

# **REPORT ON 53<sup>RD</sup> SESSION ON THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**DATE: 25<sup>TH</sup> -7<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2009**

**VENUE: UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS NEW YORK CITY**

**THEME: The equal sharing of responsibilities between women  
and men; including care giving in the context of HIV&AIDS**



**PRESENTED BY: MIRIAM OTIENO**

**YOUNG LEADER KENYA GIRL GUIDES ASSOCIATION**

**NAIROBI 2009**

***LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS***

CSW-Commission on the Status of Women

IWHC-International Womens' Health Coalition

WAGGGS-World Association of Girl Guides & Girl Scouts

NGO-Non Governmental Organization

WYWCA-World Young Women Christian Organization

ARHP-Adolescent Reproductive Health Programme

## **Introduction to CSW**

The Commission on the Status of Women is a functional commission of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), dedicated exclusively to gender equality and advancement of women. It is the principal global policy-making body. Every year, representatives of Member States gather at United Nations Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and advancement of women worldwide (from CSW website).

The Commission on the Status of Women is a forum that brings together various organizations from all over the world. This forum offers an opportunity for both the young and old to come together and discuss on the situation of women and the girl child based on their different contexts and be able to propose recommendations that will focus on improving the status of women and the girl child all over the world. The recommendations made during these forums after many deliberations are passed on to governments, NGOs, civil society, private sector and other relevant actors are advised to take action based on the recommendations that are made and passed. During this event, several side meetings take place to discuss on issues that are related to the theme of the meeting .These meetings are chaired by various organizations as well as UN bodies. (from: *Handbook for Kenya Delegation to the 53RD Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, pg1&3*)

This is an indicator on the advancements made by CSW fora in discussing on the various issues affecting women from the basic needs and coming down to HIV&AIDS related issues, which is presently affecting many women and the girl child in the present society.

## **WAGGGS PARTICIPATION**

WAGGGS being an organization, that focuses on empowering the girl child, has been participating in CSW and this year WAGGGS was represented by five young delegates as follows Kenya-Ms. Sheila Wangui and Ms. Miriam Otieno, Zambia- Ms. Misozi Blessings, Brazil-Ms. Vanesa Fiuza and Canada-Nomusa Taylor-Dube .Each of these participants had a session to present apart from participating in the different side meetings.

### **a) CSW PREPARATION AND DIRECT LOBBYING ACTION**

Prior to the CSW, three of the young WAGGGS delegates (Ms.Sheila Wangui,Miriam Otieno and Vanessa Fiuza) were privileged to participate in an advocacy training that equipped them with skills on

conducting advocacy .Through this forum the young WAGGGS delegates had an opportunity to interact with other young delegates who had been sponsored by the International Women’s Health Coalition (IWHC). This forum educated the young WAGGGS delegates on effective communication skills especially while being interviewed, presentation of an agenda at CSW and the role of IWHC. During this training, an orientation to understanding CSW was made to the group in order for the participants to have an idea of what happens during the CSW. As it was observed during the CSW meetings, where a group presented an agenda and later they encountered another group that was against their agenda, the participants at this training were made aware of how to handle both enemies as well as how to seek support from potential allies. This made it all possible to have an orientation to CSW prior to the event.

During the IWHC training, each participant were guided on how to book an appointment with their country mission attending the CSW and the young WAGGGS delegates were able to secure an appointment with their Kenyan delegates of which they were able to meet with them on the first day of their planning meeting. This offered an opportunity for the young WAGGGS delegates from Kenya to meet with the team of the Kenyan delegation who were represented by the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Development Hon. Esther Murigi, Hon.Linah Kilimo and Dr.James Nyikal-Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Developments among others. The delegation was very impressed to have young delegates from Kenya participating in the CSW.

On the first day, all participants were given an orientation to CSW as well as it was an opportunity for the various NGOs (Non Governmental Organizations) to meet together.

WAGGGS delegates participated in various meetings and the paragraphs below briefly highlights some of the meetings attended and a brief on the issues discussed.

#### ***b) YOUTH ORGANIZATION CAUCUS***

This meeting brought together youth from various organizations to discuss issues that affected young people and make recommendations to be presented to the United Nation delegates’ .This was the first youth organization caucus ever that was convened at the 53<sup>rd</sup> CSW. WAGGGS and World YWCA were the conveners of the youth organization caucus. Having discussed the recommendations, Miriam Otieno (WAGGGS young delegate) was nominated to present the youth statement to the UN delegation. The youth organization caucus called on United Nation member states in collaboration with NGOs to effect the following recommendations:

1. Promote education strategies that promote holistic development of girls and young women but also create opportunities to educate men and boys on gender role and equal sharing of responsibilities.
2. The governments were called upon to provide appropriate and gender sensitive information to enable young women and men understand their sexual and reproductive health and rights in order to increase their awareness and help combat the spread of HIV&AIDS , STIs and unplanned pregnancies among young people .This is in partnership with families, communities and civil society to actively take measures to protect girls and young women as well as support men and boys role in preventing and eliminating all forms of sexual violence.
3. Use of media and other forms of social networking websites as a strategy to positively portray women and girls as leaders and as a tool to eliminate all forms stereotypes and sexual exploitation.

It is important to note that the views of the youth organization caucus do not represent the views of **all** young delegates or youth organizations present at the CSW.

***c) GIRL/BOY DIALOGUE***

Miriam Otieno facilitated this meeting together with Aaron Buford from Massachusetts. The meeting started with panellists (both male and female representation) sharing on their experiences as caregivers and the drawbacks they face as caregivers in their communities. After brief presentation by the facilitators, the participants at this meeting were grouped to discuss on caregiving; the age at which they became caregivers and if it has impacted on their life, if they felt there were cultural barriers that hindered equal participation in care giving and how care giving could be improved and what resources they felt were required. From this discussion it came out there was somehow the participation of men in care giving but in many cases, men who participated in care giving were a minority and in many communities it is not common to find men in caregiving. Men were sometimes perceived as '*weak*' when they participated in care giving. Therefore, there was great need to re-socialize the community that care giving is an activity that men can also participate in.

***c) WAGGGS EVENT: Who Cares? Girls Perspective on Equal Sharing of Responsibilities among men and women in the Context of HIV&AIDS***

This event was hosted by WAGGGS. The young delegates each got a chance to talk about their perspective on the above topic from the different countries that they came from. Miriam and Sheila

from Kenya talked about the Adolescent Reproductive Health Programme (ARHP) at the Kenya Girl Guides Association. Sheila highlighted on the trainings she had as peer educator and her involvement in training other girl guides in her school. Miriam briefed on the Kenya Girl Guides Association projects (Hawkers Market, Kibera Girls Centre and Shanzu for the Physically Challenged girls).The presentation highlighted the informal approach of the guiding system of empowering the girls with entrepreneurship skills and information and knowledge on reproductive health and HIV&AIDS which they also shared with their families. The Young leaders of the Kenya Girl Guides Association participate in empowering the girls by volunteering their free time to empower the girls with different skills based on their different educational trainings.

Nomusa shared her experience of working with women from rural Ghana. From her experience, it came out for the need of women to combine efforts in empowering other women especially supporting those who were living with HIV&AIDS in their communities and more so those in rural set up as was the case experienced by Nomusa. Her experience was just but one example of the challenges many women living in rural setting of Africa encounter. Misozi shared on their role as young leaders in educating the community on HIV&AIDS as well as supporting those who were living with HIV&AIDS. Vanessa shared on a project on HIV&AIDS run by the Brazilian Girl Guides with support from UNICEF. These activities highlighted the contribution by WAGGGS in the campaign against HIV &AIDS. However, it challenged on need for more contribution and active participation by the community as well as Girl Guides.

#### **d) PARTICIPATING IN REGIONAL CAUCUSES**

There were regional meetings and we were able to participate in the African regional meeting. This gave an opportunity to share and discuss what was common to come up with recommendations.

#### **e) A POWERFUL NOISE**

The young delegates got an invitation to participate in watching **A Powerful Noise**, which is a documentary film about three women who decide to take action to bring lasting resolution to their communities. These women were able to rise above the challenges they faced about women empowerment and improving livelihoods, educating girls, fighting HIV, promoting sexual and reproductive health as well as reconciliation and Peace after devastating conflict. The film was also attended by Madam Madeline K Albright-Former US secretary of State and Principal of The Albright Group and others. After the movie the panellists were able to respond to questions presented to them by participants.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Among WAGGGS priority issues are HIV&AIDS, Education, Leadership development and promoting participation of girls and young women in decision-making, focus on MDGs. Each MO is urged to commit to WAGGGS key priority areas in order to realize the advancement and improvement of the status of the girl child all around the world. Participating in the 53<sup>rd</sup> CSW was a great opportunity to be an advocate for WAGGGS and present what WAGGGS is doing to improve the status of women around the world.

WAGGGS is thus challenged to combine its efforts towards realizing this goal. This is through:

- Its programmes and projects and being at the forefront to lobby and advocate for the advancement of girls and young women in various sectors of development. Active participation by each WAGGGS MO shall contribute towards the enhancement of the status of women, especially by investing in the young leaders who can actively contribute in communicating these messages to other girls and young women. This will be a step forward towards improving the world because in many communities, women are at the core of holding the family and if women are empowered, we are convinced that not only care giving shall improve but also the society shall be able to improve.
- Emphasis on WAGGGS non-formal programme of education has an opportunity to transform communities through re-educating systems of socialization to create awareness on the need for men to contribute in supporting women as a means of promoting gender equality through encouraging the participation of men with women. This is possible since informal means of educating has strength in terms of communicating the needs to a community.
- MOs should seek to support the young leaders so that in the coming CSW there may be a larger number of WAGGGS delegates participating in the CSW. This is important since young people need to come out and be seen advocating for their needs at the CSW.
- MOs can contribute towards supporting CSW by adopting the theme and incorporating in their programmes activities that will promote realization of the CSW themes.

Many thanks to The Girl Scouts of USA for the support they offered during this event as well as sponsoring two of the delegates Miriam Otieno and Sheila Waithera ,Soroptimist International and Yvonne Herbert Foundation for the financial support accorded to the young delegates Misozi and Vanessa respectively and to WAGGGS team for facilitating and making it possible for this event to be a learning experience to each of the young delegates and for the thorough preparations made with the young delegates prior to the event. BRAVO! To you all. **REPORT COMPILED BY: M.O (MIRIAM OTIENO)**