



The Grail Link to the UN Network

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

Update on Grail and UFER activities

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P.O. Box 540082, Bronx, New York 10454 Grail-IPT@juno.com



Parallel event sponsored by the Grail/co-sponsored by UFER: Girls' Voices: Challenges of Age and Gender in a Rural Environment. The panelists were: Nagaba Agatha (Uganda/age 18), Carmen Siteo (Moçambique/age 18), Laura Luka Kisasa (Tanzania/age 15), Thando Nzimande (South Africa/age/17). The moderators were Veronica Pereira (Portugal but born in Cabo Verde/age 20), Naniaca Camara (Bronx high schooler but with roots in Mali and the Ivory Coast/age 17), Maria João Ribeiro(Portugal/age 19) translating for Carmen

The GLUNN Team (Grail Link to the United Nations Network) worked long hours and did lots of networking to ensure a Grail presence at CSW-56.

Kate Twohy spearheaded our connection with Carmen Gloria Arriaga for the side event where Thando Nzimande and Honorata Mvungi were panelists: **RURAL GIRLS AND WOMEN, AGENTS OF CHANGE IN CLIMATE JUSTICE: Living Testimonies of Dr. Maathai's Legacy.** Carmen and Kenyan Ambassador Josephine Ojiambo were impressed with them as well as the Grail and are seeking funding for some aspects of their work.

Mary Kay Louchart, Sharon Joslyn and intern Ana Heleno as part of the Working Group on Girls/Girls Participation Task Force (WGG/GPTF) helped coordinate the Youth Orientation. Belkis Martinez was also part of this effort.

With the WGG/GPTF The Grail co-sponsored:

GIRL-BOY DIALOGUE: Financing For Gender Equality from a Youth-Based Perspective,

VOICES OF RURAL GIRLS: Empowerment through leadership and entrepreneurship (Thando spoke at this event).

BRINGING IT HOME: Youth Delegates Share the Impact of CSW (Denise Milice from CSW-51 and Timeka Mucambe CSW-55—both from Moçambique-- were part of the video. Some of our Bronx girls had their photos and quotes as part of the film) Go to the website: girlsrights.org. Then search for Bringing it Home and the video will pop up. With the United Methodist Women (under the leadership of Carol Barton) we co-sponsored and all participated in: **RURAL WOMEN’S CONCERNS: What do Gender, Race and Class Have to Do with it?** Some of the girls worked with drafting the Girls Statement. A big hit was the Girls Reception one evening.

The Grail/UFER event: **GIRLS’ VOICES: Challenges of age and gender in a rural environment:** the "triple challenge" of rural life, age and gender faced by the world’s girls. This event featured rural girls from four African countries who shared their stories and struggles. As they spoke, it becomes clear that given access to education and resources, they will become the leaders whether farmers or teachers, etc. who will play a vital role in solving poverty and hunger in the developing world.

The Grail has participated in CSW for many years. We have brought women and girls from many countries as well as from other states in the USA. Often we would hear: why are the side events always run by USA women? And if there are girls, why only one?

So, we decided we wanted our members from the Global South to organize our side event. They organized and facilitated it. We have been blessed that Abida Jamal from Moçambique has participated in CSW three times in the past and works very well with young people. She worked with them to bring together a really fine panel. The girls were happy and the response from the other participants seemed good. If nothing else, those four plus the two facilitators felt empowered and we could see them ‘grow before our eyes’.



AGATHA

CARMEN

LAURA

THANDO

SOME FOLLOW-UP COMMITMENTS OF THE FOUR:

- AGATHA:
- 1) I will try to involve more girls in my rural girls especially those who have no jobs.
 - 2) I want to make rural girls to be aware of many ways of getting money by starting small business like that of making flowers and necklaces as a source of income for their needs as girls need many things.
 - 3) I want to improve on skills of rural girls.

- CARMEN:
- 1) I will go back to the rural community that I worked with to do the documentary, share with them the impact of their works and planning with them some workshop related to rural girls leadership, gain self-esteem, confidence and determination.
 - 2) I will involve those rural girls on our Girls International Day activities that we already start to organize.
 - 3) I will prepare together with my colleagues meetings with our local leaders and mayor to engage them on girls issues.

- LAURA:
- The place where am going to organize is at school.
- 1) I am going to organize our daily experiences with my friends in our school debate team.
 - 2) The time for organizing is when it reaches the lesson of school debate on Tuesday.

- THANDO: 1) On 25th March I will start organising an Easter camp of 2-3 days for girls from the age of 10 years to 25 years old. The camp will be at my church because it is big.
- 2) I will ask the Emthojeni girls to help me organize the event. We will need food and transport to transport the girls. I want to ask the premier of KZN to come and talk to us.
- 3) I will chose girls to share their life experience.

Naniaka Camara (St. Catharine's in The Bronx) co-facilitated the Grail's Side Event on March 1st. Maria Joao Ribeiro (Portugal) was the translator. Here they are comparing notes as we waited to begin our event.



Pictured here Ana Luisa Heleno who generously served as our intern in preparing for CSW, with

Veronica Pereira, Maria João Ribeiro All from Portugal—enjoying a quiet moment between sessions.



Rural Women's Concerns: What Do Gender, Race and Class Have to Do with it? (United Methodist Women with the Grail as one of the co-sponsors), Carol Barton brought in the Boal Forum. Our Grail group immediately got into the role play/drama!

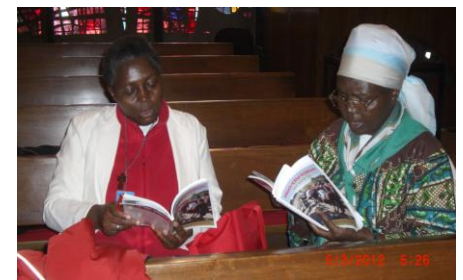


Bianca Jenkins (Saginaw, Mi) and Keila Guerrero (Ann Arbor, Mi)

during one of the sessions. They both followed the medical discussions. Keila also translated for Lucero from Mexico.

Nsiimenta Angelica (Uganda) and Honorata Mvungi (Tanzania) pausing to study the

Book of Days in order to decide which session to attend next.



We asked some girls: "what do you think are the most important issues affecting girls that need to be addressed by the UN?" Here is one response:

I think that one of the main problems is that young girls are stereotypes raised by our society, a society that says that girls have to be "perfect", to become "perfect women" starting with having to be good students to become successful professionally, good citizens, good mothers, faithful wives and at same time beautiful and attractive!

Because of this high level of expectation lots of young girls have health problems like depression because they cannot be good students. They have anorexic and bulimic problems because they are not/ cannot be thin like the TV wants! And also the stereotypes that say that boys and girls are different, for example that boys do not cry, that they are stronger than girls, that they do not have to do domestic work, etc.

I think that all these ideas are completely wrong, but they also continue to be passed on through generation and generation, and if this continues to happen it is bad for young girls because they become frustrated and sad adults without the capacity to develop their potential. Carolina Semedo, 16 years old, Portugal

THE PHILIPPINES: Unfortunately, Grail members from the Philippines were not able to attend CSW-56. However, they had much to contribute to the theme: The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges. This is what Jeanette Loanzon (CSW-54 attendee) sent to us:

We are engaged in a Triple L approach to rural women in the Philippines. Triple L stands for listening, leadership and livelihood. We first listen to the dreams and aspirations of rural women, their problems and daily concerns. The second L refers to leadership training, a strategic interest for women while the third L refers to livelihood, a practical need of rural women. We pattern this according to the distinction earlier given between practical need and strategic interest by Maxine Molyneux (1981).

There is a need for community leaders in the Philippines, particularly in the rural areas where two-thirds of Filipinos live. Thirty four families dominate rural economics and politics (McBeth, 1989). In contrast, women leaders are known to have bridged family needs with community resources. *Paglaum*, a Cebuano and Samareno word for hope, is a leadership training seminar for young rural women from Mindanao and Eastern Samar. There is hope in the leadership of young women willing to transform themselves, their families and their communities towards more justice and peace. *Paglaum* started in 2008 and it will run its fifth program on April 2012. *Paglaum* aims to help young women, 14-30 years of age, realize their potentials to serve as leaders and practice shared leadership in responding to needs in their communities; their depth and richness of spiritual resources and to nourish their response mainly through group sharing of the Sacred Scripture; their responsibility to care for Mother Earth and sustain future generations. The training schema is as follows: widening circles beginning from self-knowledge, knowledge of others, social analysis, environmental awareness, relationship with the Creator. An explanation and discussion of the UN CEDAW facilitates awareness and understanding of women's issues and potentials.

To tackle ecology, participants experience a nature walk, learn different forms of environmental degradation and come up with solutions through creative expressions in song, poems, etc. For the spirituality content, the format for *Lectio Divina* is followed: What touched my heart in a Biblical passage, what is the message for me and what is my response to this message? At the end of the program, the participants integrate their learning with their knowledge of their community needs and design an action plan.

Livelihood projects, soap making and sewing bags, have been launched among the adult women Grail members in Eastern Samar and Western Mindanao. This is a practical need of rural women and helps provide for more "rice and fish" and "calories and proteins" of their families.

- **If you are interested in attending CSW-57, 4-15 March, 2013, start planning now.**
- For the 57th session in 2013: **Priority theme:** Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls. **Review theme:** the agreed conclusions from the 2009 session on "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS." (Grail-IPT@juno.com)

PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES May 7-18, 2012: UFER and The Grail were also present at the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Affairs. Raymonde and Elly attended some of the sessions in week 2. Through the connections of Joy Garland, UFER and The Grail co-sponsored an event: Walking a Path Together: Collaborating for the Return of Northwest Native Artifacts. The event featured a presentation by the Chairwoman of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde in Oregon. Mary Kay, Sharon, Lillian Wall and Belkis Martinez also attended some of the sessions. Carrie Bowling and Paul Deters (son of Virginia Deters) work in a Peace Museum in Dayton, Ohio. They attended week 1 of the session to gain insights in to how the UN works and how being an NGO could benefit their work. The Bronx Grail Center welcomed all out-of-towners. A member of the Yamasee tribe in South Carolina, following the Forum, spent two weeks at the Bronx Center while she attended the Commission on Sustainable Development.

International Movement for Fraternal Union among Races and Peoples (UFER)

The UFER /Board of Directors met at the Cornwall, NY Grail Center May 21 to 23, 2012. Present were: Raymonde Martineau, Secretary General(Canada); Elly Koenig, President(Grail/Netherlands); C.M.Eya Nchama, Vice- President(Switzerland/Equatorial Guinea); Paul Beersmans, Associate Director(Belgium); Lee Kum-Yeon(AFI/Korea); Joy Garland, (Grail/USA); Monica Maher, (Grail/USA-Ecuador). Sharon Joslyn, Main UFER representative in NY(Grail/USA). As this was a Board meeting, many policy and structure decisions were taken. For us, the exciting thing is that they will work at getting girls from Nepal and Korea and hopefully some Dalit girls from India to attend CSW-57. For more information, go to the website: ufer-international.org.