

# GRAIL LINK TO THE UNITED NATIONS NETWORK



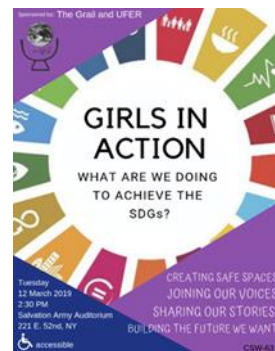
March/April 2019



In the end, due to visa denials, our group was minus 6 people. Two girls: **Ana Beatriz Rodrigues** from (Brasil) and **Valentine Wanjiru** (Kenya), a young woman, **Caroline Mutimbanyoka** (Zimbabwe) and **Edwig Kamatagi** (Uganda), both adults. The girl from Uganda got a visa, but in the end, couldn't come as her chaperone was denied! And the chaperone for Ana Beatriz did not attend. We continue to work on this situation. This year UN Women are also involved in addressing this injustice.

Our GIRLS IN ACTION panel was terrific. Panelists: **Magdalena Tesha**(Tanzania), **Kimy Chadreque** (Mozambique), **Areli Troyano**(Manhattan/USA), **Erica Ferreira** (Portugal), **Malikah Mitchell** (Cincinnati/USA) with moderators being **Gabriela Perez** (Florida/USA) and **Wintana Demoz** (Cincinnati/USA). The UN Club from the **Academy of Mt. St. Ursula** in the Bronx began by coming down the two aisles shouting GIRLS RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS. After speaking out the words which pointed to Social Protection, they defined in personal terms what it means to have decent housing, nutritious food, meaningful jobs, proper health care, and good education.

Asking what can we do in building the world we want for ourselves and future generations? One girl called out: Let's listen to the wisdom of the Grail. These girls have some answers for us.



**Sacred Activism Event**

Presenters: **Ana Barata** opened the session with a reflection on Sophia and keeping 'our fire' burning. **Camila Castillo** closed our time together by sharing a ritual of calling on the four directions. Sharing their experiences: **Maria Platteeuw** from The Netherlands addressed the question: What is an example in your own community work where you experience shared power? **Elsa Nogueira** from Portugal followed with: What SDG do

you feel most calls you into action for your community and why? And finally **Gabriela Perez** from the USA: How does your community work integrate spirituality and shared power to address the SDG's? **Lisa Petro** and **Abida Jamal** served as moderators. Using a method of panelists asking a question to the audience, there was an appreciative response and participation by the audience. Read our CSW-62 Report for a fuller sharing.

**A GLIMPSE OF CSW FROM PARTICIPANTS.....** we asked for a couple of sentences addressing: 1) a highlight of CSW for you, and, 2) what new ‘learning’ did you gain. These are a few excerpts:

**Venosa Mshana from Tanzania**, a teacher at St. Teresa of Avila Girls Secondary School: I learned different cultures from my country especially those cultures that still undermine women in their lives

**Gleds Rafael from Beira, Mozambique**: chaperone: my highlight was when Sharon asked me to read Mbelu’s speech. It was not easy to speak to delegates from all nations and NGOs.

**Magdalena, Tanzania**, student at St. Teresa of Avila GSS. I learned to be courageous and stand in front of people to express myself Also being helpful and caring to others.

**Kimy, Mozambique**: youth: I learned how important to respect the opinions of others.

**Elsa, Portugal**: chaperone: being in community(Bronx Grail) and facilitating the sessions with the youth(Teen Orientation).

**Gabriela, USA** (Florida) youth: The highlight of CSW was being with all the girls. I felt genuinely happy and loved within a family when we were all together.

**Èrica, Portugal**:– **Ilha da Madeira**

Youth: Nesta semana eu aprendi a não ter medo ou dar a minha opinião e falar tudo o que penso, a fazer com que a minha voz seja ouvida por mais que concordem ou não com o que diga.

This week I learned not to be afraid or give my opinion and speak everything I think, to make my voice heard even if they agree or disagree with what I say.

**Maria, The Netherlands**: adult participant: the getting together and sisterhood throughout the whole CSW through the connections made by the Grail.

**Camila, Mexico**: young woman: one highlight is creating community in the Grail House and the events of the Grail. Our work here and in our country matters however small it is.

**Jessica Ebert, Cincinnati, USA**: chaperone: Living at the Grail House was my highlight--I loved being around women of many ages and learning who they are and learning about their lives and experiences. I came away from the week feeling so renewed, and so committed to continuing to work for women and girls for the rest of my life.

**Mbelu Kalala** prepared a statement which was delivered for the International Grail at the UN Interactive Dialogue for African American Women and Girls, a High Level Assembly of Delegates held on the second week of CSW 63. Mbelu introduced herself as a Congolese-American woman and spoke of the importance of opportunity and space to exercise one’s skills for the African-American woman and girl. Following is an excerpt of her statement.

“Through my experiences, I was able to learn from many women and girls of varying social and economic backgrounds. And my exposure to and dialogue with them has truly shaped my thinking and my involvement in the community. In fact, it has changed my life. I would not be who I am today without these communities and the people who are part of them. But many girls of African descent do not have access to such programs and communities. Women and girls of African descent are subject to intersectional discrimination and need to be equipped with the tools to learn about and combat issues prevalent within their community and also create opportunity and safe space for them.”

(Due to a glitch in the UN system, Mbelu was not able to enter the conference room so **Gleds Rafael** read the statement for her.)

**18th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on  
Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), 22 April – 3 May**



**The theme: Traditional Knowledge:  
Generation, Transmission and  
Protection**

The Grail and UFER are co-sponsoring with the NGO Committee on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: **Our Elders Have Taught Us: Translating Tradition and Culture into a Sustainable Economy for Future Generations**. Grail panelists: **Blanca Veronica Guajan Sanchez**, Indigenous from Ecuador whose people have developed Ecotourism on the land which they inhabit, **Shirlei Aparecida Almeida da Silva**, an activist in ‘women and human rights’ in Brazil, and **Anna-Maria Ahlén**, educator and journalist living and working in the Swedish side of Sápmi, the cultural region of the Sami people. **Maya Gallardo** from Mexico and **Abida Jamal** from Mozambique will serve as moderators.

- Veronica will speak about challenges that indigenous people face when they want to study in public or private institutions. What happens with their traditional knowledge? What happens to the indigenous women when they enter college and when they are in a new community?
- Shirlei will speak about her work based on the ‘Pedagogy of Cooperation’ and the creation of participative methodologies in both urban and rural communities, and, original peoples of Brazil.
- Anna-Maria will focus on the possibilities and challenges for living in and strengthening a Sami community within the Swedish society.

Indigenous Women Sharing Traditional Practices. The event will address indigenous women’s participation in and obstacles to spiritual, social, cultural, economic, and political life, specifically in the context of education and labour with attention to Indigenous Peoples’ languages, climate change issues, and governmental/administrative issues impacting education and labour.

**COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT 52<sup>nd</sup> SESSION** from Abida Jamal

The CPD was held at UN Headquarters, New York, 1 to 5 April 2019. The theme: *Review and Appraisal of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and its contribution to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

The Grail was present at the event through **Mary Kay Louchart**, **Sharon Joslyn** and **Abida Jamal**. Among the several events attended was one on Faith-based approaches to sexual and reproductive health from a human rights' perspective organized by UNFPA, Norway, ACT Alliance, Faith to Action, Jewish Theological Seminary, and the World Council of Churches. **Clara Helgesson** from Sweden, a Grail CSW-58, 2015 participant was part of the task force on organizing the event. (Her mother is a Grail member.) This panel discussion composed by a diverse faith-based community looked at the actions made by faith-inspired rights-actors in the areas of gender equality and sexual and reproductive health rights. All were very vocal about how religious leaders and faith-based organizations can have great influence over matters to do with delivery of health and education services, with legislators and advocates on the local, national and the global scene. This interactive discussion brought together diverse perspectives and experience of advocates for gender equality and SRHR. But also, the panelists looked at the challenges faced in implementing programme action on the issues – church language on SRHR; toxic masculinity; engagement of religious leaders in understanding the social reality; medical facts from reliable sources; sexual education in churches. However, it was well concluded by **Azza Karam**, the moderator of the panel discussion, that there is power in religious leaders that can influence and assure that human rights are taken into account. It is especially needed for women and girls that access to sexual and reproductive health rights is priority (statistics show that 40% of faith-based organizations provide health service in Tanzania.)

We are pictured here with Clara and with Azza Karam who will be present with Grail members at the IC meeting, July, Kisekibaha through a video conference. I look forward to her presence with us. (Abida took the photo.)

*Some inspirational reminders from the meeting: Human rights are God-given... Not in our name should people die in child birth because they were denied their rights.... It is the population that counts, not counting population... Faithful voices need to speak with power, dignity, grace and love.*



### **ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL YOUR FORUM 2019** from Abida Jamal

The ECOSOC Youth Forum was held at UN Headquarters(New York) 8 to 9 April under the theme “Empowered, Included and Equal”. This event provides a platform for young leaders from around the world to engage in a dialogue among themselves and with United Nations Member States. This year’s Forum aimed to mobilize support for young people across the globe.

The Grail was present at the event through **Abida** who was part of the task force preparing the event. She attended some plenary sessions, interactive thematic and regional discussion sessions. In all these sessions there was an opportunity for a rich exchange of views and ideas on taking action to implement the 2030 Agenda focussing on the contribution of young people. The five SDGs were the focus of analysis that will be under review in the High-level Political Forum in July 2019 and also important for the Climate Action Summit and SDG Summit in September 2019 during the UN General Assembly. **SDG4** - Quality education, **SDG8** – Decent work, **SDG10** – Reduce Inequalities, **SDG 13** – Climate Action and **SDG 16** – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions . Some signs of encouragement were so evident among the UN leaders and Member States.

Also, it was affirmed that the contribution of young people is so crucial for the success of Agenda 2030.



They are the largest generation, most educated, most globally minded in history. The young people, for their part, demand the urgent need to address the challenges of our time such as access to quality education, unemployment, inequalities, social exclusion and climate change.

At the Climate Session it was clearly visible that a rise in youth engagement with the recent Global Climate Strike where 1.6 million young people in 125 countries took to the streets, demanding world leaders to take climate action now. Young people are a vast source of innovation, ideas and solutions. They are pushing strongly for the changes we need in the technology arena, in climate action. Youth advocates present shared their involvement in climate action, what young people are doing about climate change such as organizing workshops and debates at elementary and high schools; rehabilitation of natural water reserves; intergenerational dialogue on passage of knowledge; preservation of indigenous knowledge; raising awareness, capacity building in school and government to name a few. However, also a recommendation to the governments and world leaders was raised: more action, prioritize people, invest in education; youth engagement in decision-making of climate policy, have climate change strategy in place; access to climate finance, create bank of investment for climate change; give youth organizations opportunity, Green new deal; climate change action has to go with economic; the work of young scientist need to be share and put more young people in charge.