



# The Grail Link To The UN Network

Update on **GRAIL** and **UFER** Activities

Newsletter 2, April 27, 2010



"Women working together to bring about a world of peace, justice, equity and renewal of the earth"

## CSW

### 54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

GIRLS....GIRLS...GIRLS....In our first issue of this newsletter, you read that we held a CSW pre-training for—girls! This event opened the UN to the girls and their teachers in a new way. The girls got excited about participating in parallel events as well as observing in the official sessions. We kept saying to the girls: 'it's your voices we want to hear.' How happy and proud and impressed we were when we did hear their voices. In the Youth Orientation, Gina volunteered to be a recorder as well as at the Girl-Boy Dialogue. In the Gender, Race and Class workshop, Naomi and Genesis (pictured here) volunteered to take notes and report. Ingrid in another session asked very 'on point' questions and Edilenia volunteered to be a reporter in the Girl-Boy Dialogue. Lucille (pictured below) helped write the Girls' Statement and then co-facilitated the Girls Only Workshop. Saran was a speaker at the CSW



Roundtable in February sharing her moving story of life as a Muslim family moving from Guinea to the Ivory Coast to The Bronx. Gabrielle spoke with the Yemen delegate during a mission visit. These are just some of the 'voices' that I heard--I'm sure the girls spoke up many other times. And, when they spoke, they gave their names and said they were representing the Grail.

The Schools? St Catharine, the Bronx, brought girls for 4 days of the week 1. Below is an excerpt from their website.) St. Jean Baptiste, Manhattan, is close to the UN so the girls easily came to events in between and after classes. Dominican, Manhattan, had a different group of 6 girls each of the first three days. Mt. St. Ursula, The Bronx, came many times during the two weeks. The girls from St. Michael's, Manhattan, also found time in between and after classes. All of the girls were finding creative ways to report to, and engage the students in their schools. They are already planning for next year.



### The Grail at CSW 54

By Mary Kay Louchart

In addition to the regular UN pass-holders (Joy Garland, Mary Gindhart, Sharon Joslyn, Mary Kay Louchart, Dorothy Rasenberger, Simonetta Romano, Kate Twohy) we were joined for one day to two weeks by Grail members: Lucy Jones and Monica Maher, Carol Barton and Elmira Nzombe, Grail explorers/interested in Grail: Monette Cruz, Christina Hayes and Jessie Hamilton, two students of Monica and a friend of hers from Honduras, Jessica Sanchez. And, our international Grail members: Monica de Leon from The Philippines; Lidia Martins from Portugal who actually attended as one of Portugal's delegates and also from Portugal two teens: Sara Teles and Marina Castro and their chaperone, Susana Estevinho; Millicent Cavanaugh, one of the Grail Link to the UN interns. Some others had planned to come but work, snow, birth of a baby and a death in the family kept them away. We also registered about 60 girls and their chaperones—not all waited in the long lines to get their passes and thereby get into the official CSW proceedings, but all came to parallel events.



The Grail co-sponsored three parallel events:

- Two with The Girl Scouts, Girls Learn International and the Working Group on Girls: GIRLS ONLY workshop and GIRL-BOY dialogue,
- One with the United Methodist Women: Beijing +15: What do Gender, Race and Class have to do with it?



## WGG asked girls to meet with missions and country delegates

On March 10<sup>th</sup>, Marina and Sara from Portugal met with Dr. Isabel Romão, a delegate from Portugal. The following is from their report: “Dr. Isabel admitted that Section L, of the Beijing Platform was not well enough developed and incorporated by the United Nations members and that it should in the future be a point that would receive more attention. During the meeting we spoke about the importance of the role of the girl in the world and about her participation in future meetings. We spoke of other issues related to girls and to women: mental illnesses (anorexia, bulimia), abortion, devaluation of the work of the domestic, etc. We felt that Dr. Isabel showed receptivity and a willingness to defend our interests, but that a lot also depends on persons in higher places.”



*About their own involvement and participation in CSW 54 the girls said: as representatives of the Grail in Portugal, in general, had and will have, a very positive repercussion in our lives*

- *From the experience of New York and CSW we learned to be more aware and to value our own lives*
- *With the lessons learned from CSW 54, we will in our own place, Madeira, Portugal, sensitize our friends both in our institution (Vila Mar) and in our school about the severe problems of girls throughout the world and about the gaps in the Beijing Platform for Action. All of us can do something to help!*
- *We saw in all the CSW work groups that no one stands up for girls as well as they do for themselves.*
- *We ourselves finally see and feel how important it is to be able to speak English so that we can communicate and relate better with other youth... gesturing also helps, but speaking is faster to understand one another. So that when we return to Madeira, one thing is sure: we will be more attentive in the English Classes and our investment in this language will be more serious.*



## An excerpt from St Catharine Academy website

Three students participated in the 54th Commission on the Status of Women. SCA student participation was sponsored by "The Grail", a woman's organization and UN NGO, dedicated to women's spirituality and social justice. Gina, Edilenia and Ingrid spent several months studying the Beijing Platform for Action developed at the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995, especially the section on "The Girl Child" with hopes of having their voices heard at this international conference. Activities that students were able to participate in included the celebration of International Women's Day which included a speech by UN Secretary General Ban-Ki Moon; sessions on the Millennium Development Goals, and a briefing at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations where they heard Ambassador Susan Rice speak as well as Tina Tchen, Executive Director of the White House Council on Women and Girls. *(Gina, Edilenia and Ingrid will now prepare presentations to share with the SCA student body regarding their experience and the cause of girls throughout the world.)*



## An excerpt from by Ambassador Susan E. Rice remarks

March 4<sup>th</sup>, Ambassador Rice spoke at a Briefing of NGO Representatives, at the U.S. Mission: “President Obama said yesterday in his proclamation, ‘Our nation's commitment to women's rights must not end at our own borders, and my Administration is making global women's empowerment a core pillar of our foreign policy.’ I can tell you that up here at the United Nations that is what we are trying to implement, very concretely, every day. And that that is the commitment that I want to talk about for a few minutes with you all. And I wanted to start, because we are joined today by members of Girls Learn International, The Girl Scouts and **The Grail**, I want to talk about youth for just a quick second. Our work at the 54th session of the CSW is particularly important to your generation. We are here to work toward a world where women and girls everywhere can fulfill their God-given potential, free of fear, free of want, and with the opportunity to live their own dreams. Many of us here in this country may take those opportunities for granted. But, when women are held back, anywhere, the world is held back. When girls lack equal opportunity and education, nations fall behind and we have seen that sadly, played out in many parts of the world. So, fifteen years after the Beijing Conference, the world can still be, as you all know, a bleak place for far too many women and girls.”

# CLIMATE CHANGE AND WOMEN

By Kate Twohy

It became very clear in this year's CSW54 which reviewed the Beijing Platform of Action that climate change is now a serious matter to the international community of women. As a member of the Subcommittee on Women and Climate Change of the NGOCSW/.NY Committee, I was privileged to interact in five parallel events on this subject. The Women and Climate Change Caucus which met twice (with about 40 women in each session) was dynamic. Joy Garland and Dorothy Rasenberger were present, too. We were lucky to have panelists from WEDO, UNDP and UNIFEM with the passion and information which informs the committee members with whom I interact. It is clear that women's ability to formulate the problems of their communities and regions, their skills at adapting to the effects of climate change, and their overall vulnerability as the food growers for their families and countries (as much as 50 to 80% of food grown in some developing countries is raised by women) give them a unique place at the table. We know now that the advocates for women in the NGO, civil society and UN agency worlds are going to work for that empowerment and inclusion.

From all over the world come reports of drought, floods, desperately awaited rain for planting crops delayed for two or more months, coastal areas

washed away, and the threat to the food supply of millions... Oxfam is doing a good job of making the stories of women known. We showed a DVD of four women's stories, prepared by Oxfam. Floods in Bangladesh and Brazil, Mississippi, trying to restore the city of Biloxi and a fourth story from Uganda, women in a heart breaking drought walking miles for some food and fire wood.

In the second week of CSW, Ban Ki Moon made an announcement that he had appointed 19 advisors to make proposals about the financial distribution mechanism for adaptation and mitigation funding to countries most affected by climate change. Groups we work with immediately sent around a petition noting that all those advisors were men and then sending a list of women's names from around the world to be considered. We were able to distribute copies of that petition at one of the events sponsored by UNANIMA International (our colleagues). The petition has gone out also to many organizations and to our Women Act list of the NGOCSW. This is a brief report on my participation in CSW-54. I am so pleased to be a part of a subcommittee of women of so many gifts....and I do my best to keep learning more about this important issue.



In the photos on p. 1: Genesis Vargas (St. Jean Baptiste ) and Lucille Watkins (Mt. St. Ursula). Lucille was part of the group of 6 girls who drafted the Girls' Statement (two girls each from Girl Scouts, Girls Learn International and The Grail) and Emily Bent pictured here with Adwoa Aidoo (chair of the

WGG Participation Task Force). Emily is a Doctoral Candidate and Galway Fellow in the Global Women's Studies Programme, National University of Ireland, Galway. During CSW she interviewed girls for her research on girl's rights. Lucille helped to facilitate the Girls Only Workshop.

## News

The April issue of the USA newsletter: GUMBO has more CSW reports and photos. There are some quotes from 'our' girls as well as a wonderful report from Lucy Jones and the girls from Portugal, Sara Teles and Marina Castro. In the next issue of CROSSROADS, we will hear from 1) Monica de Leon and Monette Cruz from the Philippines(CSW), and, 2) Theresa Dardar who along with Joy Garland and Sharon Joslyn attended the 9<sup>th</sup> Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (April 19<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>). Theresa is a Grail member from Louisiana and a member of the Pointe-au-Chien tribe. Some Grail members will be attending the Commission on Sustainable Development, May 3<sup>rd</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>, so we'll also hear from them.)

# Global Governance: The G-20 and the UN

By Sharon Joslyn

On March 25 I attended a Midday Forum at the United Nations Headquarters sponsored by the United Nations University (UNU). The presenter was H.E. Ambassador Mr. Vanu Gopala Menon, Permanent Representative of the Singapore Mission to the United Nations. Following are parts of the brief that we received highlighting the main points of his presentation about the evolving **Group of 20 (G-20)**, its significance for future global decision making, especially in crisis situations and how it may affect the status of the United Nations. I found the presentation informative and interesting, but I think it is important to note that nowhere, neither in the presentation nor in the discussion period, was the importance of **the participation of women** in the process mentioned. Also, when speaking of United Nations reform, no reference was made to **Gender Architecture Reform (GEAR)**. *The global economic crisis has underscored the need for **more effective***

***global governance mechanisms** for economic policy coordination. The G-20 represents a significant step in that regard. The G-20 process and the swift, decisive actions that it brought about helped to avert a global economic depression in the last year. However, for the G-20's deliberations to be translated into effective actions on a global scale, they will need to engage and consult a wider range of countries. At the same time, it should also be borne in mind that the United Nations is the only global body with universal participation and unquestioned legitimacy. The G-20 process and its actions and decisions should complement and strengthen the United Nations. What can be done to ensure that the G-20 process **strengthens and not undermines** the UN? How can we build up a framework of engagement between the G-20 and non G-20 members?*

In his presentation Ambassador Menon continued that to achieve the desired framework the G-20 must develop appropriate mechanisms so that it is more consultative, inclusive and transparent. He listed some steps that need to be taken to realize this framework:

- There must be constant dialogue between the G-20 and the non G-20 countries.
- The G-20 should seek to engage a wide range of countries including the Middle and small states
- Countries should have regular and predictable channels for raising their own concerns
- Although not a member, the Secretary General should participate on all levels of the G-20
- The Secretary General should consult with countries before meetings instead of presuming to speak in their name which has been the custom
- The Secretary General should be able to raise areas of concern.
- Finally, the United Nations must work at its own reform in order to avoid being by-passed by the major DESA information powers.

CONGRATULATIONS ALMA AND FAMILY! Alma Agolli, one of our Grail Link to the UN (GLUN) interns and editor of this Newsletter, had a baby boy—unfortunately just before the CSW so she wasn't able to participate. But she kept in touch with everything via the internet. Contact her with any comments, request for info, etc. at [alma.agolli@gmail.com](mailto:alma.agolli@gmail.com).