

United Nations

Economic and Social Council

Commission on the Status of Women CSW 59 – 2015



**The Rev Carol L. Grant
United Nations Convenor
Presbyterian Women Aotearoa NZ**



59th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW59) - United Nations, New York - 09 - 20 March 2015

The fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place at United Nations Headquarters in New York. Representatives of Member States, UN entities, and ECOSOC-accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all regions of the world attended the session.

This year Presbyterian Women of Aotearoa New Zealand had a full delegation for the first time - Carol Grant plus five self funded adults and six self funded young women, all from the South Island. Members of the delegation attended United Nations, UN Women and UN Ecumenical events, networked, and made international connections and decisions that will affect NZ Government and global policies and also their interactions here in NZ.

Members of the Delegation at the New Zealand Mission in New York



Members

We were asked to limit numbers below our entitlement of twenty due to the large number of women wishing to come for the Beijing+20 celebrations.

Carol L Grant, PWANZ UN Convenor, Lyn Heine, Health Professional and Lay minister - Greymouth Uniting Parish, Diane Brockbank, Health Professional and Team leader - Hokitika Uniting Parish, Annette Hannah, psychologist, AnneMarie Tangney, GP, medical educator, clinical editor, and member of DSAC (Doctors for Sexual Abuse Care), Elizabeth Wilson, former principal of Columba College, and Columba College senior students: Amira Alloo, Claire Anglin, Sarah Dippie, Caroline Moratti, Annabelle Ritchie, Elizabeth Yarnall

All documentation for each member of the delegation was fully completed. Details required are extensive and are required by United Nations security.

Each member of the delegation fulfilled these agreed criteria on this occasion.

- 1 Active Presbyterian involvement.
- 2 Knowledge of and experience of empowerment of women and girls, gender equity, etc, UN CSW 59
- 3 The ability to make a difference to our church and our work in the community on their return
- 4 The ability to use the experience to promote the aims of CSW 59 and to further the work of the United Nations.
- 5 The ability to be completely self funded and responsible for themselves whilst overseas. Minors must have the appropriate parental and school approvals and be accompanied at all times by an adult with a UN pass. Presbyterian Women of Aotearoa NZ is the umbrella organisation only.
- 6 For selection each person must write a letter of application outlining their reasons for wanting to be selected, their personal background, and future contributions and report back after a time for reflection.
- 7 That their aspirations must agree with the stated aims, past and present, of Presbyterian Women of Aotearoa NZ

Further criteria may be added or changes made to these criteria in the future depending on the circumstances and the applications at the time.

Individual comments are attached at the conclusion of this report.

Themes of the Commission on the Status of Women CSW59

The main focus of the session at the United Nations were on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including current challenges that affect its implementation and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Commission undertook 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. The session addressed opportunities for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women in the post-2015 development agenda.

Gender Equality

In spite of a global effort to assure the respect of human rights and the strengthening of women role within our societies, not one country in the world has achieved gender equity.

Women are still discriminated against and their potential remains largely unexploited. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment goals not only respond to the universal duty of respecting human rights, but represent major tools for fighting extreme poverty and realising political, economic and social development for all.

Twenty years after the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, significant levels of inequality between women and men persist. Critical areas of insufficient progress include access to decent work, closing the gender pay gap, rebalancing of the care workload, ending violence against women, reducing maternal mortality, realising sexual and reproductive health rights, and participation in decision making at all levels. .

This year at the Commission there was a high level of frustration at the slow progress being made, and the urgent need for transformation of structures, institutions, and norms - economic, social, and political - that are holding back progress on gender equality. It is fine to have policies but to be effective these must be backed by implementation and action.

The twelve strong delegation of women and girls from the South Island took every opportunity to participate in the events and debates at the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women. It was challenging for many, and heaps of work for all those attending, but ultimately enlivening for everyone who attended this year.

Comments

Personal highlights were:

1 UN International Women's Day and the march by nearly 9,000 women and girls on Times Square, the celebrations marking twenty years since Beijing, and meeting women who were present at that event during CSW59:

2 More involvement in advocacy work, networking across so many global organisations and building on the many relationships established in 2014.

3 It was a pleasure to be a member of the United Nations Ecumenical Women's network once again and to participate as a member of other associated advocacy teams. Advocacy work is constant during the Commission and ongoing on returning to New Zealand. PWANZ has close links to other NZ Women's organizations such as the Ministry for Women, National Council for Women, Pacific Women's Watch, Federation of Graduate Women and UN Women NZ, and contact with overseas women's networks.

4 Observing the growing awareness of the PW delegation members at the UN – both adults and girls – and the impact meeting other women and girls from every corner of the planet had on them. It was good, as United Nations Convenor, to be able to share UN experiences with others as they happened and to reflect with them on returning home. The opportunities were vast and most delegation members took every opportunity to be involved.

5 Taking a delegation to the UN in March was very time consuming, and complex. Advantages and disadvantages, and things to beware of for future delegation leaders have been noted. The United Nations and New York environment is both challenging and distracting. Careful selection of participants is vital. Face to face interviews would be advantageous to ascertain suitability, personal agendas, understanding and motivation.

A team of UN PWANZ experienced people who have also a background in the field of women's rights and justice issues; experience in advocacy work and with a wide knowledge of international affairs has been formed to assist me with the selection of the next delegation.

It is my hope that future UN Convenors, might come from this group of mature younger women who have UN experience, the ability to use and communicate through contemporary technology and the capability to build on the personal connections already made at the UN and with UN Ecumenical Women. The work is time consuming, and involves unfunded travel. It needs genuine long-term commitment, time, and a passion for international gender justice.

6 The improved NGO interaction with Government officials, the Ministry for Women, including the support of the Minister for Women, the Hon Louise Upston, who also assisted NGO's this year, was appreciated. The NZ Mission once again hosted the NZ members to a breakfast where we met officials stationed in New York. It was interesting to learn more of the role and opportunities to make a difference that New Zealand has on the Security Council. Affirmative action is preferable to rhetoric.

I note with concern the shrinkage of staffing levels and funding affecting the capacity of Ministry for Women to promote, research and progress women's empowerment and gender equality here in New Zealand.
I commend the 2015 White Paper researched by National Council of Women.

7 It was a privilege to be invited by the NZ Government, as one of only two NZ NGO's, to attend the Commonwealth Secretariat Meeting on Gender (Consultation of Commonwealth National Women's Machineries) where progress for each commonwealth country was discussed and planning made for future progress on gender issues. The Commonwealth is made up of 53 countries around the world spread over every continent and ocean. Its 2 billion people, who account for nearly 30% of the world's population, are found in Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Americas, Europe and the Pacific. They are of many religions, races, languages and cultures. This was a crucial discussion as the next stages are planned.

8 The range of UN presentations, parallel events, and debates was hectic this year with so many coming from around the world. I took the opportunity to attend events that would relate to the wider work of Presbyterian Women as well as those, which might inform our own advocacy work on behalf of women and girls here in New Zealand and in the South Pacific.

This background has enabled me to speak with knowledge and confidence in different church and community forums on issues of gender justice and equality and to promote the empowerment of women.

Follow up

Since returning members of the delegation have interacted with church and community groups. I was delighted with the immediate presentations by the two Year 12 girls in various forums. Their comments have had a profound affect on those adults present. They have since been selected as UNICEF Ambassadors. The Year 13 girls have also been active and I have added the details of one project to this report.

Reports from delegation members are attached and the ongoing work outlined in these will be included in PWANZ's next Quadrennial Report to the United Nations. Presbyterian Women's last Quadrennial Report to the UN which was due by June 2014 was accepted in July this year. The next is due in 2017.

Articles on the UN work have appeared in Touchstone (attached), Bush Telegraph, Church and Parish magazines and on online blogs. Reporting nationally has proved problematic. The UN Commission on the Status of Women CSW 59 is not a conference, and background research and careful reporting is essential if the enormity of this two-week global, interactive Governmental and Non Governmental event is to be portrayed accurately.

A list of useful UN websites is available for PWANZ members and others interested, as are the speeches on International Women's Day at the United Nations and documents involving the ongoing work involved. These cover a vast array of subjects. I am happy to provide information or assistance to anyone interested in this international work, or to connect people interested into networks such as work on ending violence, and human trafficking,

The workshops I attended were fascinating as well as challenging. I was also fortunate to have the opportunity to attend the Opening Session of the Commission at the UN to hear Helen Clark, Ban Ki Moon, and other speakers promoting empowerment of women.

I felt proud to be a New Zealander when Sovereign CEO Symon Brewis-Weston has become one of only five CEOs around the world to be recognised in 2015 by the United Nations (UN) for his progressive approach to workplace diversity and community engagement. Brewis-Weston, who is only the second New Zealand CEO ever chosen for the honour, received the 2015 [Women's Empowerment Principles](#) (WEP) CEO Leadership Award at the UN headquarters in New York City on March 10, where Hilary Clinton provided the keynote address.

Since returning from CSW59 I have taken every opportunity to interact globally, and to contribute to international discussions. I accept every invitation to speak at local and regional gatherings of PWANZ, to church and community groups and in forums where people are promoting gender equality, gender justice, the empowerment of women, men's networks who support women or work in the prevention of violence, those who seek protection of the environment, sustainable development, the work of reconciliation or peace making. Community groups are vitally interested and excited about the empowerment of women and girls, gender justice and equality issues and invitations to speak are ongoing.

The PWANZ delegation met with the Minister, the Hon Louise Upston, and her officials from the Ministry for Women in Dunedin to continue the discussion started in New York. This is the first time this has happened. There are two International Caucus meetings held in Wellington at the Ministry each year – one prior to the Commission and one following. I have attended each of these meetings on behalf of Presbyterian Women of Aotearoa NZ

International Women's Day March to Fifth Avenue



Thanks

I would like to thank the members of Presbyterian Women of Aotearoa New Zealand groups, both small and large who have invited me to speak at their meetings, and all the women of our church who not only encourage our participation as an organisation at the United Nations but also financially support this work with stunning generosity. It is a mission project in which the whole church should share and support financially.

I appreciate the active support from the Dunedin Knox Presbyterian Church Parish Council and congregation, the Southern Presbytery, and other community organisations such as the Federation of Graduate Women, Zonta, National Council for Women, Pacific Women's Watch and the Council for World Mission and the Mayor of Dunedin City, Mr. Dave Cull who responded positively to my letter that Dunedin consider becoming the first CEDAW City in New Zealand. These discussions are ongoing at present.

For UN Convenors the work does not cease at the end of the Commission but continues during the year in various overseas forums and nationally in New Zealand.

For further information on the work of PWANZ at the United Nations, please contact the UN Convenor, The Rev Carol Grant.

Phone: 03 425 8865 or email: nandcg@clear.net.nz



Council for World Mission Gender Justice Workshop

From 1st – 5th June, I was privileged to attend the Council for World Mission consultation for its Pacific member churches on gender justice in Nadi, Fiji. . Forty people including local church leaders, women's community representatives and youth, participated. There were four observers from the Netherlands, Taiwan, Jamaica and India

We discussed biblical texts, gender justice issues, culture, women's ordination and violence against women and girls, recognizing that boys and babies also witness and suffer violence. The workshop was contextual to the Pacific region and churches were challenged to say “No” to violence against women in all its forms. The consultation also explored issues of equality, gender balance and the empowerment of women and girls, both in the local church and society. We acknowledged that if conversations on gender justice are to progress in the region, the issue of theological education at all levels and the formational training of ministers requires review



Attendees from the Pacific region at Nadi, Fiji

We called on churches to understand and to engage in building awareness at all levels on the extent of violence by those with authority, members of families and by strangers. There was also a call for attitudinal change regarding violence against women and children at home, in churches and in society. Additionally, there was a call for the need to affirm gender equality, equal opportunity for ordained ministry, and women's rights to their own body, health and their reproductive rights.

Finally, it was acknowledged that the movement on the issue of gender justice required networking among Pacific churches and other ecumenical bodies. It was the expressed hope that all CWM member churches in the region would get to the place where the gifts and talents of women are affirmed in and through the office of ordination.

The PCANZ could do much to support this call by encouraging the ministry of Pacific Island women, ensuring they can contribute fully at all levels in every parish and ministry position in New Zealand, and by having deliberate policies in place that promote gender justice, equality and empowerment of women leaders as well as sound theological education when training ministers and leaders in the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The week was thought provoking and often challenging
The call for immediate change was urgent.

For the full report, speaker's notes, and workshop material on gender violence from the CWM Forum, please contact Carol Grant

Another report from UN Women is also available which outlines the statistics and prevalence of violence in the Pacific area.

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United Nations Peace Gun

Individual Reports following CSW59 from individual members of the 2015 Delegation.

Sarah Dippie – Year 13 – Columba College.

At the 59th session of the commission on the Status of women I learnt so much more than I ever anticipated. It was easily the best experience of my relatively short life. Not only was the commission alone incredible but so were our surroundings and the group we were travelling with.

The entire conference was an indescribable experience; over a month later it is difficult to put it into words. A personal highlight for me was consultation day on international women's day and the march to time square. The day was an excellent introduction to the conference with the amazing Ruchira Gupta speaking about her experiences. All of the workshops were remarkable, meeting the most strong, incredible everyday women some younger than me who have been to hell and back in their short life times yet have the strength to speak up, tell their story and still smile. Being in a room and personally hearing about these women's hardships was very moving and personally made me feel responsible for doing my part to combat gender inequality. The top three workshops that really impacted me were 'Women and racism', 'Invest in girls transform the world' and 'Seeking justice women of African decent put the U.S. on trial for sexual assault crimes committed against them'. These workshops were a mix of hugely motivating and relatable as a young women and horrifically confronting. Some workshops I was so moved I would be crying during and shaking and speechless afterward. At times I feel so guilty for my life and so weak that these incredible women are withstanding more than i am sure I will ever have to go through.

These events also helped me to form a perspective around gender injustices not only globally but also here in New Zealand. Before I left I was proud to come to from New Zealand a country that could boast how 'liberal' we are. I've since learnt this is not the case. Although the situation surrounding gender discrimination is significantly less severe as other countries, we still are far from perfect. The example that comes to mind is the way prostitution is viewed in New Zealand. It is legalised with the intention of sex work becoming a legitimate form of employment so that these women / men may entitled to protection and benefits that come from legally being in the work force. Many places globally consider prostitution a form of slavery and New Zealand legalising and legitimating this medieval and hugely embarrassing on the world stage.

The UN environment was an excellent place of learning. As young girls at the New York United Nations headquarters we felt extremely important, privileged and very eager to learn. Perhaps in another environment we wouldn't have been so 'switched on'. The seriousness and large scale of the united nation reflected the weight and influence of the conference.

Networking became something important now that we are back home in the various activities that we plan to do with out knowledge.

Having business cards was an effective easy way to share our personal contacts and I gathered a collection of people who I will be able to contact and hopefully work with. The opportunities to meet these people and make the international collections never would have been possible had we not physically been there talking in person with these likeminded people.

With the knowledge that I have now gained I feel ready and passionate about making a positive change back here in New Zealand, a country in the corner of the world where limitations caused by gender are so often misunderstood and overlooked by our communities. It is a little daunting being just one 17 year old girl wanting to take on and change the world. That is the thing about travelling with all members of kiwi delegations – we are all here to work together and help each other whilst advocating for this change. I think in a way that our youth can be used as an advantage when working to improve the lives of women here in New Zealand. For some unknown reason people seem to be attracted to young people who are keen to make a difference and really help and get behind us. Since we have been back I personally have felt a huge amount of support for the work that I have done and plan to do in promoting equality.

In the short amount of time that we have been back in New Zealand we have done a fair amount of work (and more to be done of course!) I see the promoting of gender equality and education / conversation around it as a vital step. This year I was a stage challenge leader, a regional competition where schools put together a performance with a message. We chose ours to be feminism, exploring issues around over sexualising women, the pay gap and expectations around housewives.

Just a few days ago, on Monday I spoke at the National Young Leaders Day, with an audience of 1300 intermediate students (year 6,7,8). I was approached and asked to speak after one of the organisers saw the article in the Otago Daily Times about us attending CSW59. I used the opportunity to share my views on gender equality and introduce this concept to a large number of young people.

I am involved with the Young Enterprise scheme where high school students set up a temporary business as apart of our commerce studies. I saw this as a chance to get out in the community and promote something that really matters. We are producing t-shirts that say 'I believe that gender should not limit my chances at life. A strong person is not silent; speak up for those who can't'. This is an exciting project and we are trying to go as 'big as possible' with it hopefully surpassing just our local community into national territory and possibly even international if the opportunity arises. With this we are teaming up with EGG (educate girls globally) and will be donating a proportion of the money made to their organisation.

These are some of the larger scale things I have been involved with since I have been back as well as speaking to various groups. There is a whole lot more work to be done but we are still motivated and excited to get amongst and spread the word. CSW59 really did change my life and I believe it altered me as a person.

It triggered my passion for human rights and has confirmed my plans for next year of studying law and a PPE (politics, philosophy and economics) with the dream of one day becoming a human rights lawyer and really helping the amazing people around the world in adversity.

My Experience at CSW 59 - Amlra Alloo – Year 13 - Columba College

I was so privileged to attend the CSW 59 in New York this year. Human rights, particularly Gender Inequality has been an interest of mine for a long time and to be educated at the United Nations was by the most amazing experience I as a 17 year old could be a part of.

It is extremely hard to pin point something as being a highlight during my time in New York as everyday opened my mind and blew me away. Something I really appreciated from the CSW 59 was the women who shared their own experience in order to educate those around them. I respected their bravery in sharing some heart breaking stories. It is really inspiring to see women overcome such incomprehensible pasts and to turn it into a positive view and look for a solution.

These stories really made me appreciate and be grateful for the upbringing I had and will continue to have living in New Zealand. It made me consider gender inequality in a bigger scale where just because somebody is a woman people believed they could take advantage, use and abuse them.

I got to meet women amazing women with a passion for feminism. The approachability these women had was really great, being able to interact, share and exchange contacts with people was really special. Being so young at this amazing conference people really appreciated us and thought it was great young women were getting behind this issue and I enjoyed being a part of that.

The fact that the CSW 59 covered so many different aspects of Gender Equality had me drawn towards certain talks and I was able to attend things I was passionate about. It allows everyone to pick and choose what they want to learn about, although it got difficult when you wanted to see perhaps three all at the same time! I returned back to New Zealand with such a wide range of knowledge from aspects such as Racism, Human Trafficking, Children and Prostitution.

Something that stood out for me was the way people spoke about New Zealand and our prostitution laws. There was a negative way in which people talk about prostitution in New Zealand. This made me really think about the national issues we have here. It brought up questions about how perhaps New Zealand isn't as gender equal as we think and there is still a lot of work to be done. It made me put New Zealand in perspective with countries around the world and their approach to prostitution. The Nordic Model seems to be one New Zealand should be considering and this is something I would like to look more into.

Being at the United Nations really opened my eyes to the issues I had never considered before. It allowed me to get a perspective from all over the world and be able to make links and discover gaps where gender inequality needs to be looked at. The people you are surrounded by at the United Nations are all really intelligent, passionate people and it is really refreshing to be around people who have such good ideas in becoming a gender equal society.

While being back in New Zealand feminism has really been a key part of my education at school. In English we are studying the Handmaids Tale novel by Margaret Atwood. The key theme being feminism. Having been at the United Nations makes me a lot more engrossed in the subject as I am far more educated on the topic than I was before. I am able to make some points in discussion from a global perspective that the students I am surrounded by at school are uneducated on. I was a Stage Challenge leader this year and we decided to do our theme on Feminism based in a 1920's context. It just goes to show how much being at the CSW 59 has really impacted my life since on return. I now view certain things in a different way and am able to express my views while being well educated on the topic of Feminism.

My reflections on CSW59 by Dr AnneMarie Tangney

My first experience of attending The UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) earlier this year made me feel like I was in a busy 'melting pot' of thousands of women from all corners of the globe. CSW attracts a vast number of NGO members and representatives from a large number of countries all who gather to discuss critical issues affecting women's empowerment and gender equality within the countries they live or work. It was both an honour and privilege to attend CSW59 as a member of the PWANZ delegation.

Initially it took a day or two to find my way around the many rooms of the United Nations and surrounding buildings within which were held events and side-events (which were talks/discussion groups). However once I was orientated I was then confident in finding my way around the well set-up programme of events and side-events that ran over the 2 weeks and covered a huge array of topics all of which in some way affected women or girls. The talks that I attended were mainly those to do with: sex trafficking, prostitution, child marriage, female genital mutilation, access to education for girls, land ownership rights for women and the representation of women by the media.

The highlights that I personally experienced whilst at CSW 59 were:

- ≡ Meeting vibrant and passionate women fighting for causes that adversely affected countless of women – it highlighted the importance of advocacy i.e. “giving a voice to the voiceless”. Ruchira Gupta was a particularly remarkable woman who is a journalist from India who has been making investigative documentaries which reveal the horrors of sex trafficking and prostitution within India (e.g. ‘The selling of Innocents’).

- ≡ Ruchira was truly inspiring to listen to and made me feel that she was the perfect example of how one woman can positively change the lives of many.
- ≡ Meeting women from other Presbyterian churches around the world at the Ecumenical dinner– it was wonderful feeling part of God's worldwide family.
- ≡ Meeting and networking with women from the MWIA (medical women international alliance) who adopted me instantly and who I'll be working with in the future. The MWIA are hoping to develop and publish a manual that can be used by doctors worldwide. They have asked for my help in writing a chapter of this manual on sexual assault/ sexual abuse. The reason for this particular subject is that the MWIA has been asking doctors around the world what they thought would help them better deal with or treat women patients. The doctors' response was they felt that they had very little knowledge on what they should do when a woman or girl patient disclosed that they have been sexually assaulted or abused. I hope to be able to write such guidance through my experience that I have gained in NZ as a medical forensic examiner of people who allege sexual assault/abuse.
- ≡ Meeting Louise Upston – NZ's minister for women. She seemed genuinely interested in our delegation and what we were finding challenging or interesting.

Since returning home from CSW I have been plunged back into work and routine. However fortunately there has been the opportunity to relive some of the highlights of my experience through some speaking opportunities, writing opportunities and valuable conversations with friends and colleagues:

- ≡ Speaking events: I had the chance to speak at a meeting of the Dunedin Central Zonta group and was also part of a small group (including Carol Grant) invited to talk to the congregation at Knox Church, Dunedin. Both audiences seemed genuinely interested in CSW and I was approached after both speaking events by people keen to know more.
- ≡ Writing opportunities: I have been asked to write about my time at CSW in the DSAC quarterly newsletter. DSAC is a national organisation of health professionals that work in the field of sexual abuse/assault. I am also asking NZ Doctor (a magazine distributed to GPs in NZ) if they would like me to write an article for publication.
- ≡ Conversations with friends and colleague: Since returning from CSW I have spoken on numerous occasions on NZ's current prostitution laws - I was challenged by hearing about another model of prostitution (the Nordic model that has been adopted by Sweden and two other countries) that I feel is worthy of discussion in NZ. It differs from our current legalisation in that it criminalises the purchase of sex. It makes me wonder if this might send out better messages to our society and its

young men that a woman's body is not an item that you can purchase as you would a hamburger or a pint of beer!

In summary CSW59 was a valuable experience for any woman to attend, so I feel extremely grateful that this opportunity was afforded to me. I would like to sincerely thank PWANZ to allow me to be part of the delegation – it was a life changing event.

PERSONAL HIGHLIGHTS OF CSW59 - Claire Anglin - Year 13

Looking back on the two weeks I spent at CSW it is hard to find just a few highlights that can capture the amazing time I had there and the valuable experiences I gained.

So that I will be able to name a few I have listed them below:

- ≡ **Consultation Day** - As our first official day at CSW it was really our first taste of what we would be experiencing over the next two weeks. With inspirational women speaking, singing and discussing issues that effected their countries and homes, it was the first time I believe I had ever bothered to think in a wider sense about how gender inequality has really effected woman across the globe. I enjoyed sitting around women and young girls who shared the same passions as I do and see how they all embraced one another. A moment that I will never forget is leaving the Apollo Theatre and traveling on the subway with our signs to Time Square for the march, along the way we were greeted, hugged and welcomed by other members of CSW who joined our delegation to the march. This experience definitely opened my eyes to the unification of women everywhere. While I have only mentioned it in this highlight, as it was my first taste of it I felt encouraged and supported by all the women I met at the conference. It opened my eyes to how important support for every women and girl is no matter where they are from because we are all in this fight for equality together.
- ≡ **Let Girls Lead** - One of the first sessions I attended was led by a non-profit organisation called Let Girls Lead. It focuses on empowering young girls and changing systems so that girls can go to school, stay healthy and escape poverty. As an American organisation one of its main goals was to network with other countries and girls who wanted to make a difference for those who lived in unstable or poor countries. At the end of their talk which focused on how we can better help these girls in need I spoke with the founder of the organisation who encouraged me to start a club at my school or in my community. She showed me that one person with one idea could make a huge change.
- ≡ **New Zealand Delegation Meeting/Breakfast** - I really enjoyed meeting with the other members of the New Zealand delegation and of course Louise Upston. Getting to know the other organisations that shared similar interests in gender equality and the like in New Zealand was very comforting and made me feel proud to be a Kiwi!

≡ Networking with these women not only inspired me but also gave me so many ideas for job and careers I now want to pursue! What I took away from both meetings with the New Zealand delegation is networking with other organisations and people can make all the difference and is a great place to start when trying to raise awareness and gain support.

* **Intergenerational Dialogue** - My first real session in the United Nations building was an intergenerational dialogue that discussed the advances and challenges of gender equality over the past 20 years. Many women from all over the world and of different ages spoke about issues within gender equality that they felt needed to be heard about. While a little overwhelming at first I thoroughly enjoyed getting to hear the perspectives of not only different ethnicities but also age groups. Until this point it didn't really hit me that different aged women wanted different freedoms. This is an idea that I will definitely be explaining to those back home where in the past I have felt younger generations voices have not been taken seriously or sometimes even heard.

≡ **Conference at the Canadian Mission/Working Group on Girls** - While at CSW, Carol Grant gave me the opportunity to attend a workshop and conference at the Canadian Mission where young leaders from all over the world were meeting to discuss how we as young leaders could better tackle the issues that are effecting girls everywhere. At this workshop I got to meet and network with the team from Working Group on Girls who ran the event. The conference focused on not telling us what we could do but how we thought we could make a change and then helping us to put this change into motion. My awareness of how a young person and in particular a young girl could make a difference was definitely widened! I want to mention a moment in this conference that forever changed my way of thinking: while discussing the issue of child marriage and rape a young girl by the name of Irene who was no older than 17 stood to speak. She began to list some facts about how many girls die during child marriages and began to cry. Immediately putting out my hand to comfort her another member of the event whispered to me that she had been a victim of child marriage, abuse and rape. In that moment while I comforted Irene I thought back to all the statistics I had EVER heard and fully realised that every number, every statistic stands for a person. I can't fully express how moving that moment with Irene was. I now know that I can't just focus on raising awareness for the victims of crimes but the survivors as well as for the rest of their lives they must live with the pain inflicted on them.

On our return to Dunedin the five other girls and I began to discuss our plans for the future and how we will be spreading the awareness of the issues we learned about in New York. We have scheduled a school wide assembly, which will be happening in the upcoming week in which we will discuss our experiences and how we want our school to get involved in making the world a better place for women everywhere. Still in the works is the founding of a

new club at our school that we hope the year 12's of our delegation will dutifully carry on after the year 13's departure at the end of the year. This club will be a place where girls from year 7 to year 13 can come and discuss international or local issues they feel we should be addressing. I am in contact with some young leaders from the America NGO 'Working Group on Girls' who have shown interest in helping us start our new club and expanding it to other schools in New Zealand.

We are also very interested in involving other local Dunedin schools in this plan and have begun to express interest to these other schools leaders. In my wider community I have enjoyed speaking informally to my neighbours, family friends, rest home residents and youth group about my trip to CSW and spreading the word of the movement your wonderful organisation is committing itself to.

I thoroughly enjoyed my time at CSW59 and I know it will always stand as a most memorable journey. Thank you so much for the opportunity of a lifetime. I hope that we have paved the way for another lucky group of young New Zealand girls next year who I am sure will come back like I did: confident

Report from Elizabeth Wilson, former principal, Columba College

One of the highlights of CSW59 for me was to see the number of young women presenting workshops and seminars, and also attending CSW. Several of the workshops were led by NGOs, and I was very impressed by the mutual co-operation and understanding evident among the presenters on the panels - the residents of the countries where the NGOs were active and non-resident workers for the NGO.

Equal partnerships are critical to an NGO's success with listening first to the country's resident partners about priority needs and gaining local knowledge essential before undertaking action. The many young women who are working in NGOs and who presented at CSW59 are clearly doing this very effectively, and were most impressive.

CSW59 made a huge impact on the six Columba College students privileged to attend. They were not the only high school students there (notably a group from the States attended), and there were also many young women in their 20s and early 30s. This age group (senior high school to women in their early 30s) is critical for the continuing vibrancy and relevance of future CSW, and, most importantly, to advance the many positive ways in which women's empowerment and gender justice are being addressed globally, and also to create new and effective initiatives in the future. Having seen how inspired and enlightened our six students were by the people they met and the many workshops and seminars they attended, I hope that students of other Presbyterian girls' schools in New Zealand will have the same opportunity in the future. It would be excellent to see even more senior high school students from around the world at future CSW - the networks they would form alone would be powerful agents for change.

Workshops I attended that made an indelible impression included: Slavery (it is estimated there are 32 million slaves globally - mainly women and children), sex trafficking, prostitution (the Nordic model puts the focus on the sex buyers and criminalises them - serious food for thought for us here in New Zealand), gendercide (the statistics mentioned in India were highly disturbing), gender-based violence, safety problems for women and girls in refugee camps, the prevalence of unsafe abortions and forced early marriages in many countries, the impact of ISIS on women and girls (there are 25 counties with Jihadist groups and the number is growing) and sexual violence as a tool of war.

The moral stature and dignity of the presenters from Iraq, Somalia and Nigeria was truly impressive, as was the dedication and determination of the two policewomen from Canada and America who spoke about the scale of sex trafficking in their countries. There were so many unforgettable people and stories, but these are some people whom I still think about.

What messages did I come away with?

...Evidence-based advocacy (listening to people who know what is happening on the ground) is vital

...Effective programmes are mainly based in local communities

...Transformative change at grassroots level happens when women are there in sufficient numbers

...The economic empowerment of women is critical

...The importance of mentoring young women and the powerful role that mentors and role models play in consciousness-raising

...Involve and engage men as allies and to be champions of change as well

...The critical need for comprehensive post-rape care and long-term psycho-social care that is culturally sensitive

...The need for access to safe abortions in many countries

...Stricter enforcement of laws

AND (and a very big AND) equal access to education for girls

The empowerment of women is the empowerment of society! This was an overarching theme of CSW59.

Domestic violence and the abuse of children are two major issues to be addressed in our society, and perhaps at a future date there may be some courageous and determined people who will endeavour to implement the Nordic model of prostitution in our country. They will need a very strong research base to succeed, and would be helped by having some overseas experts to present here in New Zealand.

CSW provides the opportunity to network with individuals and groups around the world who are effecting positive change for women and girls. It is a hugely educational and consciousness-raising opportunity, and also deeply moving and humbling from our very privileged perspective. From the knowledge and insights gained and from the awareness of privilege should come compassion and understanding, and the will to be an agent of change and to commit to action.

It is heart warming and inspirational to think of the many people who attended CSW59 and who have returned home determined to be just that - agents of change committed to action for the empowerment of women and girls.

On behalf of the Columba College group I would like to thank Carol Grant and Presbyterian Women of Aotearoa New Zealand for the privilege of being able to attend CSW59.
Elizabeth Wilson

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 59)
New York, March 2015
The Presbyterian Women of Aotearoa New Zealand Delegation

Diane Brockbank

I have really appreciated this unique opportunity to be part of a delegation which in some way will make a difference, through relationships particularly in civil societies i.e. in churches, communities and families towards gender equality and justice for women and children. The delegation was lead by Rev. Carol Grant and the group included five professional people and six secondary school girls.

One of the highlights for me was the daily participation in the ecumenical church services. Each morning (0800 hrs) a group of us went along to the church centre. It was so enlightening listening to the different denominations in different languages. The cultural diversity was amazing but the scriptural messages and wonderful music was very similar throughout the different denominational services.

For me understanding that Ecumenical Women is an international coalition of church denominations and ecumenical organisation with status at the Economic and Social Council helped to put perspective around their purpose at the United Nations. They have an important role to seek, train and empower a network that advocates for gender equality and justice at the United Nation.

Being at the United Nations was empowering and the main reason for attending was to be part of reviewing the Beijing platform for Action plus 20 years. The twelve critical area of concern included the following: women and the environment, women in power and decision making, the girl child, women and the economy, women and poverty, violence against women, human rights of women, education and training of women, institutional mechanisms of the advancement of women, women and health, women and the media and women and armed conflict.

The purpose of the United Nations – freedom from want, freedom from fear, maintain international peace and security, support international cooperation to solve economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problem and promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Yet today in some parts of the world for example Syria, the people live in fear, have no social stability and the number of displaced people is the highest in history due to war and civil unrest.

I enjoyed meeting the Minister of Women for New Zealand Louise Upston, at the New Zealand Mission, New York. She spoke to us about her journey on how she got to where she wanted to be, a politician. She explained the issues she encountered with both family and completing her studies but with determination she achieved her goal of becoming a politician. Current New Zealand government has a gender imbalance and she encouraged those present to consider her career choice.

I was fortunate to be part of a group of women who discussed women's participation in the life of their churches. In my group were a Japanese woman, Jordanian women and women from Macedonian. The Japanese women explained the family in Japan was father and son, all three women had no input or chance of getting on the governing bodies in their churches. I realised the issue was about changing culture and language towards women and girls which lead me to develop the attached diagram. The diagram allows me to reflect on which part of the process I can have input or influence to help with change in my own community on any of the twelve Beijing issues.

Human Rights are Women's Rights (vice versa) Empowering Women Empowers Society

Diane Brockbank. A more informed women

A report by Caroline Moratti – Year 12 - Columba College

A highlight of my time at the 59th Commission on the Status was learning about New Zealand's role in feminism and women's rights in the world especially when concerned with the area of prostitution and our staggeringly backwards approach to such a controversial issue. There was such great in-depth looks at a variety of approaches such as the Nordic Model, the New Zealand Model, the German Model, and so on, all of which showed a side of life that due to my privilege and the lack of information in modern day media, I had no idea existed. CSW offered the opportunity to engage in a variety of stakeholders involved in the sex worker struggle, from NGO's campaigning for change, former sex workers and government officials to help me make an informed decision about my feelings on the matter.

My awareness of other women's issues such as LGBT+ struggles, the role of religion in sexual reproductive rights and the part that media plays in first world feminism were all openly explored in a safe and respected surrounding. I definitely feel more confident with this newfound knowledge to go and spread awareness myself and converse in topical debates surrounding feminism.

It's essential to have an open mind whilst attending and the Commission gave me the chance to not only talk and share my experiences, but also most importantly, listen to others.

The UN is a friendly and professional environment that is really inspiring to someone like me who is still trying to explore and discover potential career opportunities to help change gender inequality.

There were plenty of opportunities for networking with women all around the world, most importantly with women who have influence in New Zealand society such as Jackie Blue, the Equal Employment Opportunities Commissioner and the Hon. Louise Upston, the Minister for Women's affairs. These connections are invaluable and really made the UN experience unforgettable by meeting such strong women in politics.

A spin off idea I have would be to try to petition to incorporate feminism into sex education in schools. As a young school student, from a young age I have been taught about drugs, alcohol and relationships, but I am perturbed as to how many of my peers are oblivious to what feminism means, or even the struggles that females in their own country and around the world face on a daily basis due to their own gender. We need more youth to get involved in political struggles and to help others through their own privilege, and education is the only way to go. The Nordic Model for prostitution is also something that New Zealand society should investigate more as I think our current situation is harmful to women and has a strong connection to rape, abuse and other criminal activity. Action needs to be taken on a government level.

Overall I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to represent Presbyterian Women Aotearoa New Zealand in attending the UN's 59th Commission on the Status of Women. It's been a life changing experience that I hope to use to benefit girls and women from New Zealand and all around the world by being a future advocate for women's rights.

New York CSW59 Report - Lyn Heine, Greymouth

Amazing!

If there is one word to sum up the whole experience of being part of CSW59 it is amazing. From the hearing of stories told by Rev Carol Grant describing her first participating, to actually being in New York and part of it myself, to the ongoing Google discussions, amazing is still the word that best sums it up. I wasn't sure what to expect.

In my letter of application to be part of the Presbyterian Women's delegation I wrote the following:

"I expect that attending the Commission will challenge me to recognise and be prepared to speak to and get involved in situations that are not promoting of human rights that are gender equality issues. Having been supported by others, and because of experiences I expect to have in New York, I foresee opportunities to share, that would not otherwise be available to me.

It was hearing Rev Carol Grant speak about meeting people whose life experiences are so different from ours in New Zealand, whose faith journeys are inspiring and challenging, and who face risks in everyday living that caused me to want to know more. I realise that this will also bring with it a responsibility to work actively to make changes where and when I can.”

Being aware of living in a city that contains the population of two New Zealand's, and looking at one big building that probably contained a whole Greymouth, was both confronting and comforting. Finding a sense of belonging and connectedness in such a place brought home the need to acknowledge what it is that we hold in common with others and the responsibility we have together to address the issues that affect any one sector of us.

And issues there are. From the distressing experiences of women and girls in conflict zones; to the uplifting stories of men involved in educating boys about attitudes and responsibilities in living with women; to businesses and financiers using environmental and gender measures as part of their investment strategies; to minority indigenous women speaking of what their lives look like; to women in some African countries being taught about the need to have a will and their entitlement to independent financial and social rights. From things that we take for granted in New Zealand as having had in place for a long time such as voting rights and education and employment opportunities that many do not have; to being challenged in particular about our legalisation of prostitution rather than our criminalising the users of these. We continue to share high levels of domestic violence with countries like Iceland, and they too, like us, are exploring ways of exposing and addressing the underlying causes of this.

I heard a particular challenge to those of us in faith communities to examine ourselves and see how we may have contributed and continue to contribute to the human rights issues being discussed. Challenged to think about how we can do things differently to intentionally make a difference and work with civil society and communities as partners rather than as competitors.

The twelve platforms of issues affecting women globally and that are the legacy to come out of the Beijing Conference in 1995 - continue to be as relevant as they ever were.

Women and Poverty

Education and Training of Women

Women and Health

Violence against Women

Women and Armed Conflict

Women and the Economy

Women in Power and Decision-making

Institutional Mechanism for the Advancement of Women

Human Rights of Women

Women and the Media

Women and the Environment

The Girl-child

These platforms, coupled with Hillary Clinton's take-home message from Beijing of "Human rights are women's rights, women's rights are human rights, once and for all" are underpinning the valuable work being done around the world and the aspirations for what continues to be needed.

I continue to process the experience I had. For me, it made a difference being there with someone I knew and being part of both our New Zealand delegation as well as part of the much larger Ecumenical Church Women's grouping.

Being exposed to the calibre of speakers and the range of countries and topics was impressive and challenging. The ongoing Google discussions continue to tease out thinking and opinions. The opportunity to have been part of it all, has been, as I started with, amazing. I am grateful for it all and live with the awareness that this privilege I have had, needs a meaningful response into the place and life I live. Thank you.

Lyn Heine, Lay Minister, Greymouth Uniting Church



**Communion Table at the United Nations Church Centre, New York.
From all around the world we are one at the table of Jesus Christ**

The CSW experience by Annabelle Ritchie – Year 12 – Columba College

The CSW was such an amazing opportunity to take part in. The main highlight for me was just the atmosphere at the UN – it was one of hope and action. Everyone there had accomplished something and had their own human rights project, which really inspired me to have something to talk about if I should ever go back! The sessions themselves were very eye opening for me. I knew I was privileged, but I feel now that I can never go back to being so innocent. Coming from a decile 10 girls' school is alone such a privilege that everyone should have the opportunity for but so little do. I was particularly interested in a session I went to at UNICEF house, which talked about school related gender based violence. From this I realized I am really interested in youth issues. I have been inspired to try to create a world in which every girl can have the opportunities I have had; most importantly to be myself regardless of my gender.

Since this I have applied to UNICEF NZ Youth to become a youth ambassador. I would really love this opportunity, since it is hard to know where to start fighting for social justice and gender equality! Since the CSW I have also taken part in the Youth Model United Nations in Dunedin, spoken to several groups about my experience (including Knox church, classes at school, the Otago University Federation of Graduate Women, and the Hon. Louise Upston), and I am making time for a meeting with Clare Curran to talk about what can be done specifically at a local level in regards to gender equality.

Since attending the CSW, I have also been much more outspoken than usual about human rights; it has really changed my outlook. I help to take robotics at my school and at the Otago University, but since the CSW I have realized that I can begin to try and get more girls interested, to achieve gender equality in my own small part of the world. Equal representation in STEM education and leadership roles is so important for girls and women;

I am very unusual for my age and gender in that I really enjoy science, computer programming and robotics. I am planning to get more youth and especially girls interested in robotics or programming by taking after school and holiday courses specifically aimed at girls.

One of the sessions that particularly inspired me was on LGBT+ rights, especially as a heated debate sparked at the end – even at the UN there were so many conflicting opinions based on the societal norms! LGBT+ rights is such a controversial issue at the moment; while it is widely accepted now that it is okay to be part of the LGBT+ community, this is mainly in Western culture and there are some incredibly disadvantaged people around the world who feel they cannot truly express who they are. Some of my friends and I had a meeting with our school principal to talk about what we could do to support the LGBT+ community within our school, and the ideas at the moment are to raise awareness of a support group, to let students know that it should not be a taboo subject and there is absolutely nothing to be ashamed of. We are planning on joining in on days of awareness like the day of silence, so that

just within our school community we are making a change to people's attitudes towards the LGBT+ community.

I have had so many ideas of what I can do to change my part of the world since the CSW! It was such an inspiring experience for me, and I intend to use it for the best I can.

Report from Elizabeth Yarnell – Year 13 – Columba College

Going to New York to attend CSW was a dream come true for me. I got to meet so many wonderful and caring people, who I continue to speak with. I made sure to attend all LGBT events because I feel that as a movement feminists should work hard to support trans youth, and prevent hostile home environments for young individuals coming out, and while I made a number of friends at these small events, I was shocked by how few in number the topics talks were.

Where as the statistics and the need for a discussion of LGBT inclusion in feminism was there and noted by almost all, the level of in depth discussion from LGBT people that was apparent in the small group conversations. It just wasn't there in larger talks. There were jokes made that it was just my bad luck to never see a large discussion of the problem, as that in the one large assembly where a woman, who I later met, talked about her experiences as a lesbian in Cuba, I had briefly left to visit the toilet.

I learned the importance of politics when considering the position of women within a society, and that no event exists in a vacuum, that they are all developed from the social conventions of our time, and that the best way to develop further is to change our method of thinking and how we perceive others. The disparity between men and woman, show that while the causes of gender discrimination are aligned social conventions their values are so entrenched in culture that we have to examine and think in how our actions are representative of the society we grew up in. We have to know whether we are acting in our own interests.

An interesting thing said to me in one meeting was this, "Your first thought when faced with a problem is what you were taught to think, what comes after, your examination of yourself, is who you really are."

As Women we have to be aware in the way we act towards other women, and people of other gender backgrounds, are influenced by and further influence the people around us. Racism, transphobia, and homophobia are values that are entrenched in society, and as individuals our actions reflect on that. Only by working against using language and acting in ways that can hurt people can we gain an equal future.

I will constantly push for intersectionality in feminism, and specific forces pushing for the people affected most by gender discrimination.

Report from Annette Hannah

Dear Carol,

Sorry for the delay in getting this to you. I would like to thank you and the Association of Presbyterian Women for the opportunity to be part of the New Zealand delegation to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. While I was vaguely aware of these global meetings I am now more intimately aware of the global work being done on women's issues,

particularly around sexualised violence. I also enjoyed the opportunity to again network with other NZer's around gender issues, as in my years of being an academic this has been my area of research, passion, and publications.

As I was given token funding by the NZ Psychological Society I was invited to write a 2000 word article on my reflections to be published in the New Zealand Psychology Journal being published this month. I have also spoken to other groups around the issues presented at the Commission.

It was suggested in a discussion with the Ministry of Women that I spearhead an International symposium on gender and mental health. So to that end I have been meeting with Heads of Departments of Universities and have currently garnered considerable support for this idea. At Otago I have obtained support from the Chair of Public Theology, David Tombs, who will likely provide a National Speaker, and also the Head of the National Centre for Peace and Conflict Kevin Clements who has put his full support behind this. I have also skype conferenced with others nationally and internationally. I have also spoken to many women within many different departments! They are not always in leadership positions as we know! We have yet to do the hard work of finding funding so that the cost of registration can be kept accessible. We are doing this because the New Zealand situation is interesting in that we have much legislation around human rights issues that are supportive of women and children, and yet we have a very high rate of gender based sexualised violence happening even though we are living in a time of peace.

We have been considering ways to reduce this violence that is mainly, but not always, perpetrated by men. Therefore we wanted to hold an International Symposium here in Dunedin that would embrace many disciplines, not just health care; not be an 'academic' symposium, yet have a base in good academic research and evidence based knowledge. Provide a forum for conversations around ways of unravelling gender and being human in a feminine and masculine world, that is respectful and helps people develop their potential, rather than the current limiting stereotypes that are alive and well that leads to much sexualised violence. This would then hopefully result in collective action in areas that we are not able to legislate for. Presuming this goes ahead this will take my attention for the next 2 years as possibly Anzac weekend 2017 would be the projected date. If the Association of Presbyterian Women had any funds and wanted to be a part of this venture we would be very pleased! I attach a very preliminary summary concept of the symposium. Planning is very much in its infant stages currently.

With much appreciation, Annette Hannah

Concept: International Symposium on Gender and Mental Health

Being fully human in a feminine and masculine world? Achieving better mental health and wellbeing.

Unravelling the Feminine and Masculine - Exploring Mutuality by way of Transformative Conversation Interdisciplinary Symposium on focused on Gender and Mental Health When? February 2017

Inspiration:

United Nations Commission on the status of women CSW-59 Beijing +20

- . Global violence against women is increasing
- . Gap between women who have 'made it' and those who have not is increasing
- . Human rights issues are being flaunted and violated
- . Women representative of those who have not gained economic, political, religious, social equity

UN Women: Substantive equality for women: A framework for action

Bridging the gap between formal rights and women's lived experience, to achieve substantive equality, is the key challenge for public policy. To address this gap, Progress proposes a 3-point framework for action:

- . Resources: Redressing women's socio-economic disadvantage
- . Respect: Addressing stereotyping, stigma, and violence
- . Voice: Strengthening women's agency, voice and participation.

Only when action is taken in all three domains can we bring about the transformation of structures and institutions – including households, labour markets and governance institutions – that maintain women's subordination. (sited From UN Women: Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016 (<http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/>))

Aim?

To reawaken the human rights issues for women particularly but also men, so that people become more aware of the ways that women and people in general are discriminated against. To raise (shatter) the glass ceiling and overcome binaries generally; To highlight the misused of power against others and more vulnerable groups such as women and children, immigrants, people of colour, sexuality, etc; To be both a conversation, but also educative about a positive and more peaceful way forward; To also look at masculinities, perspectives, repercussions and challenges. To raise gender awareness, and identify tools and technics that lead to gender transformation leading to a solution to violence and expresses a new vision for humanity.

SCOPE?

To create the opportunity for people to focus their attention on mainstreaming gender into particular themes and disciplines and consider its effects and consequences for well-being.

These streams below may well be condensed under different headings. Streams such as: Religion, - gender and wellbeing. Language & Culture, Law, Politics. Economics.

We want opportunity for much discussion not just papers being presented and passively listened to. We want this to be very interactive, tapping into the expertise of all those who attend.

The Future – A woman Secretary General?



The Future – A woman Secretary General?

Since the United began all the Secretary Generals have been men. Their individual portraits line one wall in the United Nations.

Perhaps the next Secretary General of the United Nations will be a woman?

Perhaps our former Prime Minister, Helen Clark?



Helen Clark became the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme in 2009, and is the first woman to lead the organisation. She also chairs the United Nations Development Group. Helen Clark is highly respected for her work on global issues and her support for gender equality, and the empowerment of women and girls around the world.

