CSW62 Experience

CSW62 brought a vibrant feel to UN headquarters and the IPA office. I haven’t yet seen the UN headquarters so busy, let alone filled with the majority women. Each with a cause, the women who spoke were inspirational and incredible. Among the vast sea of women and girls were incredible men, also advocating for gender equality and the rights of women and girls on a global scale. The UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, opened the first session of the Commission, proclaiming to be a proud feminist.

Throughout the two weeks, I had the opportunity to attend several CSW62 side and parallel events. I was also fortunate to sit on a panel for a side event on the impacts of climate change on migration for women and girls, drawing on my experiences having lived with the Vanuatu people. The IPA representatives took a divide and concur approach to the 400+ side and parallel events on offer. I choose to focus on attending events relating to indigenous women and climate change. Each with different themes, the events provided vast amounts of information regarding: the current situation of women and girls, especially rural, the adversities they face and best practices and strategies to encourage their empowerment and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. It was encouraging to see many member state’s missions, and their delegates, were present and engaging in various side and parallel events. This can be said to be a display of their commitment and interest in promoting gender equality.

There were a number of reoccurring themes at the events I attended. Regarding those focusing on indigenous women, it was evident that the issues faced by women globally, are often exacerbated for the women living in indigenous communities. Many indigenous women continue to face immense challenges as a result of the intergenerational effects of colonisation, assimilation policies, and struggles in ensuring their rights and identity as indigenous people. This has adverse effects on the women, their communities, and families.

The topic of climate change was central to a large number of side events over the two weeks. Each event I attended, mentioned the fact that women and girls are the subgroup most vulnerable when natural disaster and climate change strike. One interesting point made, was disasters can manifest discrimination. Storms are not classist, sexist, or racist but disaster risk management and relief can be and this needs to be addressed. There was also a strong call to recognise the agency of individuals and communities being faced by climate change. It is important recognise and encourage this rather than just seeing them as victims or vulnerable.

Two common ideas presented at many of the events I attended, was the need for gender sensitive policy and to call to stop looking at development strategies with a silo mentality. To an integrated approach must be taken to achieve sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda. One example was the link between gender equality and climate change - one cannot be achieved without simultaneously combating the other. The link between the education of girls and a smaller carbon footprint is undeniable. Evidence suggests that girls who attend school and receive quality education, has positive and cascading effects, including: reduced incidence of disease, higher life expectancies, more economic prosperity, fewer forced marriages, and fewer children (address this bit – why is that a good thing?). Better access to education equips women with the skills to deal with
the antagonizing effects of climate change, and gives them the tools to influence how their communities mitigate against it.

During the second week of the commission I was humbled to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of IPA at a side event, “Shouldering the Burden- Rural Women & Climate Induced Displacement”. Sitting in between two idols, the first being Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, executive director of UN Women. The second was Miriam Traore Chazalnoel - a migration, climate change and environmental specialist at the International Organisation for Migration. This was truly a once in a life time experience I will never forget. To make it even more special I was able to share my personal experiences and interactions with women in Vanuatu and how climate change is affecting their lives.

Although local and global communities have a long way to go before reaching gender equality, the outcomes produced by CSW62, have depicted the international hope that it will one day be achieved by all. With five resolutions being adopted by the member states, progress is being made, and many have shown their commitment to changing for the better and achieving equality for all regardless of gender.

To read more about these adopted resolutions please visit: http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/62/outcome/csw62-agreed-conclusions-advanced-unedited-version-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3837

To find out more about all of the agreed conclusions please visit: http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/62/outcome/csw62-agreed-conclusions-advanced-unedited-version-en.pdf?la=en&vs=3837

By Molly Gerke