



*THE NEWSLETTER OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE DELTA KAPPA GAMMA SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION (DPI) AND THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (ECOSOC)*

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The **C**ommittee on **T**eaching **A**bout the **U**nited **N**ations 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

***Refugees: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Challenge - Friday, 27 January 2017***

Refugee crises are not new in world history. Millions have been uprooted over centuries, fleeing their homes due to fears of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.

Yet, today we face the largest refugee/migrant movement since the Second World War and, wherever we turn, we are bombarded by media images of desperate but determined faces of people on frightening journeys to overburdened and increasingly unwelcoming countries.

How do we bridge the fear on both sides? What are the cross-cultural issues involved in assimilation, and the challenges to host nations? What are the implications of a generation deprived of its education and what can we, as individuals and educators, do to remedy that?

Come learn from UN and Non-Governmental Organization representatives on the scene, and hear the personal experiences of refugees at this day-long conference at UN headquarters in New York City.

Educators at all levels, high school students and above, and concerned citizens are all welcome.

Go to [www.teachun.org](http://www.teachun.org) for registration details, hotel, and special group rates for both students and adults.

### **Migration, Refugees, and the SDGs**

*By Grace M. Murphy*

A more-than-capacity audience attended the policy forum, "Ensuring No One is Left Behind: A High Level Dialogue on Migration" at the Trygve Lie Center in Manhattan on Wednesday, 20 July 2016. Sponsored by the International Peace Institute, the Quaker UN Office, and the Permanent Missions of Finland, Mexico and Morocco, its purpose was to discuss how policy, which will be decided at the upcoming Summit on Migration and Refugees on 19 September, can reflect the principles, ideas and spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). (Ed. Note: 17 Sustainable Development Goals were

unanimously approved by all 193 nations of the UN by the General Assembly in September 2015. See DKG@UN #34)

Beginning with the staggering statistic that 65 million people have been forced to flee their homes, Peter Sutherland, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration, delivered a very straight-forward assessment. Political rhetoric has increased xenophobia; the trend to create walls and borders must be eliminated; destination countries have to facilitate migration by working toward inclusion; trafficking must be eliminated and the rights of the individual protected. He called on all the countries which will be part of the Summit to "deliver the goods" - to make decisions that are both practical and compassionate.

H.E. Miguel Ruiz Cabanas, Deputy Minister of Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of Mexico, speculated about the consequences for his country and others. He sees five goals to be accomplished: preserve and protect human rights; create ways for migrants to contribute to the economy of the host country; establish people-to-people contact to develop a social network; insist that there be international participation since no country can solve this problem by itself; foster meaningful cooperation between border countries.

Karen AbuZayd, Special Adviser on the Summit on Addressing Large Movements of Refugees, spoke about the positive effects of migration. She added her voice to those calling for the Summit to create a framework that deals with all aspects of migration, especially relating to refugees and their children. The majority of refugees are children; one half of them will not receive primary education and three quarters will have no secondary schooling. She stated that all countries should share the responsibility of helping and protecting refugees; they must also work on ways of returning refugees to their native land.

On the same evening, a panel discussion entitled, "Implementing the SDGs: Taking Stock of the Challenge and Starting to Measure Progress," was held at the Westin Hotel. It highlighted the launch of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and Bertelsmann Stiftung's new SDG Index. The purpose of this Index is to assist countries in getting started implementing the SDGs; it will show countries where they stand now and indicate trends in the future.

Sustainable Development includes three pillars: economic development, social inclusion and environmental sustainability and there are 17 Goals under this umbrella. Using data currently available, countries were ranked on how close they might come to attaining these goals by 2030. Three Scandinavian countries - Sweden, Denmark and Norway - have the best overall "scores" as of now, but they still have to work at shifting their energy systems from high-carbon to low-carbon energy. The United States ranks 25th of the 149 countries ranked. Poorer nations are ranked lower on the list. Jeffrey Sachs, a director of the Network, said that these Goals were made to be achieved and that we in the US must help the countries that are at the bottom of the list. Read more at [www.ipinst.org](http://www.ipinst.org) or International Peace Institute for the first half.

## Women and Girls: From Adversity to Hope

By Ann Grosjean

On March 17, 2016, as a side event to the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the briefing, *Women and Girls: From Adversity to Hope* was held at the United Nations. The focus this year for the CSW is the implementation of *Sustainable Development Goal # 5 – To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*. Six amazingly strong women shared their personal stories and experiences to validate the need for the political, economic and social change necessary to achieve this goal.

*Malala*, the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner, proclaimed in an excerpt from a speech, that *Malala Day* is not her day but the day of all women, boys and girls. When she was shot on October 9, 2012, her voice was not silenced but instead thousands of voices emerged to support education for all and the end to child marriage ([www.malalafund.org](http://www.malalafund.org)).

*Monica Singh's* husband had a bucket of acid poured over her entire body on June 14, 2005. Although people were watching, it took 35 minutes for her to receive help. She was unable to move 65% of her body and 90% of her skin was skinless or scarred and she lost her speech, vision and hearing. After 46 surgeries on her face and covering her face with a black veil for eight years, she created a new "me" with her family's love and support. Although her reflection is different, her voice, personality and identity are the same. Since her accident she sees positivity in life and kindness in people. She completed her fashion design degree and started her foundation, the *Mahendra Singh Foundation*, named for her father. Her advice to girls who have been raped, physically or emotionally abused, or experienced a similar unjustified punishment is to move on to the positive. Life is not ending, it is just beginning! (@MonicaSingh91) -- (<http://mahendrasinghfoundation.org/>)

*Consolee Nishimwe*, a motivational speaker and author of *Tested to the Limit: A Genocide Survivor's Story of Pain, Resilience and Hope*, shared the story of her three month involvement in the Rwanda Genocide twenty-two years ago when she was fourteen years old. She had a happy childhood with her parents who were teachers, her three younger brothers (18 months, 7 and 9 years old) and her sister. Her family is Tutsi and experienced some discrimination which escalated when the genocide began to exterminate all Tutsi. Homes were searched, families murdered and their homes destroyed. Rape was used as a weapon of war. The world watched while neighbors killed neighbors. Her family moved from one hiding place to another after their home was destroyed. Her father and brothers were slaughtered. Her grandparents, aunts, uncles, classmates and friends were also killed. She and her mother and sister relied on prayer and kept "God within their hearts". She was raped and managed to crawl back to her mother. After that she could not function - she had nightmares and could not go to school. Her mother told her to be strong and she then realized that many girls who had been raped were in much worse condition – they were pregnant, they had lost limbs by machete, were HIV positive or had no family. In 2001, she moved to the USA to chart a new course for her life including writing her memoir in 2012 to be a voice speaking out against these atrocities. Tearfully, she reminded us that genocide and rape as a weapon of war are still going on today in Iraq, Syria and many other parts of the world. But we must never lose hope because that is the beginning of defeat! (@nconsolee) -- (<http://www.womenundersiegeproject.org/author/profile/consolee-nishimwe>)

*Naila Amin* is a twenty-six year old child bride survivor. Her family moved to the USA with her five siblings when she was four years old. They returned to Pakistan for a visit when she was eight and she was engaged to her first cousin who was thirteen years older than she. At age thirteen, they had a religious wedding ceremony in Pakistan. Back in Queens, she was beaten by her father and taken away by Child Protective Services (CPS) because she had a boyfriend at school while married. She begged the CPS workers not to return her to her home so she spent time in group homes. She was returned to Pakistan at 15, where she was abused and raped by her husband. Finally, NY Child Protective Services were able to secure her return to the US. Today she suffers from PTSD and anxiety. Her brother, an army psychiatrist, asked her "Are you a victim or a survivor?" She then decided that she is not a victim so she shares her story and started the *Naila Amin Foundation*. Her dream is to open a culturally appropriate group home for foster children under eighteen who are escaping child marriage or honor violence. She wants to give girls in this situation courage and states that we must start by teaching boys to stop violence. Her father apologized a year ago and said that if he had been educated and had known better he would not have forced her child marriage or beaten her because of her boyfriend (honor violence). She will speak out because "truth sets the world on fire" and "it is OK to let go of certain social cultural norms"! (<http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/1298869-child-marriages-in-the-u-s-a-hidden-epidemic/>)

*Sarri Singer* worked just a few blocks from the twin towers and oversleeping one day, she missed work on the morning of September 11, 2001. This was a life changing experience for her so she quit her job and moved to Israel in December of 2001 to volunteer with non-profit organizations. On June 11, 2003 she boarded a bus and a teen-aged boy with a bomb strapped to his body entered the bus after her and the bomb exploded. Sixteen died and she was the only one to survive at the front of the bus. She had shut her eyes which saved her vision but her eardrums were blown, her hair and face were burned, and there was shrapnel in her mouth and clavicle. With the kindness of strangers and family she made it to the hospital and recovery. She founded her organization *Strength to Strength* to provide support and healing for victims and their families who have experienced terrorism. Terrorism can destroy families and women are two times more likely to suffer from PTSD and less likely to seek treatment. Untreated it leads to mental health and then physical health problems. Mentally one experiences shock, numbness, intense emotion, fear, guilt, anger, resentment, vulnerability, loneliness and the inability to resume daily activities. *Strength to Strength* provides a culture of peace and a global network for victims. She proclaims that the wounds we wear are our badge of courage and we need to live in a world where peace is the norm and terror no more! (@sarrisinger) -- (<http://stosglobal.org>)

*Alexandria Akira* is an executive producer for film, television and internet productions. She has also worked at the United Nations for the past five years on the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals. She is a visionary and feels that stories from around the world about crisis situations bring us together to create change. She works with *Goddess in Progress*, which is a series of films that provide a safe place and repository for stories about women's issues. She reminds us about the power of social media and encourages Non-governmental Organizations and everyone to use all forms of social media to communicate, share and educate! (@AlexandraAkira)

These powerful testimonies exemplify a few of the many ways that girls and women are being exploited worldwide. Every female has the right to a quality education, the right to choose when and whom to

marry, protection from emotional or physical abuse and rape, and a peaceful life free of terror. The Sustainable Development Goals (See DKG@UN # 34) provide a path for governments and partner organizations to legislate and change social norms to meet this goal.

*Your DKG UN Representatives are pleased to share an article written by guest contributor and fellow sister, Connie Rensink. Connie is a member of the Theta Chi Chapter in Texas. She is now living in New York City where she recently received a Global Competence Certificate from Columbia University and is attending some UN events open to the general public. Connie has her own blog at: <http://somethingmoreconnie.blogspot.com/> Below is a copy of one of her blogs.*

### **How Many Stories Does it Take?**

By Connie Rensink

I'm here to share a story - Yes ANOTHER story, because I hope and I pray that this can make another person's struggle real enough for political leaders and powerful advocates to bring about coordinated change and make our world more human.

Recently, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) sponsored a special event with the overarching theme One Humanity to call recognition to World Humanitarian Day. Held in the UN General Assembly with a star-studded lineup, the evening promised an entertaining program guaranteed to bring high profile recognition.

Yet with all the celebrity star power, at the center of this program was the heartfelt story of a Syrian refugee family. Hala Kamil is the mother of 4 children, Sara, Farah, Mohammed, and Helen, 7-15 years old. The account of their transition from surviving in Aleppo as freedom fighters to seeking refugee status in Turkey to settlement in Germany is told in the Frontline report Children of Syria. The excerpts shared Friday were well selected but couldn't cover each moment that touched me in that episode.

As an advocate, educator, and mother, my heart wrenched as Farah flinched at the sound of missile fire, Sara told about collecting red ribbons to help her father make bombs, Mohammed said goodbye to his neighborhood, and Helen refused to cover her hair in her new German home.

As a woman and wife I shed tears as Hala made the difficult decision to leave Syria for her children's future, and explained why her phone with pictures of her husband (taken by ISIS and presumed dead) and her life in Syria, had become her life.

On this evening in New York, in a country far removed from the horrors her family faced, Hala took another courageous step, to beseech the leaders of our world to take action to end the attack on civilians in Syria.

Here are two points that called to me:

· *I do not agree with those out there who say that there are two worlds—one for the political decision-makers, and one for those who bear the consequences of their decisions. We who suffer those consequences must have some bearings on the actions, or lack of action, of the powerful.*

· *Make your voices heard. I call upon you not to give up and not to regard us as helpless victims being ushered by the powers of destiny alone forever deprived of self-determination. We may have lost our homes, but we have not lost our ability to change this world, for it is the only world we have.*

And on this evening, her children joined her onstage for a standing ovation. A standing ovation for the terrors of their life, for their struggle, for their pain, and for their future. They stood awkwardly, seeking out each other's gaze and shifting their feet. How is a child supposed to respond when their story is there for the world to see? I was uncomfortable with them.

There are over 60 Million refugees in the world. Every minute 24 people are displaced and half of them are children. These astronomical numbers are hard to fathom which may be why nations aren't fulfilling their quota commitments to accept refugees and why there seems to be a stalemate on efforts to prevent, negotiate, and end the crises that are the cause.

But while these astronomical numbers are hard to fathom, it is even harder to accept that these are 24 lives, 24 stories, 24 futures at stake. EVERY. MINUTE.

So today I'm here to share a story. May this one be the call for action locally and globally that rewrites the future for our world.

### **YOUR UN REPRESENTATIVES**

The members of The Delta Kappa Gamma Society International listed below are your official representatives at the United Nations Department of Public Information and the Economic and Social Council. Most of them also work with CTAUN. You can email us for further information.

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