



NGO NEWS

BY TERESA KOTTURAN SCN MARCH 2020

CSocD58 side event addresses youth homelessness

According to the UN Secretary-General's Report on affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness: "Homelessness is not merely a lack of physical housing, but is also a loss of family, community and a sense of belonging. It is a failure of multiple systems that are supposed to enable people to benefit from economic growth and lead a safe and decent life... it affects people of all ages, genders and socio-economic backgrounds... it is a gross violation of the rights to adequate housing." Homelessness is a problem in both developed and developing countries. Based on national reports, it is estimated that 150 million people, or 2 percent of the world population, are homeless. Homelessness among adolescents and youth is a major concern for many countries; youth (those aged 15–24) have been identified as the population group most at risk of becoming homeless. Most vulnerable among them are the adolescents and youth ageing out of foster care and juvenile justice systems. In the United States, it is estimated that 4.2 million children and youth will have at least one experience of homelessness on their own during a given year.

The UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty states that 5.4 million children are in institutional



The Sisters of Charity Federation co-sponsored this side event, "Youth Homelessness: Interrogating Policy Gaps and Legislative Vacuum." From left: Sister Teresa Kotturan, SCN; Diamonique Perry (youth presenter) and Arleys Nolasco from [The New York Foundling](#), and Sister Carol De Angelo SC (New York).

care around the globe. There is a steady flow of youth who "age out" of the care system. According to National Alliance to End Homelessness, in the United States, "more than 20,000 youth age out of foster care each year." On a magical date, they become adults and are told to go out and find a home to live in a society where affordable homes are not available and get a job to support themselves

where unemployment is rampant. Developmentally, youth have not reached the level of physical, mental and emotional maturity to shoulder such responsibilities. Science tells us that the decision-making center of the brain (prefrontal cortex) is not fully developed until the age of 25.

The Sisters of Charity Federation co-sponsored this side event, "Youth Homelessness: Interrogating Policy Gaps and Legislative Vacuum" at the [58th Session of the Commission for Social Development](#) (CSocD58) in February. Speakers at the event were from Malta, Slovenia, India, and the United States, who were experts in the field as service providers to youth experiencing homelessness and university students who had been

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SC Federation at CSocD58: Photo Gallery



From left: Sister Teresa Kotturan, SCN; Sister Marion Sheridan, CSM; Sister Carol De Angelo SC (New York); Sister Ellen La Capria, DC; Sister Margaret Tuley, DC. Back row from left: Mary Ann Dantuano, AIC, and Natalie Boone, AIC.



Sister Teresa with Fr. Martin Puthussery SJ, Head of Labor and Migration at Indian Social Institute, Bangalore, India. Fr. Martin attended the Civil Society Forum during the 58th Session of the Commission for Social Development on Feb. 14 in New York. The Sisters of Charity of Nazareth in India collaborate with Fr. Martin in their ministry to migrants in Kerala.



Sister Seon-Mi Jin, SC (Seton Hill) in the UN General Assembly Hall. She had hoped to have a second UN internship and be a part of the Commission on the Status of Women this month. The outbreak of the coronavirus led to the postponement/cancellation or scaling down of all meetings at the UN. Seon-Mi has returned to Caritas Christi in Greensburg. Hoping she can come back another time.



During the Civil Society Forum: (from left) Sister Teresa Kotturan, SCN; Natalie Boone, AIC; Sister Margaret Tuley, DC; Fr. Guillermo Campuzano, CM; Sister Ellen La Capria, DC; Mary Ann Dantuano, AIC; and Sister Margaret O'Dwyer, DC.



Runa Ray, a sustainable fashion designer from Bangalore, India, also participated in the Commission for Social Development. As a designer, she is constantly searching for innovative methods for “green fashion”—using natural fibers that are planet-friendly and biodegradable. To reduce wastage and water pollution, she uses chlorophyll printing and water painting. Through fashion activism and education, she raises awareness among youth about the environment. She has exhibited her designs at the UN.



Sisters Teresa Kotturan, SCN; Marion Sheridan, CSM; and Carol De Angelo, SC.

Commission on the Status of Women 2020

More than 12,000 people from government and civil society had registered to participate in the 64th session of the [UN Commission on the Status of Women](#) March 9–20, to mark the 25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) (1995). In Beijing, the world acknowledged that “Women’s rights are human rights and human rights are women’s rights.” Five years have gone by since the adoption of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#). So, the 2020 session was a pivotal one to take stock of the achievements made and current challenges that affect the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and its contribution towards the full realization of the 2030 Agenda. A year-long preparation for the conference had completed 173 national-level reviews on the progress made and challenges encountered as well as regional reviews through regional intergovernmental meetings and expert group meetings on current issues and prospects

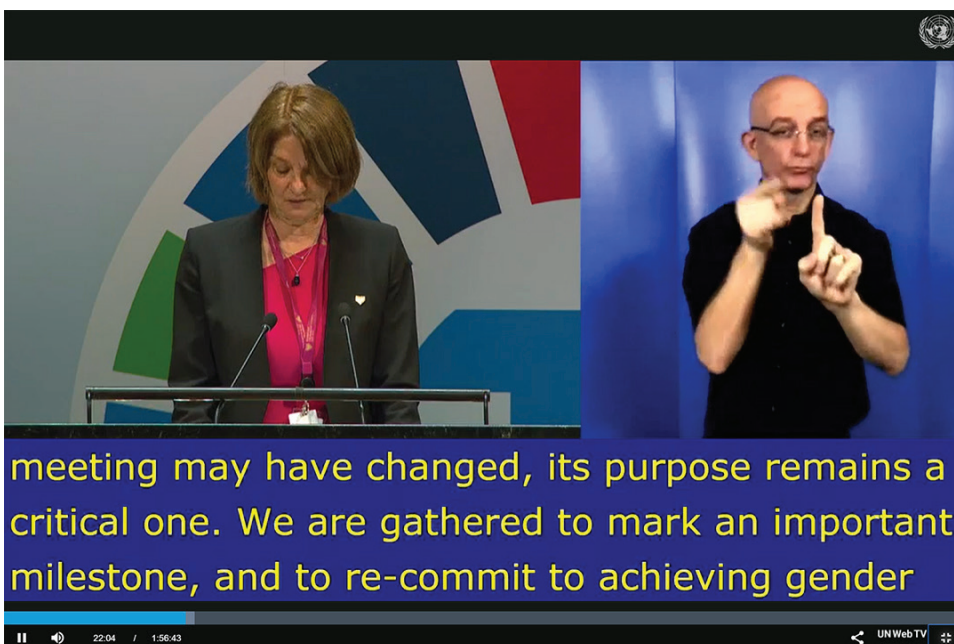


Sisters Seon Mi Jin, SC (Seton Hill); Margaret O'Dwyer DC, NGO Representative, Company of the Daughters of Charity, and Teresa Kotturan, SCN.

for gender equality and women’s rights. All the preparations came to no fruition due to the coronavirus outbreak.

The commission was scaled down from two weeks to a single session of two hours on March 9, where several high-level speakers from the UN, a civil society representative and a youth representative from Afghanistan addressed a small gathering of member state representatives and NGOs prior to the [adoption of the](#)

[political declaration](#). The declaration, though lacking in ambition, will provide a roadmap for the member states to accelerate their strategies for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. The UN is as strong as the member states, and the member states are as strong as their citizens. The struggle of equality is a long way ahead, and let us walk that road as members of [Generation Equality](#). [Watch video of the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women](#) on UN WebTV.



meeting may have changed, its purpose remains a critical one. We are gathered to mark an important milestone, and to re-commit to achieving gender

International Population Development Conference

On the 25th anniversary of the ICPD, 6,000 world leaders, scholars, rights advocates and faith leaders gathered in Nairobi, Kenya Nov. 12–14, 2019 to outline new pathways for attaining the rights of women and girls. The [Nairobi Summit on ICPD25](#) was co-convened by the governments of Denmark and Kenya along with the United Nations Population Fund. The conference provided a platform for marginalized groups and grassroots advocates to engage heads of state and policymakers on how to realize the rights and health of all people. (The 1994 conference in Cairo, Egypt, included 20,000 delegates from governments and all sectors of society.)

Since the first ICPD conference in Cairo, maternal mortality is down by 44 percent: 4 million women who would have otherwise died in pregnancy or childbirth are alive today. The world is also witnessing demographic shifts: some countries in the world are facing rapid ageing population, while others are preparing for large cohorts of young people.

Addressing the conference, Uhuru Kenyatta, president of Kenya, called for the elimination of practices, policies and laws that undermine the rights of women, especially the elimination of female genital mutilation (FGM), a serious violation of human rights of women and girls. He pointed out the “most important participants”—the victims of gender violence, discrimination and abuse—were absent from the summit. He was referring to the 1-in-5 women around the world who experience gender-based violence every day; the 830 women and girls who die every day from pregnancy complications and childbirth; the 4 million girls who

have to endure the painful and traumatic effects of FGM, and the 33,000 girls who are married off every day before the age of 18.

The summit agreed upon three critical commitments: to bring preventable maternal deaths, gender-based violence and harmful practices, as well as the unmet need for family planning, to zero. There is optimism that these unmet goals will be met with all the commitments and financial pledges made by governments, civil society and private sector in a human rights framework.

To realize the Cairo dream of 1989, now concluded in Nairobi in 2019, requires \$264 billion in the next decade. Just to bring maternal mortality to zero in the 120 countries that account for over 95 percent of maternal mortality will cost \$115.5 billion in key maternal health interventions. Ending the unmet need for family planning will cost \$68.5 billion and ending gender-based violence will require an investment of \$42 billion in 132 priority countries.

On the financing question, Achim Steiner Administrator of the UN Development Program stated, “This discussion is not about dollars and cents, but values and choices... It is about helping societies to be better informed and to make better choices. The issue is not what it will cost to bring them to zero, but the cost of not bringing them to zero.” To reach zero in all three areas, governments will have to demonstrate a political will to make them priority issues and allocate financial commitments. The Nairobi Summit reenergized the global community and breathed new life into the ICPD agenda, and amplified gains made since 1994.



Links

Watch/listen: “[This Time Around ICPD25 Commitments Will Be Met](#)”

Interview with Bettina Maas, UNFPA representative for Ethiopia

Read: “[Mixing Politics and Religion, the US Stalls UN Work on Women’s Rights](#),” Nov. 26, 2019 by Barbara Crossette, PassBlue | Independent Coverage of the UN

UN2020: 75th anniversary of the United Nations

As the United Nations is readying for the 75th anniversary of its foundation in 2020, the civil society has begun the [UN2020 Initiative](#) “to take stock and strengthen the UN system in partnership with civil society, governments, and the UN in support of a people-centered multilateralism. We believe that strengthening the UN system means improving multilateral relations and structures for global problem solving. To this end: we involve the progressive voice of civil society in the conversation about the UN we need to meet the challenges of the 21st century.”

Today, nationalism is on the rise, and multilateralism is being called into question by powerful governments. International cooperation is lacking to tackle global threats like, climate change, military conflicts, inequality, pandemics, etc. The UN General Assembly President reiterated that the 75th anniversary “is a chance to make the UN more effective, more transparent, more accountable and more relevant to ‘we the peoples.’”

But the official program of the UN75 does not envision a meaningful role for civil society. Right from its inception 1945, civil society has worked together with member states on the text of the [UN Charter](#) and more recently, in the negotiations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as in policy formulation, awareness raising and implementation strategies.

The UN2020 Campaign is working to develop a civil society [Declaration and Plan of Action](#) to be adopted at the UN75 People’s Forum for the UN we Need, taking place on April 23–24, 2020. Those who are part of the campaign are urged to provide input into the declaration which will focus on the achievements of the UN as well as the structural issues that need to be addressed to strengthen and improve the UN. The civil society wants to have an ongoing dialogue with the UN beyond the 75th anniversary.

Visit <http://un2020.org/> for more information.



This year marks 25 years since the adoption of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), the most comprehensive global agenda for girls and women in all areas of life. 2020 should be a transformative year for Gender Equality.

The [Generation Equality Forum](#) is a global gathering for gender equality, convened by UN Women and co-chaired by France and Mexico, with the leadership and partnership of civil society. The Forum is scheduled to kick-off in Mexico City, Mexico, on May 7–8, 2020 and culminate in Paris, France, on July 7–10, 2020.

Generation Equality has six Action Coalition themes: Gender based violence; Economic justice and rights; Bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health and rights; Feminist action for climate justice; Technology and innovation for gender justice; and Feminist movements and leadership.

Action coalitions are global, innovative, multi-stakeholder partnerships that will mobilize governments, civil society, international organizations and private sector to catalyze collective action, spark global and local conversations among generations, drive increased public and private investment, and deliver concrete, game-changing results across generations for girls and women. Each Action Coalition will launch a targeted set of concrete, ambitious and immediate actions within the period of 2020–2025 to deliver tangible impact on gender equality and girls’ and women’s human rights.

Youth homelessness *continued from page 1*

through the foster care system as well as homelessness. (A young woman who spoke at the event was from [The New York Foundling](#), part of the Sisters of Charity of New York ministry network.) Service providers were focusing on empowering the youth at risk in safe shelters and after-care homes through formal and non-formal education, healthcare, job placement, life skills, etc. to assist them in their transition process.

Whether developed or developing, most countries in the world have not put in place adequate legislation or policies to provide supportive services to help transition this vulnerable population, who have been under the care of the state until their 18th birthday. There is a lack of policy coherence and system failures at all levels, along with a lack of political will and budgetary allocations to provide for the needs of vulnerable segments of society for affordable, safe and adequate housing, and social protection systems along with basic services—especially to youth who age out of institutional care. Or where policies do exist, there is apathy and failure from the governments to implement them. While targeted policies are needed to respond to at-risk children and their families, governments should focus on long-term policies to address the root causes and prevent youth homelessness. High-level policies need to be translated into ground-level strategies and practices. Implementation takes creativity, innovation and commitment.

The homeless youth population is very diverse in terms of gender, sexual orientation, race, descent, language, exposure to violence and trauma, abandonment, etc. The needs of young homeless women are very different from that of young men or that of persons from sexual minorities. These differences need to be considered while planning for policies around interventions and supportive services.

Here are some of the suggestions the speakers left with the participants.

- **Transition planning:** Youth preparing to age out from foster/state care need to be provided with life skills, internships/jobs, budgeting, saving habits, handling money, learning to build resumes and credit, individual rights and entitlements, etc. to help them navigate the new world.
- **Aftercare services:** Strong aftercare services are essential to extend support and services

to care-leavers. These services should have a built-in monitoring mechanism. The young need to know that the system has not abandoned them.

- **Crisis support:** Single-window support centers for crisis support for two years after exiting the aftercare program
- **Housing options:** Provide access to not only transitional housing options, but also to long-term housing options, especially to youth who cannot return to family.
- **Mental health services:** Homeless youth who are either in shelters, couch surf with friends/relatives/strangers experience violence, hostility, discrimination, and anxiety. There is a need to destigmatize mental health issues and make services more accessible to youth experiencing mental health issues as well as their family members.
- **Listen to youth:** Our responses to youth homelessness should be informed by the experiences and insights of youth who have been homeless. They are the experts and need to be at the table while planning interventions.
- **Address structural causes:** We need to shift our focus from mitigating the effects of homelessness to addressing the structural causes of homelessness.

It is fitting to conclude with the words of a speaker: “But all of these services will mean nothing unless we provide every child with our unconditional love and absolute respect. Everything that we do for our children needs to come not just from an obligation to care for them, but from our deep and abiding love for them (and they need to know and feel that love.)”



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