

Introduction to Presentation on GWI UN Representatives for Focus on GWI

GWJ has volunteer representatives attending and involved in meetings at UN centers in Geneva, Vienna, Paris and New York (the UN does have other sites). Based on the GWJ website there are four representatives in New York, four in Geneva, two in Paris and five in Vienna. All are volunteers and are not even compensated for expenses. Different branches of the UN are represented in different locations. In many cases there are activities at multiple sites but some are only at one site. In the former case their focus would usually be different but can be the same.

To situate the types of UN organizations GWJ reps are part of, a few bits of UN structure, as we understand it from their huge website, in which you can get lost very easily.

The main organs of the UN are the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice, and the UN Secretariat. All were established in 1945 when the UN was founded. One of the subsidiaries of ECOSOC is the Committee on the Status of Women (CSW). The CSW is also part of UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women formed in 2010 to bring together resources and mandates for greater impact. Another component of the UN is The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, or OHCHR. The CSW and OHCHR are the areas of main focus of many of GWJ's UN volunteers. They are involved in various NGO working groups.

There are currently 193 Member States, or countries that belong to the UN. A major part of the functioning of the UN is the participation of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). There are currently over 4500 NGOs which have consultative status at the UN, which means they can participate in meetings, working groups etc. CFUW and GWJ have Special Consultative Status, although GWJ is still listed under its previous title of International Federation of University Women (IFUW). NGOs can range from very small with a very narrow focus, to very large and well known, such as CARE.

We spoke to one GWJ UN representative in Vienna and one in Geneva. None of the New York reps were able to talk with us as they are involved in preparations for the upcoming meetings of the Committee on the Status of Women. Below, we report on our meeting with Elisabeth Francis from Vienna and on our Skype conversation with Nina Joyce in Geneva.

Meeting with Elisabeth Francis (Vienna) - February 15, 2017

Barbara Newbegin and Dorothy Phillips by FaceTime.

About Elisabeth

Elisabeth Francis is a member of the Austrian University Women (Verband Der Akademikerinnen Österreichs), which has less than 400 members in a county of about 8.5 million, and she is a GWI member who lives in Vienna. She represents GWI on various United Nations committees and at UN conferences. We asked her many questions about her work for GWI. What we found was an enormous world of international work in which we, as members of GWI, can participate.

Elisabeth has a masters in economics from the Vienna University of Economics and Business. Among other jobs, she teaches German as a foreign language. She has lived abroad and is used to meeting and talking with people from different countries.

About 3 years ago, Elisabeth was approached by a senior member of the Austrian national organization of university women, completed a questionnaire, sent it along with her CV to GWI headquarters and was accepted as a volunteer for the United Nations meetings in Vienna. She enjoys being involved in the UN NGO committees which allows her to contribute internationally and work with other NGO representatives to share information and make a difference to girls and women. She enjoys meeting and making friends among the representatives of other NGOs. She says there is a lot to learn and a lot of reading for each committee but it is worth it.

As a volunteer for GWI, Elisabeth does not earn any money or get any expenses paid. She even had to pay for her own calling cards. She lives close to the UN Centre in Vienna.

Elisabeth's Work for GWI

The time she spends on the UN work varies as lot. Once she attended a two-week meeting, other times one-week meetings, more often a day or half-day. She writes reports in English which is not her first language so they take time. She recently presented GWI to members of the Peace committee and that went well; she mentioned UWHAW in the presentation.

At committee meetings, Elisabeth has the right to speak; she is not just an observer. She attends meetings of the NGO Committees on Status of Women, on Peace, and on Sustainable Development, a new one for her. There are a number of other NGO committees in Vienna under (CONGO) the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations - Ageing, Outer Space, Family and Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

<http://www.ngocongo.org/ngo-substantive-committees/vienna-committees-on>

At times, after consultation with GWI Geneva, she submits statements on behalf of GWI. Her role is to participate in the work of the committees that promote gender equality and empower women and further the cause of women's education.

Elisabeth attended the Women's Higher Education for Peace–Vienna Forum in 2016, an annual event bringing together professionals from international organizations, private sector, NGOs and think-tanks actively working on disarmament, non-proliferation and development. Six NGOs created a video which was first run at the Forum and has since been used for peace education. It has been shown by the UN at Peace training in troubled countries There is a video, "Getting Involved for Peace"

(<https://www.dnpeducation.org/index.php?go=forum>) on the Women Scholarship for Peace: Global South—participants are supported to attend the Vienna forum and obtain a certificate from the University for Peace established by the UN in 1980 in Costa Rica.

The day after our meeting Elisabeth was going to a monthly meeting of the CSW Vienna committee on the status of women which 40 NGOs attend. The meeting had a large agenda including discussion of a Kid's Rights project and an address by the Ambassador from Iceland. She expected it to take much of the day. Later she reported that: "the Nordic approach to gender is very effective!"

The GWI Team in Vienna

There are 5 GWI representatives in Vienna: a senior member of the GWI team represents GWI on the NGO Drugs Committee/UNODC (Commission on Drugs and Crime) and 3 others attend other meetings.

In January Elisabeth attended a conference of ACUNS (Academic Council of UN Systems) on implementing the 2030 agenda of SDGs (sustainable development goals) The SDGs are a follow-up to the Millennium goals. She attended the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPDJ) last year—principally the session on human trafficking with the emphasis on the trafficking of women—and will attend this conference again this year later in May.

(<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/commissions/CCPCJ/>)

As a GWI representative, Elisabeth can also participate with other NGOs in side events at UN conferences in Vienna. In November, 2016, CSW Vienna marked the beginning of the campaign "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence" by hosting a panel discussion outside the UN buildings, sponsored by United Nations Information Service in Vienna. They showed a documentary film called "A Girl in the River: the Price of Forgiveness" about honour killings in Pakistan, which won an Oscar. CSW Women will be preparing another side event in March at the upcoming Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) on gender and addiction. These events are part of the 2030 agenda.

More questions for Elisabeth:

Does she receive guidance from GWI staff or Board?

She consults with GWI Geneva and relies on GWI material on the website, including Advocacy Guidelines from GWI. She finds the Geneva staff very helpful.

She is not aware of any policy manual that lists the resolutions GWI has passed.

What value does her work have for GWI?

A lot of value. She works with an international network of educated women working for women on GWI goals. There is a lot to learn and a lot of work to be done.

Has her work improved GWI goals for women's education?

She hopes so. Elisabeth thinks education for women has definitely moved up on the international agenda since she began and she hopes she has made a small contribution in the UN Vienna context.

What help can we and other NFAs give her?

She would like feedback about her reports, sharing our experience, and information about special projects like UWHAW — and our views on these key matters so that she can reflect them in her work!

Elisabeth works with a long list of other NGOs. The main ones are:

- Soroptimist
- Zonta

- FAWCO (Federation of American Women's Clubs Overseas)
- International Council of Women
- Business and Professional Women

Documents of interest:

UNESCO **Global Education Monitoring Report 2016: Education for people and planet: Creating Sustainable Futures for All.** Available on the web:

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002457/245752e.pdf>

A Girl in the River: the Price of Forgiveness, a documentary about honour killing in Pakistan, **very good!** (about 40 minutes). To access A Girl in the River from the library (access from the catalogue didn't work), from the Ottawa Public Library home page, login, click browse, go to online resources, then for Access Video on Demand click on GO and search for the title.

Meeting with Nina Joyce (Geneva) February 17, 2017

Barbara Newbegin and Dorothy Phillips by Skype

About Nina

Nina is from Ireland and has lived in Geneva for many years. From a friend of a friend she was introduced to the idea of becoming a volunteer about 6 years ago. She interviewed with GWI and came on board. She was on staff for a while, but is now back as a volunteer.

She has a communications and international relations background and worked on the organization of the World Economic Forum in Davos about 13 years ago. She was finding it very mechanical versus strategic so decided she wanted to get into advocacy.

She gets no remuneration and expenses are not reimbursed. She said she works for 'karma'. Most NGOs, except for large ones, do not pay their representatives. That can show in the level of professionalism. Organizations need to take good people when they can find them. She has been told that GWI is well seen in Geneva and does a good job of not seeming small and of being professional.

Nina's Work for GWI

The amount of time she spends on GWI work can vary widely and she can adapt to her schedule as she has a young family. Some weeks she may spend 30 hours working on GWI activities. Many conferences etc go on for a number of days to 1 or more weeks.

Prior to the change in leadership of GWI in August 2016 she had rather strict guidelines on what she could or could not say or do, but under new leadership they know she knows what she is doing and they let her do it with only guidance and consultation. She has worked with Stacy (Executive Director GWI) before when Stacy was a UN rep with another NGO and they worked together for about a year on a project. Because Nina was on GWI staff at one time she has more background info than many other UN reps.

The work evolves based on what comes along and can go in many directions and can be difficult to choose where to focus. She finds it important to be able to say 'no' and to maintain focus on GWI's mission and vision.

She primarily works with other NGOs as part of CSW Geneva and an NGO Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning, of which she is co-chair and takes minutes. She noted that CSW Geneva has been trying to find its way as there were leadership challenges. Nina was on the nominations committee for the NGOCSW Board about 18 months ago and they were able to persuade members to join the Board and they are still there. Since leadership changed, things have been getting on track, but they aren't where they should be yet. There is also a working group on aging that is of interest to her but she doesn't have the time to participate.

ECOSOC main conferences alternate between New York and Geneva each year, but their overall agenda is not that relevant to her work. She was involved in a side event a couple of years ago. GWI is ECOSOC accredited.

She attended but did not participate in the October 2016 Forum on Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls in a Sustainable Development Perspective as GWI did not have an active role. It was well attended.

She referenced 3 H's with regard to the UN in Geneva; Health, Human Rights and Humanitarianism. She primarily focuses on Human Rights.

Although the CSW is based in New York, it is very active in Geneva and has different activities. Because the Swiss government wanted to direct some funds to CSW with a focus on economic empowerment for women, they chose to focus on that. There was a forum on the topic held recently. There is a current working group on women's empowerment in which Nina participates. They are looking at unpaid work.

There is a States Platform on Human Rights Education and Learning with the permanent missions of 9 countries participating. It was in some disarray and prior to a change in leadership it was not very receptive to NGOs. There is now more organization, co-ordination and openness to NGOs. The NGO Working Group of which Nina is co-chair is able to be more strategic now. This Platform is not a formal group, but there is a similar group in Paris.

On the International Day of the Girl Child 2016 NGOCSW staged a flashmob dance outside the UN building in Geneva and it was a big hit. It was Nina's idea and she was very surprised when the group decided to run with it. It was sponsored by the US Mission, UN Office in Geneva, and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. There was professional choreography and sound and 52 children participated. **To watch a video of the flashmob click here:** <http://www.ngocsw-geneva.ch/international-day-of-the-girl-2016-flashmob-dance/>

The take-away from the flashmob dance was that there is very strong political support in Geneva for girl's rights. The Director of the UNESCO office in Geneva and her team danced, as did the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights and her team, including the Head of Women's Rights section. The Director General of the UN in Geneva recorded a video that introduces the flashmob dance. The question now is where to go from that. There are plans in the works for something for next year's International Day of the Girl Child, perhaps a bit more serious next time. This was good visibility for GWI.

In February 2017 GWI was invited by UN Geneva to participate in the Geneva Mix and Mash. This is an event that intends to connect UN Geneva with local Geneva (civil society) and GWI will have a stand. This is the 3rd such event, this year with a focus on women's rights and will be held on International Women's Day this March 8.

Future Opportunities

Nina has the opportunity to speak at meetings of NGOs but not so much at formal meeting of the States, which are the political missions at the UN. NGOs talk to NGOs, States to States etc. People need to get out of their silos more. There is a common challenge at all levels of not knowing what each other is doing and of the international level not knowing what is happening on the ground, at the local level. NGOs, working groups, and States can be working on similar issues and not know what the other is doing, even between missions of the same country. She has good relations with the Canadian mission to UN in Geneva, as does Stacy. She says there need to be more interactions with the other NGOs. Reputation and relationships are key to any NGO involvement, but that takes time to build. Much care must be taken in what is said as reputations and/or relationships can be easily damaged. Things go slowly in dealings with NGOs, diplomacy, and the UN as a whole.

1st rule is to show up and 2nd rule is to be seen. Need to be on the same page.

Nina says she is good at seeing opportunities and guiding the direction of discussions. She tries to think strategically and put the why before the how. She focuses on the big picture. There is a report coming out in June from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) about education for girls and she talked to them about the need for female teachers for secondary schools and believes that need will be reflected in report. She was given the opportunity to send documents and she sent GWI's Manifestos (<http://www.graduatewomen.org/who-we-are/gwi-manifestos/>). The day we spoke Nina had had a conversation with a Brazilian member of States Platform on Human Rights Education and Learning on improving internal practices and organization. This was a follow up to a conversation the working group had with Italy. Much of a UN reps impact is informal as part of discussions and corridor conversations with other NGOs and States. Quiet conversation can have an impact and be very productive in influencing other NGOs as well as States, but is hard to measure.

Our conversation was the first time Nina has talked to a GWI National Federation or Association (NFA) and believes there should be more interaction between GWI reps and NFAs. Often would be useful to have input from NFAs when dealing with the State representatives.

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is Geneva based and members are very approachable and want NGOs to participate more. CEDAW is made up of independent experts who are not paid by the UN. They ask pointed questions. The smaller countries do not have the resources to go to Geneva to participate, but GWI UN reps could help if the NFAs worked with them. Canada does send delegations.

Universal Periodic Review (UPR) under OHCHR is a Geneva based process which involves a review of the human rights record of all UN Member States in a State by State process. Prior to formal sessions, NGOs run the pre-sessions with NGOs and the States and Nina is involved in them. These involve more frank and open discussions regarding a particular State's record than the formal sessions do. GWI is able to participate and present statements, but they don't have the info from GWI NFAs nor do they have the mandate from the NFAs. Again, there is a disconnect between the national and the international level. (Canada is on the UPR schedule April-May 2018 – national report submission due February 2018)

GWI UN reps help keep education on the map. GWI is the only NGO dedicated to education. For some other NGOs education is part of their mandate and there are overlaps but GWI is the only one solely focused on education. Nina indicated that advocacy by GWI at the UN went dormant for a period of time after the GWI lead left the organization. Contacts and information base was lost and it is only in the last 3 years that GWI has become more active, but it takes time to rebuild relationships, which are key. You can always get the information these days, but it is a slow learning curve to build the relationships and reputation. GWI is now getting better visibility with its education agenda. She has relationships with Soroptimist International and a number of other NGOs as well as some country missions, such as Portugal, which has a strong focus on education.

She believes there is some place on GWI site where previous GWI resolutions are listed as part of a digitization project a few years ago (yes there is a listing of all resolutions by year). Typically the resolutions are not directly related to education, which is the mission of GWI, so they are not relevant to her work and as a result she does not use them. She noted that there is a gap between international policy statements and what happens on the ground. Nina said it would be wonderful if the resolutions were crafted in such a way that she could use them and that they would give consistent direction for three years. Fewer resolutions would also be good as there can be too many and this doesn't allow focus. She noted that most of the GWI UN reps do not know what the resolutions are.

Nina believes that international advocacy is important if you want to have impact on other countries. She sees GWI as the secretariat for the NFAs and that there are a number of unexploited areas to lobby in Geneva with UN and other countries in the area of education. NFAs need to see the value and have the interest in having an international impact.

She sees the need to align priorities between GWI and CFUW and other NFAs which takes a commitment of a number of years. National priorities of countries need multiple forums in which to influence international priorities and to share best practices. Also when States are asked questions from multiple directions they take notice. If CFUW wants to have an influence at the UN, the reps can be a big help. She asked if anything she could do for us. UN reps are there to serve NFAs.