framework’.

Gender equality requires equal access by women and girls to education, employment and income generating activities, health care, land and resources, as well as an equal contribution to decision-making and peace-building processes and post-disaster responses. Without equality none of the Millennium Development Goals or proposed Sustainable Development Goals will be accomplished.

Women delegates from 18 Provinces of the Anglican Communion observed plenary sessions, attended numerous presentations held by UN agencies and NGO delegations including the Anglican Communion Office at the UN. We were privileged to hear 2011 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Leymah Gbowee and Assistant Secretary-General of the UN and Deputy Executive Director Lakshmi Puri.

We shared experiences from our own countries through debriefing sessions and informal fellowship at the hospitality space provided by the Episcopal Church Center at 815 2nd Avenue.

This Newsletter features some of our personal stories and reflections from CSW 58 delegates.
Editor’s Note

What a privilege it was to be part of the wonderful Anglican delegation to CSW58 – a time of passion, inspiration and fun! The presence of our Convenor, Ann Skamp, was an added blessing. She was sufficiently recovered from her medical treatment to join us for a few days. She was full of her usual vigour and determination!

Women’s empowerment is indeed a Gospel issue – to be embedded in mainstream policies and practices of our churches. We rejoiced that faith-based organisations are welcome partners in campaigns against gender based violence; that empowering women is a matter for everyone, men as well as women, and that CSW58 concluded that gender equality should be a stand-alone goal on for post-2015 sustainable development framework.

But there is still much to do. We will never live peacefully in a world where schoolgirls are abducted for sale as slaves. Living peacefully comes through our struggle to bring gender equality to all our churches.

Elaine Cameron, elaine.ging@gmail.com

Welcome to four new IAWN Provincial Links

Sarah Chan
Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui
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Through participating in the ministry of the Women’s League, I would like to explore and study more how girls and women may contribute their talents and love into their own families, parishes and the wider community. I hope that I will be a good channel to share the Love, Peace and Hope of God with you all throughout our Anglican Communion.

Marjorie Maud Maxwell
Iglesia Anglicana de la Region Central de America
I was born in Costa Rica and have been a member of the Episcopal Church from age twelve. I am married and have three grown-up children – one daughter and two sons.

A professional social worker, I have many responsibilities, including Assistant Chair of the Diocese of Costa Rica and of the Mothers’ Union. At present I am Chair of the Women’s group in the Iglesia Anglicana de la Region Central de America (Anglican Church in Central America - IARCA). IARCA covers Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Guatemala and El Salvador.

Even though our historical backgrounds are different, the countries of our Province have a lot in common. Our multi-ethnicity and multilingualism makes us strong and creative and challenges us to learn from each other.

Jeanne Samuel
Church of Ceylon
I am from Colombo, Sri Lanka. I have over the past 30 years worked in the field of humanitarian aid and development in Sri Lanka and Vietnam. In my various positions I have worked with gender related programs in the areas of Sexual Gender Based Violence, HIV and AIDS and Health issues related to women and children.

I have a Masters Degree in Conflict, Security and Development from the University of Bradford, UK. I have served on the Diocesan Council, Board of Women’s Work, and been manager of "The Ceylon Churchman" a quarterly publication of both dioceses of the Church of Ceylon.

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Church of England
Maranda is the World Development Adviser for the Diocese of Oxford. She is also the Coordinator of an ecumenical charity, Christian Concern for One World (CCOW).

Her work involves international travel and work with a wide variety of networks, agencies and people who are serving God in different ways in different locations worldwide. This enables CCOW to produce a weekly prayer email, which uses the lectionary themes and invites prayers for people and situations of concern around the world. She welcomes IAWN sisters to her mailing list for the weekly prayer email (and to contribute prayer requests).

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MenEngage Call for Action: Post-2015 Agenda

The geographical range of the speakers for this event was impressive: Brazil, South Africa, India, Philippines, Sri Lanka. But this wasn’t surprising because MenEngage is a global alliance of non-governmental and UN agencies such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation, White Ribbon Campaign, Promundo and the Sonke Gender Justice Network. The goal of MenEngage is to promote a world where all women and men enjoy fair and healthy relationships. See www.menengage.org.

The MenEngage Panel shared successes and challenges, reminding us of the vital importance of engaging men as allies in the fight for social justice, especially boys, who need a new understanding of what it means to be male.

Founded in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1997, Promundo’s mission promotes gender equality and works with educational sectors. Their national ‘You are my Father’ campaign promotes the value of men with gender equitable attitudes and as non-violent fathers and caregivers. They have a programme for boys and girls providing safe space and modelling respectful relationships. They pay particular attention to childhood experiences which influence adulthood and are likely to be the place where a cycle of violence can begin. They run community-based campaigns for men and boys aimed at preventing HIV. Results are positive. See www.promundo.org.br.

Founded in 2006, the Sonke Gender Justice Network works across Africa supporting men and boys to promote gender equality and prevent gender based violence. They have great concerns about the lack of progress on Millennium Development Goal 5 (maternal health) and 6 (Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases). Reducing the spread of HIV and AIDS can only be achieved when there is a clear commitment to quality reproductive health services for everyone. For too long, sexual and reproductive health has been viewed as primarily responsibility of women, but men also must be involved to prevent HIV and to address their own sexual health needs. www.genderjustice.org.za.

The Centre for Social Justice in India aimed originally to end gender based violence by working with men and boys. Their work, currently in 1,500 villages, has had an unintended educational benefit for women and girls. The drop-out of girls at the end of primary education has been extremely high. So their Men’s groups celebrate stories of fathers who have encouraged their girls to continue their education. Brothers have created support groups to address sexual harassment on their sisters’ way to school, and have taught girls to ride a bicycle in order to ‘reduce’ the distance between home and school. Access to water and toilets for the girls is being monitored. Education in this gender equality framework is leading to the empowerment of girls. See http://www.chsj.org/.

MenEngage will be holding their second Global Symposium in New Delhi, India, from 10-13 November this year. Under the heading ‘Men and Boys for Gender Justice’, its purpose is to find ways to engage men and boys for gender equality so that society becomes more caring and non-violent and gender relations become more harmonious.

Meeting the MDGs: Engaging the faith community in addressing sexual and gender based violence

A panel co-hosted by IMA World Health, We Will Speak Out.US and Islamic Relief USA

“Anything in the wrong hands can be used as a weapon. Faith is no exception,” said Revd Anne Marie Hunter, cutting to the heart of the issue. She reminded us that historically, religion has helped perpetuate violence. Yet people still turn to their faith in times of suffering, so faith communities have opportunities to reclaim Scriptures and state clearly that their faith does not support gender based violence.

Key themes that emerged were the importance of training for faith leaders – especially at the seminary level; re-examining and reclaiming Scriptures and traditions to promote peace and equality; focusing on positive reinforcement and healthy relationships as precursors for discussing violence; and engaging with faith leaders as influential partners rather than obstacles.

Panelists, left to right: Salma Elkadi Abugideiri, Peaceful Families; Revd Terrie Robinson, Anglican Communion Office; Revd Dr Sally MacNichol, CONNECT; Louise Bashige, IMA World Health; Revd Dr Anne Marie Hunter, Safe Havens; Deborah Rosenbloom, Jewish Women International.

The panellists agreed that women need safe, trusting environments in which to share their stories and that faith communities can play a powerful role in stripping away the stigma surrounding violence. They emphasised that faith leaders need to get a better understanding of how power is used and misused in relationships – both domestic and political. Dr Hunter encouraged patience, gentleness and persistence, “I have seen the Grand Canyon. I know what water does to rock. We are that water.”
Faith Gandiya, Zimbabwe, Church of the Province of Central Africa

People are the greatest resource we have. I was so impressed on Consultation Day by the Filipina woman Analise Balares who showed what one person can do, never forgetting the people who are as poor as she had been. I will make more people aware that gender inequality impacts us all. We need to redefine male-female relationships. I will encourage our diocese to set up a gender desk.

Louisa Mojela, Anglican Church of Southern Africa

The critical paradigm shift we must embark on in this twenty-first century is to stop expecting opportunities to be created for us. There is nothing unfeminine about possessing tremendous drive and achieving great things outside the home. We need to differentiate between the power that stems from aggression and the power of strategy.

Esther Lee, Anglican Church of Korea

My Anglican identity here has been important. I am an Anglican from Korea, where we are a small church – the main culture is Confucianism.

In Korea, violence against women is a huge challenge.

The young women at CSW were very impressive. I will share my CSW photos, and reports, and put information on-line.

Mugisa Isingoma, Anglican Church of Congo

The presentation by South African Anglican delegate Granny Seape was very powerful – how she set up her own construction company Ahanang, meaning “let’s build together”. She recruited local women to learn basic construction skills. It shows that we can empower local people to see their potential and become self-sufficient, making something grow.

It was great to hear the importance of involving young girls in all our work. The challenge of eliminating gender based violence is critical because although we come from different corners, our problems seem to be the same. The best way to fight is to come together, as in the powerful We Will Speak Out coalition against sexual violence.

Florence Sarkar, Church of Bangladesh

Women in Bangladesh need economic empowerment. For that, we need gender equality and women’s leadership in church. I will try to set up an action programme, focussing on education and skills/vocational training for boys and girls. The challenges will be financing and changing policy-makers’ attitudes. We must increase theological education.

Marie Pierrette Bezara, Madagascar, Church of the Province of the Indian Ocean

There is great poverty in my country, Madagascar, and a lot of malnutrition. The Mothers’ Union tackles this by promoting market gardening and handicrafts. There is also a great need for family planning, so the Mothers’ Union is setting up family planning programmes. We must stop 13-year-old girls getting pregnant.

Sandra Andrade, Igreja Episcopal Anglicana do Brasil

Women’s economic independence is a challenge in Brazil. Our sisters are models for us to keep working. I keep thinking about the door used as a symbol during our worship in the United Nations Church Centre chapel, which for me symbolises our need to keep pushing doors to open for us. We need to work with men and boys - only then can we reduce violence against women.

Kaufo’ou Leveni, Tonga, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand & Polynesia

I was really excited by the session with other teenagers. It was much easier to become friends than I expected - a new experience, not just listening to young people from so many different countries, but having them initiate debate! They were fascinated by my country still having a King!

We discussed what we learned from the presentation on Millennium Development Goals. I was in the group exploring education. We thought it should be free, so I will find out how to secure funding for university scholarships. It is important that everyone can learn about critical issues and understand the poverty gap. We also need to reduce early pregnancy and try to prevent trafficking.

We return home, dreaming how to make the world a better place!

See the Final Statement of the Anglican Communion Delegation in English, Spanish and Portuguese at http://iawn.anglicancommunion.org/reports/index.cfm
Later, Granny and Ayra reflected on what they were taking away from CSW58:

"If you empower a woman you empower a nation"

Granny Seape, Anglican Church of South Africa

The saying “if you empower a woman you empower a nation” has given hope to women all over the world for decades. Our challenge for 2015 and beyond, and as we get ready to mark 20 years since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, is to ensure that we empower women in a meaningful way — in a way that does not make us passengers in the process. We need to take responsibility for our destiny.

I am taking away a greater sense of urgency. The issues of women should not be delayed because young people are looking up to the older generation for answers. In countries where young people have not lived through the trials of oppression and discrimination, their passion should be fuelled by our generation.

We need to support each other and give greater support for our sisters in countries where they are still struggling for what others have already gained. We should intensify our efforts of imparting knowledge — the ‘how’ of our experiences. I leave CSW 58 with renewed energy.

Ayra Inderyas, Church of Pakistan

CSW58 has exposed me to the international discourse on women’s rights and concerns, strengthening my conviction that seeking women’s emancipation must become a concrete global reality. Sharing subjects close to the hearts of women rights’ activists, CSW58 increased my understanding of the intricate challenges of poverty, health, leadership, economic development, political participation, trafficking and prostitution.

Daily, I question how I can make this learning meaningful for my women and girls in Pakistan. I am connected to the women’s desk of Lahore Diocese, teach women studies at Kinnaird College for Women, one of the oldest women’s colleges in Pakistan, and am associated with the Women Movement in Pakistan, so I can incorporate this learning into my work and spread the word as much as possible.

My frustration comes from the fact that in order to pursue my goals, I have to struggle continually with powerful patriarchal structures, leaders and decision makers. But my faith sustains and strengthens me, now, as in the past, to explore spaces for promoting the status of women.

I extend many thanks to United Methodist Women for making my participation possible through their financial support.
In the wake of my attendance at this year's UN Commission on the Status of Women, my question has been: does the Anglican church have something to contribute to this work theologically and spiritually, in addition to our solidarity with civil society and our participation in advocacy, activism and service delivery?

Two things incline me to answer ‘yes’. First, speaker after speaker at this year’s CSW spoke of the need for ‘transformation’ of unjust patriarchal structures in all our societies. Second, there seemed at times an assumption that this transformation will be achieved by our working harder and agitating more strongly. But I wonder if the transformation we seek can be achieved by these means alone?

Of course, there is work to be done, prophetic words to be spoken, stands to be taken. This isn’t about quietism or complacency. But deep transformation is not simply change, and it cannot arise from the same level as that which it seeks to transform. Systemic patterns of identity and community deformation are not readily undone by opposition and angry resistance, but by the invitation into a larger wholeness and belonging. We give up destructive ways of being when we are enabled to see how they diminish ourselves and others, and when we glimpse new possibilities that are life-giving, healing and compelling.

Sarah Bachelard of the Anglican Church of Australia reflects...

Without a glimpse of this new reality, then whether we are oppressed or oppressor, the courage to let go of what we have always known is hard to muster.

Programs and campaigns that seek to remedy injustices suffered by women and girls do extraordinary and necessary work sheltering those leaving abusive relationships, enabling access to education, financial security, legal protection, decision making, and so on. But what about the journey of transformation itself? What about the possibility of becoming men and women free to be fully human and fully ourselves, and so empowered to witness to and accompany others through the often painful process of letting go old securities and patterns to grow into a new and shared humanity?

This journey of personal transformation into wholeness is one our faith calls us to undertake, and must be integral to our contribution to the common work for justice in our world. Exploring how we enable this journey more fully in practice feels like the next step in my own participation in this work.
Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women, welcomed the CSW58 Agreed Conclusions as “a milestone towards a transformative global development agenda that puts the empowerment of women and girls at its centre”.

For the full text of the CSW58 Agreed Conclusions, see http://www.unwomen.org/~/media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/58/CSW58-agreedconclusions-advanceduneditedversion.pdf

What are Agreed Conclusions?

The Agreed Conclusions are the principal output of each annual session of the Commission on the Status of Women and relate to the session’s priority theme. They are a set of concrete recommendations for Governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society to implement at international, national, and local levels. As Mandy Marshall reminded us last year when she represented the Church of England at CSW57, the Agreed Conclusions give NGOs and churches an opportunity to lobby their respective governments to put into action what they have signed up to do.

Judy Dickson is a member of the Anglican Church of Canada and Chair of Advocacy for Ecumenical Women, an international coalition of churches and organisations which have status with the Economic & Social Council at the United Nations. Here are Judy’s thoughts on the Agreed Conclusions for CSW58...

We all breathed a sigh of relief when we got the news that Agreed Conclusions had been reached somewhere after midnight on March 21. On the whole, they were a qualified success. Some of the good points are these:

Stand-alone goal: The Agreed Conclusions recommend that gender equality, the empowerment of women and human rights of women and girls should form a stand-alone goal in the post-2015 development framework, which is excellent.

Gaps in the MDGs: The Commission recognises that a number of issues critical to gender equality were not adequately addressed by the MDGs. These include violence against women and girls; child, early and forced marriage; women and girls’ disproportionate share of unpaid care work; women’s equal access to productive resources; the need for women to have access to adequate sexual and reproductive health. The Agreed Conclusions set out that unless all dimensions of gender equality are addressed, the empowerment of women cannot be achieved.

Intersectionality of poverty: The Commission acknowledges and addresses the multiple factors which lead to the disproportionate impact of poverty on women, linking household gender inequalities to the need for women and girls to have equal access to all resources, including quality education and inheritance and property rights.

Data collection: There is recognition of the importance of gender sensitive data collection.

Some contentious areas had to be negotiated:

The meaning of ‘Family’: There was concern that references to ‘family’ in the text of the Agreed Conclusions only recognised traditional family structures as valid form of family. Some States argued for references to ‘families in all their diversity’ or ‘all forms of the family’. Both these phrases were rejected. The term ‘gender’ was also hotly contested.

SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights): This was an emotive area. The comprehensive list of SRH services, including emergency contraception, and the recognition of the need to eliminate female genital mutilation and so-called honour crimes, are welcome. But commitment to reproductive rights in accordance with the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) is qualified.

Sovereignty: The UN as a whole works to support democratic norms, but it is also structurally committed to the sovereign equality of States, no matter what their government. At times, this dual commitment creates tension. This was evident when some States would accept no interference in their cultural patterns.

Indigenous women: There is concern about the backwards slide on the issue of Indigenous women. The Agreed Conclusions talk about a Conference on Aboriginal Peoples but Indigenous peoples do not appear to be involved in its organisation, or to have been consulted about it.

Although the need to increase funding for gender equality is recognised, commitment is weak.

It is clear that discussions about language need to be held before CSW59 so that some agreement can be reached about terms like ‘family’, ‘sovereignty’ and ‘gender’. There is a lot of work to be done before we come to CSW59!

UN CSW59 in 2015 will undertake a review of progress made in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 20 years after its adoption at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/beijingdeclaration.html
Anglican Women at Prayer: Weaving Our Bonds of Affection

This imaginative Conference held in March at Virginia Theological Seminary, USA, brought together 140 Anglican women from different parts of the Communion in order to understand one another’s prayers—what we pray for, and how—and to expand their capacity to pray not only as individuals but with each other.

Phoebe Griswold, Conference Organiser, expressed her joy at recognising the breadth and love of God in new and old ways. But her greatest wonder was seeing “our vision enacted—prayer as the bond tying Anglican women together during the plenary session. Our keynote speaker, Revd Dr Eleanor Sanderson, a young woman priest from New Zealand, held a conversation with a young Muslim woman about praying in different cultures. And at the same time, women seminarians from Msalato Seminary in Tanzania participated on screen, asking questions and responding.

“We could see each face, hear each voice. The same women opened the conference with prayer and song. Bonds of affection were forged!”

Phoebe continued, “We want to deepen our bonds of affection. The biggest challenge going forward is for women themselves to believe that their prayer is the most important thing they do to address the critical issues our world faces.

“Out of prayer, solutions will come; new ways of working discovered. Through technology we can meet each other face to face in prayer, learning from and praying with each other. There are no stronger bonds of affection than sharing together our relationship with God. Now we have to pray to find those ways that will link us!”

The Conference website anglicanwomenatprayer.org is the beginning of an Anglican Communion-wide women’s site for ‘Global Prayers from and for the world’. We will follow progress in our next Newsletter!

#BringBackOurGirls

Many prayers are needed for women and girls. When over 200 girls were kidnapped from their school in Nigeria, Elizabeth Smith of the Diocese of Perth, Anglican Church of Australia, wrote this prayer which has circulated round the world:

O God, we cry out to you for the lives and the freedom of the 276 kidnapped girls in Nigeria. In their time of danger and fear, pour out your strong Spirit for them. Make a way home for them in safety. Make a way back for them to the education that will lift them up. Hold them in the knowledge that they are not captive slaves, but they are your beloved daughters, and precious in your sight. Change the hearts and minds of their kidnappers and of all who choose violence against women and girls. Cast down the mighty from their seat, and lift up the humble and meek, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

IAWN Canada

Human Trafficking Conference

Friday, 14 November, 2014

Key Note Speakers

The Honourable Joy Smith, MP - Legislation
Mrs Glendene Grant - Impact
RCMP Corporal Jassy Bindra - Enforcement
The Revd Terrie Robinson – Anglican Communion, Global
Sister Nancy Brown – Programme Delivery, Covenant House, Vancouver

Moderator

The Revd Canon Alice Medcof

Register: Sorrento Retreat and Conference Centre, B.C.
1159 Passchendaele Road PO Box 99
Sorrento, BC Canada V0E 2W0
Cost:$50 (until 1 November, $35)