



# THE HISTORY OF NGO CSW/NY

A LOOK AT THE NGO COMMITTEE ON THE  
STATUS OF WOMEN, NY FROM 1972 TO 2023

PREPARED BY  
NGO CSW/NY HISTORY WORKING GROUP



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# WHO WE ARE

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women, NY (NGO CSW/NY) is a convener of global civil society for the annual UN CSW and global gender equality advocacy. We are a coalition of NGOs, civil society organizations, and individuals concerned with gender equality and the rights and empowerment of women and girls.

Through our annual NGO CSW Forum, advocacy with UN Member States, information sharing with our community, and youth engagement, we work to bridge the gap between global civil society, grassroots organizations, and the official UN Commission on the Status of Women process in New York.



## WHAT WE DO

### NGO CSW FORUM

The NGO CSW Forum is a civil society gathering that runs parallel to the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). It provides civil society the opportunity to engage with the CSW processes and sessions without any special qualifications (such as ECOSOC-accreditation). The NGO CSW Forum includes hundreds of events that inform, engage, and inspire grassroots efforts to empower women and girls. The Forum gives CSOs and NGOs an opportunity to host their own in-person or virtual Parallel Events as part of the two-week forum. [Learn more about the NGO CSW Forum and how to participate.](#)



## **MONTHLY MEETINGS**

NGO CSW/NY's Monthly Meetings are an essential part of our work to engage our global constituency in the UN CSW and NGO CSW Forum processes, as well as global gender equality advocacy in general. Each month, the meeting addresses a different topic related to the CSW priority theme.

## **COMMUNITY BUILDING**

Creating a supportive, inclusive, and empowered community is very important to us at NGO CSW/NY. Through our NGO CSW Forum, Monthly Meetings, and online presence, we bring together women's rights activists, feminists, and gender equality advocates from all walks of life to work toward global equality for women and girls in all their diversity.

# **A PLATFORM FOR THE VOICES AND LEADERSHIP OF FEMINISTS & WOMEN'S RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS GLOBALLY**



# OVERVIEW

**2022 marked the 50th anniversary of NGO CSW/NY.** To commemorate this momentous occasion, we organized several campaigns and events to celebrate our history and reflect upon how we've evolved throughout the past 50 years. However, as we looked back on our history and connected with our community and former Chairs, we realized that we did not have documentation of our full history and how NGO CSW/NY has grown and transformed throughout the years. Thus, this comprehensive project was born.

Simply, the objective of this project is to document the 50-year history of NGO CSW/NY in one place. However, we also want to capture the narrative of that history and how it connected and coincided with significant milestones in the history of the global women's movement, especially at the UN, generally. With our mandate of convening global feminist civil society for advocacy at the UN CSW, it's essential to understand the context of what was happening in the world and how it affected women and girls in all their diversity. For each era cataloged in this document—marked by the tenure of each NGO CSW/NY Chair—you will find a short overview of the significant events that were happening during that time related to global women's advocacy at the UN.

Each chapter in this history is represented by a former (or the present) Chair's tenure written in their own words. These chapters give a glimpse of what NGO CSW/NY was like during that time, including their experiences, challenges, and successes, as well as significant relationships the organization had with other entities like UN agencies, Member States, civil society organizations and/or activists.

We hope that this project presents the robust 50-year history of NGO CSW/NY and how we have grown and transformed throughout the years. We are so grateful to the former Chairs for sharing their experiences and wisdom and for their continued devotion to the rights of women and girls globally.





# PAST CHAIRS' REFLECTIONS

THESE CHAPTERS GIVE A GLIMPSE OF WHAT NGO CSW/NY WAS LIKE DURING THE TIME OF EACH CHAIR'S TENURE.



# ESTHER HYMER

Chair of NGO CSW/NY during  
**1972 - 1982**

**INTERNATIONAL  
FEDERATION FOR  
BUSINESS AND  
PROFESSIONAL  
WOMEN (IFBPW)**



# HIGHLIGHTS



**FIRST CHAIR OF  
NGO CSW/NY**

**MARCHED FOR THE RATIFICATION OF  
THE 19TH AMENDMENT**

**CHAIRPERSON OF THE NGO COMMITTEE  
OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR**

**CHAired THE NGO COMMITTEE ON THE  
DECADE FOR WOMEN**



# ESTHER HYMER

## 1972 – 1982

Authored by Susan O'Malley & Leslie Wright

**"SHE WAS AN  
INTEGRAL PART OF  
THE NGO WOMEN'S  
MOVEMENT TO  
INCREASE THE  
REPRESENTATION AND  
PARTICIPATION OF  
WOMEN IN THE UN."**

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women, NY was created in 1972 as one of the NGO Committees of the Conference of NGOs (CoNGO). It was formed in preparation for the International Women's Year (1975), the UN Decade of Women (1975-1985), and the First World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975.

Its first chair was Esther Hymer of the International Federation for Business and Professional Women (IFBPW).

In 1998 on the occasion of Esther Wanner Hymer's 100th birthday UN Secretary General Kofi Annan wrote, "For half a century, as the representative of

the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW) at the UN, you actively promoted the concerns of women. Your untiring efforts influenced almost all of the resolutions of the General Assembly and its subsidiary bodies which affect the status of women." The previous year SG Annan had also honored Hymer: "Still active in promoting women's equality, Mrs. Hymer represents the best tradition of NGO activism in the United Nations."

Born in Chicago in 1898, Hymer marched for the ratification of the 19th Amendment which gave women the right to vote in 1920. Her involvement with the work of the National Committee for Lasting Peace (1942-1951) led her to the June 1945 conference in San Francisco that established the United Nations. At the conference Hymer became aware of the potential influence of NGOs. She became Director of International Relations for IFBPW and its NGO Representative to the UN for 60 years. IFBPW was granted ECOSOC consultative status in 1947.

Interestingly, there is no reference to NGO CSW/NY and Esther Hymer in *Esther W. Hymer, A Bus to 42nd St.* by Sylvia G. Perry & Livia M Ricci. Nor is there a reference to NGO CSW/NY in the descriptions of the contents in the 50 boxes of Hymer's papers housed in the Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute in Cambridge, MA.

When the International Women's Year was set for 1975, Esther Hymer was elected Chairperson of the NGO Committee of the International Women's Year, a position she held from 1972-1982 (Perry & Ricci, 34). In 1972 Helvi Sipilä from Finland was appointed the first woman UN Assistant Secretary-General. Hymer chaired the 85-member NGO Committee on the Decade of Women. In 1975 the first UN World Conference on Women was held in Mexico City, and A World Plan of Action was adopted. INSTRAW, an Institute for Training and Research for Women, was established after the Mexico City Conference; in 1976 UNIFEM, a Voluntary Fund to Support the Decade for Women, was established.

In 1980 at the second UN World Conference on Women in Copenhagen, which Hymer attended, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

(CEDAW) was signed by 75 Member States making it legally binding. CEDAW had been unanimously adopted by the 34th session of the UN General Assembly.

During Esther Hymer's 10-year term as Chair of NGO CSW/NY, she was an integral part of the NGO women's movement to increase the representation and participation of women in the UN. From 1972-1982 NGO CSW/NY was not a membership organization with monthly meetings and the yearly NGO CSW Forum with hundreds of parallel events. It was just getting started.

There is a Nature Preserve and trail named for Esther Hymer in Shrewsbury, New Jersey, where Esther and her family lived from 1941.





# KAY FRALEIGH

Chair of NGO CSW/NY during  
**1982 - 1991**

**INTERNATIONAL  
ALLIANCE OF  
WOMEN**



# HIGHLIGHTS

**MAINTAINED A FREE RESEARCH LIBRARY ON THE UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW) AND OTHER IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS CONCERNING THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS**

**CREATED THE ANNUAL NGO CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW) COMMITTEE LUNCHEON**

**MENTORED WOMEN AROUND THE GLOBE**





# KAY FRALEIGH

1982 – 1991

## Tribute to Kay Fraleigh

*By: Denise Scotto, Esq.,*

*Past Vice Chair of NGO CSW/NY*

**"IT IS UNDISPUTED  
THAT KAY WAS A  
LEADER IN  
ADVANCING  
WOMEN'S RIGHTS  
GLOBALLY."**

I remember clearly the exact moment when I met Kay Fraleigh; it was back in the 1990s. At the time, when the International Criminal Court Prep-Coms were held in the UN NY Headquarters, as a young public interest lawyer with trial experience, I was appointed to attend as an NGO delegate. During these periods, many special events were organized, and Kay and I met at one of those early receptions. Kay was representing the International Alliance of Women and she was with Eleanor

Brown, Esq., and June Willenz, other champions of women's rights, who were all wanting to learn more from me about our efforts relating to 'gender justice.'

Without question, they adopted me on the spot. Little did I know who the giant Kay was, as they introduced me to the history of the UN World Conferences on Women, and, before I knew it, little by little, they brought me into their world, into the work of NGO CSW/NY. Kay effortlessly became an informal mentor, and, in her capacity with the United Methodist Women, she maintained a research library with documents relating to the UN CSW and other important meetings, briefings and events concerning the rights of women and girls which she provided access to freely. While her library was an essential research body to many who wrote articles and books about the UN and women's rights, it also was a great resource to those, including students, who were involved in advancing women's rights in their country of origin.

It is undisputed that Kay was a leader in advancing women's rights globally. She held many leadership positions that impacted advocacy on issues that affected women and girls around the world. She served as the committee Chair of the UN Decade for Women from 1975- 1985 during which time the UN World Conferences

on Women were held—in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, and Nairobi in 1985.

Kay was also Chair of the NGO CSW/NY from 1981 through 1991 and initiated various means to bring NGO representatives together with UN Secretariat staff and UN experts. She was a genuine friend to Peg Snyder, the Founding Director of UNIFEM, Noleen Nyzer, Director of UNIFEM and Angela E.V. King, UN Special Advisor on Gender Issues & Advancement of Women as well as the many Directors of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women and INSTRAW. In particular, she created the Annual NGO CEDAW Committee Luncheon which was held when the CEDAW Committee was based in NY in the Secretariat of the UN DAW as well as the Annual UNIFEM CEDAW Reception. She was devoted to Esther Hymer, the founding Chair of the NGO CSW/NY and carried on the legacy of promoting world peace. Let us remember the UN's focus on "Women, Peace, and Development."

For those of you who are unaware, the UN Commission on the Status of Women was held in Vienna, Austria before returning to NY Headquarters. Kay was always there in Vienna and encouraged others to join her. She became a bridge between those who were unable to attend those sessions and with those on the ground in all corners of the globe providing news and updates about the UN CSW's work and outcomes.

Another historical piece of Committee information is that Kay had an office on the 12th floor of the Church Center. This is where she maintained the impressive library of documents, and, in some ways, more importantly, where women would congregate. In fact, the NGO CSW/NY office was run out of Kay's office until Past Chair Leslie Wright updated its working methods and professionalized the Committee.

It is not an exaggeration to observe that Kay mentored thousands of women from across the globe. As many of us know, Zoe Chang, my former colleague from the UN DAW, remarked, "She was the kindest, most inclusive person." Additionally, many NGOs accredited to the UN held their meetings in Kay's office including one of the legal organizations that I represent at the UN. Even when the office was moved from the 12th floor to the basement level of the Church Center, women would flock there at any time to hold meetings or to simply visit Kay.

When Kay eventually retired, we organized a special Luncheon held in the UN Staff Café (pre UN Capital Master Plan). Peg Snyder, Zoe Chang, other UN DAW staff, Mia Adjali from the Methodist Women and Esther Hymer's daughter attended along with members of various UN accredited NGOs. Needless to say, Kay was thrilled but said she didn't want all the fuss.

One of the things that we see when we look on the walls of the second floor of the Church Center is the number of beautifully framed posters relating to women. We have Kay to thank for that as she also collected them. There is so much more to share, but, I will sum up with the words of Carl Murrell, Representative of the Baha'i International Community to the UN that he wrote to me which conveys so much in a short and succinct manner, "She was a treasure."



# MARY POWER

Chair of NGO CSW/NY during  
**1991 - 1995**

**BAHA'I  
INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNITY**



# HIGHLIGHTS

**UN FOURTH WORLD  
CONFERENCE ON  
WOMEN IN BEIJING,  
CHINA 1995**



**SERVED ON THE GLOBAL NGO FACILITATING  
COMMITTEE, WHICH ORGANIZED THE NGO  
FORUM ON WOMEN IN HUAIROU, CHINA  
PARALLEL TO THE WORLD CONFERENCE ON  
WOMEN**

**DECADES-LONG ADVOCACY FOR THE GIRL  
CHILD**



# MARY POWER

1991–1995

Mary Power served as the Chair of the NGO Committee on CSW from 1991 to 1995. In that position, Ms. Power also served on the Global NGO Facilitating Committee, which organized the NGO Forum on Women, held in Huairou, China from 30 August to 8 September 1995, in parallel with the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in September 1995. Mary was also director of the Baha'i International Community's UN Office for the Advancement of Women until her retirement in 1997.

## Girl Child

"In 1974, at the Commission on the Status of Women, we made a statement on the importance of the girl child and the importance of educating the girl child. There were really not a lot of reactions to it at that time. However, in 1995 when I was in

Beijing for the Fourth World Conference on Women, it was an issue that has come a long way. And it became part of the Beijing Program for Action. It was really a thrilling moment. It was influencing the process to the ultimate. And the director of the office for the advancement of women at the UN came up to me and we high-fived! It was really a victory. But it took time. Everything takes time. It's process, process, process."

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**"EVERYTHING TAKES TIME.  
IT'S PROCESS, PROCESS,  
PROCESS."**

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## Beijing Conference

"In 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing was described by Conference officials as the largest international meeting ever convened under UN auspices. NGOs contributed substantially through direct participation in the general debate as well as through the work of the NGO Forum. In a message to the Conference delivered by his special representatives, United Nations Secretary-General



Boutros Boutros-Ghali called this a demonstration of “the new partnership in international life which has been forged between governmental and non-governmental organizations” and to the “new legitimacy of the organizations of civil society as actors on the international scene.”



I served as a member of the global Facilitating Committee for the NGO Forum in Huairou, China. This was the civil society forum parallel to the

Women’s Conference, held in a resort town 40km outside of Beijing. There were around 30,000 participants from over 185 countries.

The persistent rain, the scattered setup of the Forum, the tentative schedule and the tight security were among the difficulties we faced. Yet, we accomplished our primary objectives and succeeded in a manner which surpassed our highest hopes. Each day 400 activities, sometimes more, were scheduled at the Forum and participants forged ahead, attending meetings, networking, holding performances, rain or not.”



*Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995*



# SUDHA ACHARYA

Chair of NGO CSW/NY during  
**1995 - 1999**

**ALL INDIA WOMEN'S  
CONFERENCE (AIWC)**



# HIGHLIGHTS

## FIRST NGO CSW FORUM IN 1996

**ENERGIZING MOMENTUM FOLLOWING THE  
FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN  
IN BEIJING 1995**

**NGO AND REGIONAL  
CAUCUSES AT THE CSW**



**DAILY BRIEFINGS AT THE CSW WITH CIVIL  
SOCIETY, UN ENTITIES, AND MEMBER  
STATES**



# SUDHA ACHARYA

1995 – 1999

I became a member of NGO/CSW as a representative of All India Women's Conference (AIWC) in 1974 at a very exciting time. The first UN conference on women took place in Mexico City just the following year. Esther Hymer who had been associated with the UN since its inception and had been working for the advancement of women for decades, was the highly effective first Chair of the Committee. Other stalwarts such as Kay Fraleigh, the Vice-Chair, and Ann Walker, who later established the International Women's Tribune Center in 1976, were hard at work planning the NGO Tribune in Mexico City. I attended the first global conference in 1975 and my life changed. I became a devoted member of the Committee.

It was wonderful to work with Esther and then Kay when she became the Chair of the Committee. Kay was so

knowledgeable and passionate about the issues; she became a mentor to many of us. Her knowledge of CEDAW was remarkable. Finally, I would say that Kay was responsible for making CCUN the home for NGO/CSW.

My more active role in the Committee started when I was a Vice Chair for two terms with Mary Power as Chair and Virginia Maynard as the other Vice-Chair. I was responsible for scheduling parallel events during the Prep-Coms for the Beijing conference, and was an active member of the NGO/CSW committee for the conference. I attended the amazing Beijing conference in 1995 and helped with the NGO Forum.

I took over as the Chair of the Committee when we returned from Beijing with Nancy Wallace as Vice-Chair in the first term and Eleanor Brown during the second term. I can still feel the euphoria, the excitement about the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and the critical areas of concern that UNCSW would address each year. We prepared with great

enthusiasm. We created Task Forces on the critical areas that were being addressed by the Commission and prepared white papers with input from a large number of

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**"I TREASURE MY  
ASSOCIATION WITH OUR  
COMMITTEE THAT HAS  
DEVELOPED INTO SUCH A  
BIG RESOURCE  
SUPPORTING NGOS FROM  
ALL OVER THE WORLD IN  
FURTHERING THE  
ADVANCEMENT OF  
WOMEN!"**

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NGOs. The task forces were led by two Co-Chairs, one from our Committee and another from an outside organization. This way there was wider participation. The relationships with NGO/CSWs in Geneva and Vienna were strengthened. Members of Geneva and Vienna committees also contributed to the work of task forces. We made sure that vocal and effective organizations such as WEDO (Bella Abzug), and Center for Women's Global Leadership (Charlotte Bunch) were involved so that it was a strong and unified effort at these sessions with NGO/CSW NY leading any negotiations with the UN.

Once the Commission started, various NGO caucuses, specifically the regional caucuses, started meeting and were very active and effective. We managed to get the conference room where the UNCSW session was being held for our NGO Briefing for 45 minutes every day before the UNCSW session started. And we made sure UN officials, Member States and prominent, active NGOs briefed the NGO community at our daily briefings.

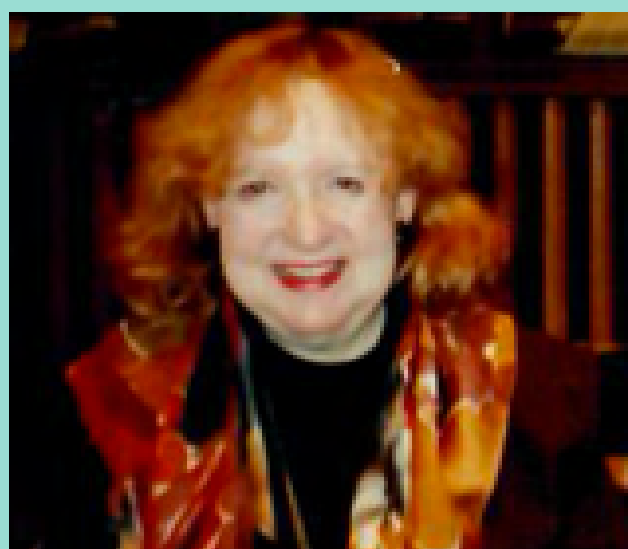
Esther Hymer, who had never missed a Committee meeting, turned 100 in 1999. There were tributes galore including one from the Secretary General, Kofi Annan, and the UN Commission on the Status of Women. It was a proud moment for us all and I had the privilege of arranging the celebration by the Committee. The luncheon was at full capacity with NGO representatives, Member States, the Chair of UNCSW, Angela King, Noelyn Heizer and many others who showed deep appreciation of Esther's extraordinary work.

I treasure my association with our Committee that has developed into such a big resource supporting NGOs from all over the world in furthering the advancement of women!

# ELEANOR BROWN

Chair of NGO CSW/NY during  
**1999 JUNE - AUGUST**

**INTERNATIONAL  
FEDERATION OF  
WOMEN LAWYERS**



Eleanor Brown, Esq. joined the NGO CSW/NY Executive Committee during Sudha's term in 1995-1997 and became Vice Chair in 1997. She was a lively and passionate advocate. Eleanor was a lawyer by profession and was passionate about helping women who were survivors of domestic violence.

In 1999, she was elected Chair, but sadly passed away a short time later. She is remembered warmly by those who knew and worked with her.



# LESLIE WRIGHT

Chair of NGO CSW/NY during  
**1999 - 2003**

**WORLD  
ASSOCIATION OF  
GIRL GUIDES; ZONTA  
INTERNATIONAL**



# HIGHLIGHTS

## 501C3 STATUS



## BEGINNING OF INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

## DEVELOPED MANY MORE ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS DURING THE FORUM

## EMPHASIS ON AND EXPANSION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND BRANDING EFFORTS



# LESLIE WRIGHT

1999 – 2003

In the early 1990s I had the privilege of working as the Head of Communications for the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) in London. As part of my responsibilities, I supervised the work of the volunteer teams at UN Headquarters and Offices – New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi. I also wrote the WAGGGS strategy for participation in the Beijing Conference on Women, but because I returned to the US before Beijing was held, I never had the opportunity to attend. Marlene Parenzan, one of the WAGGGS representatives at the UN Office in Vienna, was on the planning committee for the NGO Forum held in Huairou. The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was headquartered in Vienna at that time. It was the experience at WAGGGS that provided background for chairing the NGO CSW NY– a background for which I was infinitely thankful.

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**"OUR GOAL WAS TO  
INCREASE GLOBAL  
PARTICIPATION, GIVING  
VOICE TO AS MANY WOMEN  
AS WE COULD REACH."**

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In May 1999, Eleanor Brown, Esq, UN Representative of the International Federation of Women Lawyers, was elected to chair the NGO Committee on the Status of Women in New York (NGO CSW NY). I was elected as the Vice Chair.

Other members of the NGO CSW NY Executive Committee elected to serve at that time included Mary Singletary, International Council of Women, Secretary; Eileen Healy, Disabled Peoples International, Treasurer; Members at Large Bani Dugal from the Baha 'I International and Caroline Themm from Soroptimist International; and Sudha Acharya, All India Women's Conference as Past Chair, Ex Officio. Later the

Executive Committee included Joan Fyfe (Rotary International), Denise Scotto, Esq. (International Federation of Women Lawyers), Judy Lear (Gray Panthers), Jackie Shapiro (Zonta International).

The sad and untimely death of Eleanor Brown early in her term meant that I would become the Chair – unexpectedly. I had only moved to New York City in 1998 and had been a WAGGGS representative at the UN in New York for barely a year.

The Committee's priority was to begin to organize for the major 5-year review and appraisal of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA) – Women 2000. In addition to the expected review at the regular UN Commission meeting in March, there would be a Special Session of the UN General Assembly in June 2000. This work would be coordinated with the NGO CSW, diplomats and staff at the UN, and constituents worldwide.

If you recall, there was no social media at that time. The internet was rarely used, so correspondence and advisories came by fax, post or phone. Photocopies were an important way of sharing documents and information. While we were really challenged to provide as much information as possible, we were fortunate in that

the Church Center for the UN provided us with needed meeting space, and the UN itself offered us large meeting rooms during the sessions along with the use of a photocopy machine and copies of documents. This was true for most of the time I served as the Chair. Caucuses met in the UN, NGO side events (now called parallel events), and daily briefings were held in the UN.

Luncheons, receptions and special events were also held in the UN, and we were not charged for room rental or security!

During this time, I was elected Vice President for the Conference of NGOs (CoNGO) and found myself stretched among duties for WAGGGS, the NGO CSW NY and CoNGO. I was also elected for a second term as Chair of the NGO CSW NY.

The review and appraisal Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Beijing +5 took place in June 2000 and was called "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century."

During that first year, when we were occupied with planning for the March and June events – a major undertaking – we were a small group with no office and no paid staff. We ran everything from the

CoNGO offices with wonderful volunteer help. In addition to the planning for these events, we also coordinated numerous subcommittees – Violence against Women, organized by Carl Murrell (Baha 'I), and Older Women, coordinated by Jeanne Smith (AARP) and Nancy Lewis, to name two.

We held monthly meetings in the 8th floor conference room at the Church Center for the UN, with invited guests from the UN and various experts from New York.

Bani Dugal became Vice Chair and took on many roles. Bani's work was indispensable. Baha 'I staff were amazing, especially Meredith Krashes who designed nearly all our flyers and Consultation registrations.

We typically held a major event the day before the UN Commission on the Status of Women met in March, called the Consultation, and 2000 was no exception. We were much smaller then – with a membership of about 200. Consultation Day was usually on the Sunday before the CSW sessions began to accommodate travel for international participants. Before 9/11 we were able to host the Consultations at UN Headquarters in a large conference room, with the registration process being held

in the UN Lobby. We held breakout meetings in the smaller conference rooms and the “alphabet” conference rooms, and sometimes in the Church Center. The breakouts were around specific themes, generally connected to the BPfA.

All our work was conducted and organized by NGOs. Dr. Claire Fulcher, International Association of University Women, single-handedly organized all the breakout sessions by hand! She notified everyone about what rooms, what times and what equipment was supplied. She coined the term “parallel events” to distinguish NGO-organized events from those organized by governments or UN offices, and she also insisted that the Consultation remain consultative – with breakout sessions in the afternoon on subjects related to the UN meetings.

We also secured space for special exhibits in the ‘neck’ of the sub-basement in the corridor between the Vienna Café and the elevators. This could be various kinds of art, usually paintings or photography that showed the situation of women relative to the thematic issue that the CSW was examining. It could include information about the work of the various UN agencies on the topic, as well as

the coveted agency “giveaways” like UNIFEM bags or the DAW publication *Women, 2000 + Beyond*.

We had great support from the UN staff – Angela E.V. King, UN Assistant Secretary General and Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women; Louise Frechette, UN Deputy Secretary General; Thoraya Obaid, UN Population Fund; Sree Gururaja, UNICEF; Noleen Heyzer, UNIFEM; Caroline Hannan who spirited ‘gender mainstreaming’ from OSAGI; Yakin Erturk, Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW); Barbara Adams and Koh Miyaoi, NGLS; Amina Adam, Coordination and Outreach from DAW, who helped us coordinate everything with UN DAW, CSW, CEDAW and Security; Hanifa Mezoui, Chief, NGO Section of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA); Paul Hoeffel, Chief, UN Department of Public Information (DPI); Mike McCann, UN Chief of Security and Safety Services; Gordon Tapper, Chief of Special Events and Services. There were many others.

NGO Briefings were led by the various chairs of the NGO CSW organizations in NY, Geneva and Vienna. Some of the chairs that I can recall include Renate Bloem, Conchita Ponchini in Geneva and Maria Jonas, Vienna. We also coordinated meetings with key NGO players, such as Indira Patel from the UK coalition.

NGO Caucus point persons held regular meetings about the issues addressed in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (PFA):

- **Poverty** – Jan Peterson and Anele Heiges
- **Education and Training** – Judy Gordon, Doris Vaughn and Arlene Bartlow
- **Health** – Joyce Braak, MD
- **Violence against Women** – Cecilia Blewer and Corann Okorodudu
- **Women and Armed Conflict** – Felicity Hill and June Willenz
- **Human Rights** – Charlotte Bunch and Bobbie Nassar
- **Power and Decision-making** – June Zeitlin and Avery Ouellette
- **Institutional Mechanisms** – Bani Dugal and Jackie Shapiro
- **Environment** – Maria Arias Ceballos and Cathy Falvo
- **Media** – Anne Walker
- **Youth** – Shireen Lee, Kate Washburn and Laura Hall
- **Girl Child** – Mary Purcell
- **Economy, Globalization and Technology** – Carol Barton
- **Mental Health** – Nancy Wallace and Ricki Kantrowitz
- **Older Women** – Jeanne Smith and Natalie Gordon
- **HIV/AIDS** – Sorosh Roshan

The Chair of the UN CSW in 2000 was Dubravka Simonovic, Croatia. Heading the preparatory committee (prep com) for the June Special Session was Roselyn Odera, Kenya. All of us were called upon to speak to numerous groups about the upcoming June Special Session. One speaking engagement that I especially note was organized by the Brooklyn Borough President, Howard Golden, where I spoke about the Special Session.

There were daily bulletins produced by WomenAction and by IISD (Earth Negotiations). The International Women's Tribune Center, founded by Anne Walker, produced the NGO CSW Book of Days, which outlined significant information for NGOs interested in following the meetings and workshops. When the Tribune Center disbanded, that responsibility fell upon the NGO CSW NY. The cost of the publications was paid for by ads, usually purchased by NGOs and their networks. Copies were given for free at the Consultation, with additional copies sold later at a nominal fee.

There were numerous workshops coordinated by NGOs and governments. The Committee tried to track as many as possible and produced a master list. More were coordinated for the meeting in June as well. 322 NGOs were accredited to the June Special Session and many organizations that were attending the NGO Forum in Huairou began to seek formal association with the UN through DPI and ECOSOC further strengthening the advocacy opportunities.

### **A Look Back**

At that time NGOs accredited to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) or DPI and to the CSW were permitted to observe official meetings inside the conference rooms from the balcony. Official statements and documents were distributed to everyone who attended, including the NGOs.

Although NGO Representatives were not permitted the opportunity to intervene or to discuss issues with government delegations on the floor of the conference rooms, we could make statements on behalf of the NGOs we represented, and we could discuss issues with delegations outside the meeting room. We were not required to produce joint statements or to speak as a caucus. We also could be present for CSW voting on session Resolutions and outcome documents such as the Agreed Conclusions. Sometimes a core group of us would be waiting until the process ended at the wee hours of the night or morning for the final vote on the Agreed Conclusions.

Our charge for all this work – \$25 for the Consultation, lunch and information packet. \$15 for the orientation and briefing. Even the dues to be members of the Committee were minimal and were charged by organization. Our objective was to keep the cost of participation low to include as much representation as possible.

Much has changed.

## Decisions

Chairs of the UN Commission on the Status of Women during my tenure as Chair were Ambassador Patricia Flor (served from 1998–2000), Germany, during my first year; Dubravka Simonovic, (served from 2000–2002), Croatia; Kyung-wha Kang, (2002–2004), South Korea. Each of these women have gone on to hold distinguished careers in both the UN and their respective governments. To find the outcome documents from these years you can click [here](#).

The outcome of the Agreed Conclusions of the 47th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women resulted in the failure to reach agreed conclusions on the topic of “Women’s human rights and the elimination of violence against women and girls as defined in the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third session of the General Assembly.” NGOs were outraged and made this known. What eventually happened was that there was a resumed session of the CSW. However, it was announced that member states were unable to come to any agreement on the thematic topic. This marked the first time that the CSW did not adopt Agreed Conclusions on its theme. Later, in 2013, the CSW finally reached consensus on the topic at its 57th session.

A landmark in advancing women’s rights was the passage of UN Security Resolution 1325 concerning Women, Peace and Security in October 2000. 1325, as it is affectionately known, concerns the disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls and the crucial role that women should, and already do play in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and the humanitarian response specifically in post-conflict reconstruction. The Resolution also calls for special measures to protect women and girls from conflict-related sexual violence and outlines gender-related responsibilities of the United Nations in different political and programmatic areas.

Another item of special significance for NGOs was the passage of the CEDAW Optional Protocol on October 6, 1999, and its entry into force on December 22, 2000. The instrument allows CEDAW to consider complaints from individuals or groups within its jurisdiction.

### **Innovations from the NGO CSWNY during these four years**

Our goal was to increase global participation, giving voice to as many women as we could reach. We felt there was much to do to increase our visibility and to reach and support those who came to the meetings in New York. These are the things we organized to make that possible.

#### **501(c)3 nonprofit status**

When Joan Fyfe (Rotary International) joined the Executive Committee she immediately put her nonprofit management degree to work. She coordinated the work for the Executive Committee to secure a nonprofit status – 501(c)3 – which has enabled the Committee to obtain grants and donations, sustaining it financially into the future.

#### **NGO Receptions**

Denise Scotto was influential in making these successful. With her contacts within the UN and the law and her expertise she managed these events during the first week of the CSW meetings in March, giving NGOs the opportunity to meet each other informally.

#### **Woman of Merit Award**

At the recommendation of Secretary General Kofi Annan, we created this event and award for women UN staff working to improve the status of women through the UN. The first awards were made to Angela E.V. King in 2001 and Noeleen Heyzer in 2002. The families and friends of the awardees were invited to attend.

#### **Sales**

We noted that many NGOs arrived at the UN with items for sale that they hoped could finance part of their expenses while in New York. It is not permitted to collect money or sell on UN premises, so women would clandestinely show their items. The Executive Committee thought this should have a place on our agenda and we should be supportive. As a result, we secured the second floor of the Church Center and advertised the opportunity to participate in an Artisan Craft Fair. This was capably organized each year by Suzanne Harvey (Peace in the Streets), who devoted a significant amount of time to organize it in advance as well as a full day to set it up and clean up afterwards. There was never a charge to have a table, and many unique crafts, books and even handmade rugs were sold!

## **Women Ambassador Luncheons**

These events were held at the UN to recognize the women Permanent Representatives, ambassadors at UN Headquarters. The first year there were only 10 Permanent Representatives! NGOs would sponsor an ambassador, inviting her to their table. Photographs and other publicity were organized, and tables were filled with NGO representatives who purchased tickets. The NGO sponsoring the ambassador was seated with her and introduced her to make a few remarks at the luncheon. Our Honorary Chair was the first lady of the UN, Nan Annan and many other key women leaders in the UN also attended. One such close friend was Noeleen Heyzer (UNIFEM). We invited a keynote speaker to share remarks relating to women's leadership. Two extraordinary women were NY Times Journalist and Author Barbara Crossette and Secretary General, Council of Women World Leaders Laura Liswood.

## **Office space**

We were challenged to find our own office as the CoNGO office was limited. Mia Adjali of the Methodist Women tried to find space at an affordable price for us, but we finally settled in a shared room with several other NGOs on 43rd Street. This was our first office, and because we shared space, we made many new friends.

## **Listserv**

We recognized the need to bring in additional voices from around the world. At that time the internet was just becoming a strong vehicle for connection and collaboration. We set up a Yahoo group – Womenact – to capture these voices and to keep the international community engaged between sessions.

## **Orientation and training**

became available due to the efforts of various NGO representatives, most notably Bani Dugal. Frequently NGOs arrived with little information about the history of the CSW, how the sessions were organized, how to work with governments, rules of the UN and other important information. A special training was organized with the Jennifer Butler of the Presbyterian women to assist organizers in dealing with interrupters. Shireen Lee and Franciska Bratner organized a specific training to youth attending the CSW in 2000 and 2001.

## Interns

You can imagine that the work kept increasing. Many of the NGO representatives were either hired as staff for their particular NGOs, or the work as volunteers kept them so busy that they could not provide office support as well. We began bringing in unpaid interns, offering them letters of credit for their course work and a stipend for transportation. I unfortunately did not keep a personal record of the wonderful young women we worked with, but I include Deepa Mehta, Jennifer Patello, Veronica Heino and Scarlett Elizee among them. NGO representatives helped by identifying and selecting the interns. Two who were very helpful include Michaela Walsh and Diane Paravazian.

## Fundraising

For the first time we began collecting contributions from outside the membership. These included: CoNGO, UNICEF, Chase Bank, World Information Transfer, World Citizen Foundation, AARP and several individuals.

## CEDAW

The Committee to Eliminate all forms of Discrimination Against Women, which is the expert treaty monitoring body at the UN that oversees the CEDAW Convention, is still very important to the NGO CSW NY. When the Committee was headquartered in New York with the DAW as its Secretariat, we held annual luncheons with the CEDAW Chair and expert members, giving NGOs the chance to discuss the issues personally with them in an informal way. Some of these were held in offices of UN Missions.

## Bylaws

Revising the bylaws changed the nature of the NGO CSW NY in that the membership became individually-based, rather than based on NGOs in consultative relationship with the UN. Voting was still by organization, but the dues became structured for individual participation. This has had the added benefit of allowing “retired” members of an NGO the chance to stay involved.

## Website

We got as far as securing a domain name and creating an outline. Much of the “bones” we discussed then is used now. Our intern Paula Griffiths was instrumental in developing this.

## Logo

We discussed the image of the NGO CSW/NY. In designing a logo, we wanted it to refer to the Beijing Platform for Action in some way, so we asked Sister to Sister International Founder Cheryl Brannan to work with her friends. One of our talented interns, Paula Griffiths, was also involved, and her colleagues also worked on this. We used a stylized dove that could be used by all three NGO CSW Committees. The image has been used for many years.



## Structure, advocacy and achievements

For the Consultation in 2001 we moved to the NYU Medical School, thanks to the connections with Dr. Allan Rosenfield through Vivian Pender, MD. We also began to offer interpretation into French and Spanish, thanks to devoted volunteer interpreters. Three breakout sessions were offered in the afternoon:

- Girls, Women and HIV/AIDS, coordinated by Dr. Joyce Braak, Margaret Owen, Mukarabe Makinto and Cindy Yang.
- Racism, Discrimination, Xenophobia and all forms of Intolerance, coordinated by Corann Okorodudu, with Laura Partridge, Cecilia Blewer and Rob Ruzanic assisting.
- The Five-Year Plan for CSW, coordinated by Linda Souter, with Dr. Claire Fulcher and Tamar Kherlopian assisting.

Among the NGO activities during the CSW were daily briefings prior to the government sessions to inform NGOs about the status of negotiations and discussions and an orientation which was always held the first day of the session because NGO participation to the UN Opening Ceremony was restricted to a limited number. There were always “side events” organized by governments, UN agencies (sometimes in collaboration with NGOs) and the

DAW as well as parallel events organized by NGOs which were coordinated by the NGO CSW NY. In addition, NGOs organized Caucuses based on both by region and emphasizing a particular issue. We could gain access to the various UN offices and cafeterias in the Secretariat Building, the DC 1 and 2 Buildings, UNICEF House, UNIFEM and UNFPA Offices. We would frequently drop over to the DAW and meet with UN staff without appointments. We just needed our UN badges which were scanned onto the turnstile.

Two more Consultations would be held: one in March 2002 and another at Barnard College in 2003, using a format like the ones described above for 2000 and 2001. In advance of the Consultations, the Committee held roundtables and briefings, usually in January or February, to educate ourselves about the major issues that would be debated during the CSW by Member States. In general, these meetings concentrated on the priority themes, but they also covered some of the emerging issues and review themes. Again, we facilitated trainings, parallel events, caucuses and briefings for NGO representatives – alongside the CSW Sessions.

## 9/11

The world changed notably. On September 11, 2001, the World

Trade Center, the Pentagon and other areas were threatened by terrorists. In New York on that day two airplanes hit each of the World Trade Center Buildings – known as 1 and 2 – resulting in thousands of deaths and the collapse of both buildings. The UN Headquarters was evacuated, as were many of the other buildings nearby. Because of my connections with UN Security, and the position I held as First Vice President of CoNGO, I worked for months to have NGOs permitted to re-enter the buildings. Much of our work was stalled after that happened. Fortunately, our office on 43rd Street remained open.

Here is a more personal account relating to 9/11. The Department of Public Information was holding its annual conference, which began September 10, 2001 and included a reception in the Delegates Dining Room. On that day I delivered a keynote address on behalf of CoNGO from the podium in the General Assembly Hall and received a standing ovation. The next morning, 9/11, I met with NGO colleagues at the UN for breakfast. As I was leaving there was an announcement that everyone was to move to the basement. We learned that Building 2 had collapsed. This affected me personally because my husband worked in Building 2 on the 54th floor.

I left the UN at that point and looked

for an office where I could use the telephone. Most had been evacuated. When I got to the 43rd Street office, I found it open. I phoned my children from the office. We expected that Walt, my husband, was probably dead. We saw the dark plume of smoke coming from lower Manhattan all the way to midtown. Denise Scotto who was a UN staff person at that time and evacuated was with me and helped me through those horrible hours until I heard that my husband had made it out and was home! I will always be thankful for the emotional support from Denise and later from all my NGO colleagues at that time. It would be months before we were able to resume our meetings. Again, a reminder that there was no Zoom during those days!

### **In conclusion**

I kept very few notes from that time. Mary Singletary, the Secretary for the Executive Committee, kept extensive notes and compiled notebooks for each year. However, when Mary died in 2017, the notebooks were lost and the extensive records she kept could not be located.

Looking back from a 20-year perspective I can see that some things have changed but most things are still the same, only even more complex and outstanding. The fact that the first Agreed

Conclusion not to be agreed was on violence against women is significant. We are still waging this war.

I would like to pay tribute to those who worked whole heartedly and diligently to accomplish so much work over those years. It took everyone playing the role they agreed to play and doing so with candor, humor and love, that made this job the best one I have ever had. It was a privilege to have had this extraordinary opportunity.

In the words of Esther Hymer, whom I had the privilege of meeting, "We still have so much to do."





# BANI DUGAL

Chair of NGO CSW/NY during  
**2003 -2005**

**BAHA'I  
INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNITY**



# HIGHLIGHTS

**CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH CSW CHAIR, GOVERNMENTS, AND HIGH-LEVEL UN STAFF TO BUILD COHERENCE ACROSS THE UN SYSTEM**



**ESTABLISHMENT OF GEAR CAMPAIGN**

**10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION (BEIJING+10)**

**NGO RESOURCE BOOK FOR CSW**



# BANI DUGAL

2003 – 2005

**“BUILDING COHERENCE  
ACROSS THE UN  
SYSTEM -- AND OUR  
COMMITTEE’S WORK  
WITH GENDER FOCAL  
POINTS WITHIN THE UN  
WAS AN IMPORTANT  
ASPECT OF OUR VISION  
DURING THESE YEARS.”**

It was a privilege for me to Chair the NGO Committee on the Status of Women during the period 2003-2005. The Committee made many advances during this period which was before it acquired 501c3 non profit status and all the work was done by the members on a shoestring budget. We made every effort to facilitate the participation of NGOs from around the world at the UN Commission on Status of Women and other meetings such as the CEDAW committee sessions at minimal cost to the visiting NGOs. The office of the NGO-CSW was housed at the Baha’i International Community’s United

Nations Office and was staffed by the following interns/volunteers throughout the course of the years: Anglica Far, Fumi Hirabayashi, Louise Zea, Orchideh Pourjafar and Wei Ting Wu.

We established a very close working relationship with the Chair of the UN Commission on Status of Women, Ms. Kyung wha Kang (later Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea) and a friendship that continues to this day. 2005 marked the 10th anniversary of the Beijing Conference; however, owing to the political dynamics at the time we could not aspire for a more ambitious and forward looking agenda for the world’s women and were happy to have a consensus statement from Member States simply affirming the Beijing Platform for Action. Despite these challenges we supported the UN in planning the tenth anniversary celebration with music and dance and statements from women Nobel Laureates.

During this time we were also concerned about the fragmentation and overlapping and competing agendas of the gender architecture within the UN. The NGO Committee on Status of Women along with key leaders from the women's movement wrote a letter to the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan requesting him for a meeting to discuss this issue. A meeting was granted and the outcome was that the High Level Panel on System-wide Coherence was asked to expand its mandate to include a review of the gender architecture of the UN. This effort on the part of feminist and social justice organizations come to be known as the GEAR (Gender Equality Architecture Reform) campaign and was chaired by Charlotte Bunch, June Zeitlin and Bani Dugal and after many years of advocacy and hard work eventually resulted in the creation of the first hybrid agency of its kind, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, also known as UN Women.

Making the NGO Consultation meeting for UN Commission on Status of Women (UN CSW) an inclusive space which was welcoming of all groups was our priority-- from First Ladies attending CSW to Feminist groups to young girls and youth -- we

sought to create a well informed civil society space that advocated for strong outcome documents and resolutions of the UN CSW. Our close friendship with the Chair of the UN CSW opened many doors for engagement. The NGO CSW gave direction and focus to the organization and preparation of NGO involvement at the 49th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, which marked the tenth anniversary of the Beijing Conference. NGO CSW was primarily responsible for facilitating the engagement of over 2,700 representatives of civil society from over 575 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at this Session.

We chaired daily morning briefings for NGOs for the duration of the Commission. The NGO CSW facilitated the organization of over 80 parallel events during the Commission at no cost to the NGOs hosting the events





During these years we also started publishing the NGO resource book which provided relevant information about the UN CSW and its agenda and the parallel events hosted by member states and civil society. An earlier version of this book, known as the “pink book” had been published by the International Women’s Tribune Center and since they were unable to continue the tradition, our Committee was able to print a new and improved version. The creative means of printing paid messages within the pages of the book allowed us to provide it free of cost to all participants.

During the CSW, we continued the tradition of hosting a reception for over 300 Member State representatives, NGOs, and UN staff. In 2004 NGO- CSW, presented awards to Catherine Bertini, UN Under-Secretary-General for Management and Stephen Lewis, UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa,

recognizing their role in promoting the advancement of women and girls. In 2005 Ms. Louise Arbour, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, was awarded the “Person of Distinction Award.”

In 2006 and 2007 the NGO CSW began hosting preparatory sessions on the thematic focus of the UN CSW, as an example in 2006 we hosted a Roundtable on the theme of “Equal participation of women and men in decision-making at all levels.” The speakers included: H. E. Johan Løvald (Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Norway to the UN); Anne Marie Goetz (Chief Advisor to the Governance, Peace and Security, UN Development Fund for Women); and Amrita Basu (Professor, Department of Women’s and Gender Studies and Political Science, Amherst College).

We also continued to host the annual luncheons with women Ambassadors -- this practice was started by my predecessor Leslie Wright and we expanded it to also host discussion groups with these women leaders and First Ladies such as Mrs. Zanelle Thabo Mbeke of South Africa. In 2004 the NGO-CSW hosted the fourth Ambassadors’ Luncheon at the UN Delegates Dining Room. Among the 90 attendees were eight women Ambassadors being honored, Ms. Nane Annan (wife of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan), government

representatives, NGOs, and UN staff. Bani Dugal presented each of the women Ambassadors with a “Women Making a Difference Award,” while Ms. Thoraya Obaid, UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund, received the “Woman of Distinction Award.” In 2005 the NGO-CSW hosted the fifth Ambassadors’ Luncheon at the UN Delegates Dining Room. Among the 120 attendees were fourteen women Ambassadors being honored, government representatives, NGO representatives and UN staff. Other guests included: Ms. Nane Annan, wife of United Nations Secretary-General; Mr. Jan Eliassen, President of the General Assembly; Ms. Tehmina Janjua, Deputy Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations (representing Mr. Munir Akram, President of the Economic and Social Council); and Ms. Carolyn Hannan, Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women.

Our Committee also regularly hosted the experts that served on the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women which is the treaty body that oversees the implementation of CEDAW. This close relationship was one of the reasons the Committee initially refused to move from New York to Geneva.

In 2005, the NGO CSW hosted the

annual luncheon for the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Expert group at the Baha’i International Community’s United Nations Offices. The 55 participants included the CEDAW experts, senior UN staff and NGO representatives.

During these years the NGO-CSW screened films on the theme of Information & Communication Technology and Women’s Empowerment.

Building coherence across the UN system -- and our Committee’s work with gender focal points within the UN was an important aspect of our vision during these years. Each monthly meeting invited at least one such focal point, a diplomat from a Member State Mission and a civil society actor to discuss some topical issue. The idea was to keep our members informed of the most important aspects of the work but also to introduce the diplomats, UN agency experts and our members to each other.





# JACKIE SHAPIRO

Chair of NGO CSW/NY during  
**2005 - 2007**

**ZONTA  
INTERNATIONAL**



# HIGHLIGHTS

**NGO CSW/NY BECOMES THE FOCAL POINT FOR UN-AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS TO WORK TOGETHER TO ADVOCATE FOR PROGRAMS, POLICIES & ACTIONS TO FULFILL THE BPFA**

**PRODUCTIVE  
RELATIONSHIPS WITH  
CEDAW COMMITTEE**



**GREATEST SUCCESS = UN DOCUMENTS & MEMBER STATES FINALLY RECOGNIZING 'GIRLS' IN THEIR LANGUAGE AND GOALS "ON THE RIGHTS AND WOMEN AND GIRLS"!**



# JACKIE SHAPIRO

2005 – 2007

I was fortunate to join the NGO community at the United Nations just nine months after the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. Advocates for women's rights now had the Beijing Platform for Action as a global framework for priority actions needed to empower women and achieve gender equality. We were all energized and inspired in our work with UN bodies and member states to implement those commitments.

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**“THE GREATEST SUCCESS WAS UN DOCUMENTS AND MEMBER STATES FINALLY INCLUDING A RECOGNITION OF “GIRLS” IN THEIR LANGUAGE AND GOALS ON “THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS!””**

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We stood on the shoulders of giants—Helvi Sipilä, Mary Purcell, Kay Fraleigh, Hope Miller, Kate Katzi,

Danielle Bridel—and others too numerous to name—who had helped build this movement for the recognition of women's rights.

The NGO CSW/NY became the focal point for organizations affiliated with the UN and their representatives to work together to advocate for programs, policies and actions to fulfill commitments made to the PFA.

When I joined we had the experience of Sudha, who had, of course, been in Beijing, as Chair; after Leslie, Bani, and I worked in concert with many, many others to keep the momentum going and continue the efforts to hold member states accountable to women.

We were then a much smaller core group with no paid staff. Also, our connections to the NGO CSW Geneva and NGO CSW Vienna were primarily during the CSW. When I was Chair, we were fortunate to have an exceptional group of volunteer

interns, whom we paid a transportation stipend.

This was before UN Women's establishment in 2010. NGO CSW/NY benefited from our strong partnerships with Carolyn Hannon ,Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women; Rachel Mayanga and Angela King heads of the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women( OSAGI) and Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

Before the NGO/CSW began charging NGOs for rooms for parallel events at CSW, the DAW and NGO/CSW even did scheduling together.

We also had very productive and cordial relations with members of the CEDAW Committee, when it was still meeting in NYC, including holding an annual luncheon to recognize their work.

When I was Chair, the Executive Committee was fortunate to have a very cordial relationship with the Bureau for the CSW, especially the Chair, as had been the case previously and continued after.

The most difficult issue faced during my years as Chair, was the continued resistance of member

states to tackling, even acknowledging, violence against women in all its forms.

The greatest success was UN documents and Member states FINALLY including a recognition of "girls" in their language and goals on "the rights of women and girls!"

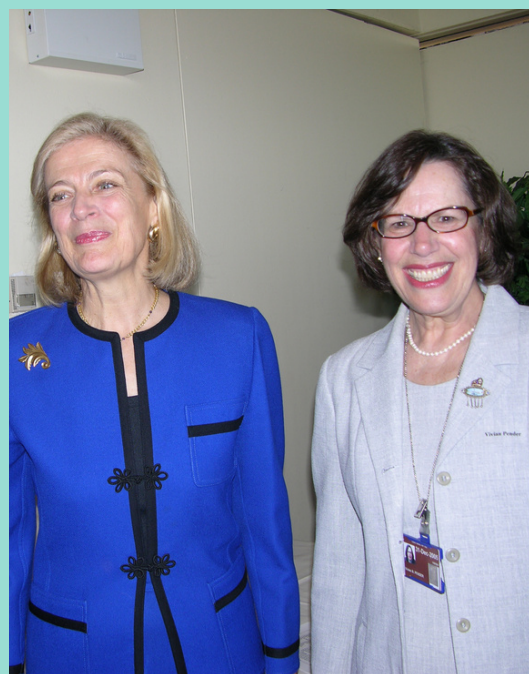




# VIVIAN PENDER

Chair of NGO CSW/NY during  
**2007 - 2011**

**INTERNATIONAL  
PSYCHOANALYTICAL  
ASSOCIATION**



# HIGHLIGHTS



**HIRED FIRST FULL-TIME  
OFFICE MANAGER**

**CLOSE AND PRODUCTIVE  
RELATIONSHIPS WITH  
MEMBER STATE  
AMBASSADORS**

**15TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEIJING  
PLATFORM FOR ACTION (BEIJING+10)**

**FORMATION OF UN WOMEN IN 2010**

# VIVIAN PENDER

## 2007 – 2011



What a milestone – 50 awesome years of dedicated, productive, and successful work! Congratulations NGO CSW! Thank you for including me in the journey. The four years that I chaired the NGO CSW (2007–2011) were some of the best years of my life! In this brief overview, I want to share with you some highlights of those years.

Most important, I want to emphasize that I learned tremendously from working with many other dedicated individuals to improve the lives of women and girls. Our common goal united us in solidarity. I learned that women are naturally excellent planners and wonderfully practical. The women of many countries taught us that they were more successful speaking to government officials at United Nations Headquarters in New York than they were in their home capitals.

In those days, our membership

consisted of approximately 100 non-governmental organizations. When we counted up the individual membership of each NGO, we represented cumulatively nearly 10 million people worldwide. With such a substantial number, our collective voice was powerful throughout the UN system.

During my tenure, we were fortunate to secure an office for the NGO CSW Church Center of the United Nations (CCUN), a prime location directly across the street from the UN Secretariat. Prior to this, we had only temporary quarters at some distance from

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**"THE FUTURE NEEDS  
CONTINUED MONITORING,  
BUT IT IS AS BRIGHT AS  
THE GIRLS AND WOMEN  
OF ALL AGES WHO LOOK  
TO US TO ENABLE THEM  
TO FLOURISH, USE THEIR  
POTENTIAL AND ACHIEVE  
THEIR GOALS."**

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the UN. Since many of the parallel events during the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women were at the Church Center, having our office there was not only convenient, but raised our visibility even more.

There, we were able to meet with many women who had traveled to New York from far distant places in order to share their experiences. It also gave us easy access to UN events, diplomats and UN personnel year round.

Our growth in membership permitted us to implement the position of office coordinator, a full time paid position that reflected our growing prominence. Until that time, we had been a completely voluntary organization. Our first employee, Katherine Ronberg, brought to us her great expertise from her work with UNICEF. Her knowledge of the UN, her organizational capability, and her wonderful collegiality helped to enhance the work of the NGO CSW. The foresight of Leslie Wright was invaluable when as chair she obtained 501(c)3 status, conferring on us charitable tax status as a nonprofit organization.

Our growing prominence and commitment to women's rights positioned us well to assist the diplomatic corps in their humanitarian efforts. In a particular memorable instance, we were able

to directly assist an Ambassador who was assigned to the UN Commission On The Status of Women. An experienced diplomat, noting to us that several women in his family had professional occupations he was extraordinarily supportive of our goals. We submitted language for the outcome documents that became the final UN resolutions on the status of women. A poignant example of how a diplomat and civil society worked closely together was during UN CSW53. Being a physician psychiatrist, I naturally carried a beeper to be used for emergencies. One day during the two-week commission meeting, he was particularly perplexed by a large group of civil society women who were singing loudly and dancing outside the UN conference rooms and generally not complying with UN protocol. He felt that they were not listening to him, and he was considering having UN security officers expel them from the building. He paged me and we met in the Vienna Café. Over lunch, I explained to him what I thought was happening. The women were expressing their frustration over not having their concerns heard by the commission. They had traveled long distances from their villages and small communities to come to New York to tell their stories of the severe and constant oppression they lived with every day, sometimes condoned by local authorities. I

explained to the ambassador that in effect their behavior was a form of communication that made him feel what they were feeling. But he shouldn't act on it, as much as it provoked him. His understanding prevailed and instead of removing them, he scheduled a special meeting with them, something that was ultimately productive and led to a positive resolution. He and I have remained friends to this day, affording us the opportunity to promote women's mental health considerations in the consciousness and priorities of sovereign states.

In 2010 we celebrated the fifteenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women that was held in Beijing in 1995. The commemoration was a very special time for women. Hillary Clinton, Madeleine Albright, and many other notable women spoke at the UN. Clinton's famous statement at the 1995 conference on women, "human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights once and for all" was reiterated and reconfirmed. Peggy Kerry (John's older sister) who became another friend of the NGO CSW worked as an NGO coordinator at the US Mission to the UN. She frequently facilitated our NGO participation and invited us to confer at the US Mission sometimes on a weekly basis.

During that same year of 2010 we saw the establishment of UN Women, wherein the offices of UNIFEM, DAW (division for the advancement of women), and the office of the UN Assistant General Rachel Mayanja were folded into a new single entity constituting UN Women. This was the result of long concerted efforts. I well remember the fight led by Bani Dugal, Charlotte Bunch and many others. I was also very fortunate to meet and work with Michelle Bachelet, former Chilean president who became the first executive director of UN Women. Before being elected to be president of Chile, Bachelet had trained as a pediatrician, evident in her special fondness for mothers and children. She was the inspirational keynote speaker at our consultation day in March 2011. This event was donated by the Salvation Army at their beautiful spacious auditorium that could accommodate our growing membership, which in turn reflected the growing interest in the status of women. During CSW55 she organized small group meetings at the Church Center with many of the over 6000 women who attended. She listened sensitively and took notes of their daily living experiences, one woman at a time. The meetings with her were substantive and fruitful.

Another memorable example of what the NGO CSW could accomplish was reflected in the experience of six women who traveled from a country with an authoritarian regime to speak at a CSW parallel event. They were filmed secretly by their government at the event. They asked the NGO CSW for help, knowing that when they returned home, they would be imprisoned and tortured. We contacted UN women who met with them and helped to ensure their safety. Later we learned that one of the women was arrested and detained but only briefly and then released unharmed. This is a good example of how civil society really made a difference.



Every year we celebrated women ambassadors, who numbered 25 out of a possible 193 missions with a luncheon in the UN Delegates Dining Room. Our invitation list included the Secretary-General and other high level dignitaries. Always a big success,

including tables dedicated to women's NGOs working in the field, the ambassadors appreciated their acknowledgement and support.

One final recollection of NGO CSW is the consultation day when Columbia University professor Gayatri Spivak, a prominent human rights advocate for women, was our keynote speaker. In the audience were the 'first ladies' of member states' chief executives. Dr. Spivak spoke directly to them, imploring them to offer their direct assistance in alleviating violence against women and girls throughout the world. Although we could not make a one-to-one correlation, it appeared that it resounded with increased awareness and increased political will to make changes.

In sum, I am forever thankful for having had the good fortune to work with the NGO CSW in safeguarding and furthering the opportunities for women worldwide. The future needs continued monitoring, but it is as bright as the girls and women of all ages who look to us to enable them to flourish, use their potential and achieve their goals.



# SOON-YOUNG YOON

Chair of NGO CSW/NY during  
**2011 - 2015**

**INTERNATIONAL  
ALLIANCE OF  
WOMEN**



# HIGHLIGHTS

**MORE ENGAGEMENT AT CSW DUE TO THE  
CREATION OF UN WOMEN**

**TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING FOR  
ADVOCACY PROJECT**

**CITIES FOR CEDAW  
CAMPAIGN**



**20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BEIJING  
PLATFORM FOR ACTION (BEIJING+20)**



# SOON-YOUNG YOON

2011 – 2015

Even before I became Chair of the NGO CSW/NY in 2011, it was clear to me that the committee had a special role to play at the UN. Under the umbrella of the Conference of NGOs (CoNGO), the NGO CSW/NY officially convenes civil society at the United Nations (UN), especially at the annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meetings. I saw this first hand when I was one of the organizers of the NGO Forum at the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. Then, CoNGO was the official convener of the NGO Forum in Beijing and I helped coordinate regional networks to which NGO CSW/NY belonged along with similar committees in Geneva and Vienna.

The trend for growing numbers of civil society participation at the CSW continued through the years. However, the NGO CSW/NY faced new challenges when I became Chair in 2014 because of the establishment of UN Women. This was the first time in UN history that a social movement (GEAR campaign) was the main driver of establishing a UN agency. Indeed, its successful transformation from UNIFEM and United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) with other entities was remarkable. As Chair, my task was to guide the Executive

Committee so we could match the energy and high ambitions of UN Women. Michele Bachelet, former president of Chile, was my official counterpart and UN Women was filled with an enthusiastic staff. As the voice and importance of UN Women was established and the attendance at CSW grew, so did the potential and responsibilities of the NGO CSW/NY.

Donors approached our Committee to strengthen advocacy at the UN. Although the participation at CSW had almost doubled, many newcomers were unfamiliar with the UN and the pushback was already very visible. It was important for us to begin serious training on advocacy at the UN to upgrade the skills and possibilities for collective action, including at regional preparatory meetings. One of the Committee's significant priorities at the time and one of the most inspiring parts of my tenure was establishing our Training and Capacity Building for Advocacy project. The overall objective of the project was to support and build knowledge and capacity of women's equality organizations and institutions and women's rights NGOs in order to be effective in UN processes, starting "bottom-up" with a strong focus at the regional level.

We held advocacy training sessions in different languages to educate participants about how to engage and advocate in United Nations spaces generally and at the CSW specifically. Through major grants from Switzerland and other partner governments, we also put together a written advocacy guide for NGOs

**“IT IS IMPORTANT TO  
REMEMBER THAT OUR JOB  
IS TO RAISE THE AMBITIONS  
OF OUR MEMBERS TO  
HIGHER LEVELS.”**

and women’s human rights activists at the UN and CSW that provided an abundance of information on how to be effective partners in UN negotiations about women’s human rights. The guide had a corresponding website and mobile app (designed by the Lucid company in Berlin).

The training sessions had a dual focus: formalities/protocol and substantive knowledge. The first part of the training explained the CSW process and the UN informal negotiations processes, basic knowledge of the UN policy documents and human rights treaties, UN acronyms, NGO accreditation processes and calendar and strategic advice on how to reach out to delegations well in advocacy of UN meetings. The second part of the training focused on women’s human rights with the emphasis on the priority theme of that year’s CSW. The project aimed to maximize advocacy skills and increase the regional on-the-ground knowledge about the CSW process by engaging experts from each region to adapt the advocacy training curriculum and materials template developed by the NGO CSW/NY, to test them, and to train grassroots advocacy leaders and NGO representatives.

The Committee was especially focused on strengthening the regional processes and voices at CSW through NGO CSWs in the regions. At the time, I was also First Vice-President of CoNGO and could help

facilitate the establishment of their official membership through that organization. A grant from Lopa Banerjee, then director of the civil society section at UN Women, helped create these new committees. These offered an important resource for a global, collaborative effort across regions—unified, yet responsive to regional diversity. An intern designed logos for the new committees which are used to this day.

The NGO CSWs in the regions now act as the official conveners in the regional preparatory meeting for the CSW (NGO CSWs Africa, MENA/Arab States, Asia Pacific, Latin America & the Caribbean). They act independently from the NGO CSW/NY, Vienna and Geneva as their equal counterparts under CoNGO.

We also founded the Cities for CEDAW Campaign with CEDAW awards for mayors given each year at Consultation Day with a grant from the Pinkerton Foundation to pay for the mayor’s travel expenses and the award. The Cities for CEDAW campaign was inspired by San Francisco which had adopted CEDAW as a legally binding city ordinance. Under the leadership of Krishanti Dharmaraj, in 1998, San Francisco became the first city in the world to adopt a UN human rights treaty at the local level. At the NGO CSW/NY executive meeting to plan Beijing Plus 20, we decided to ask the late mayor Edwin Lee to be the peer leader for the US and get other mayors to do the same. At the US conference of mayors in 2014, he introduced a CEDAW resolution that was adopted by more than 200 mayors. For several years during my tenure, the NGO CSW/NY played a critical role in the campaign as the main link to the UN and we were able to make two successful informal reports to the CEDAW committee in Geneva. This grass-roots, bottom-up campaign has been locally funded and with the help of international NGOs like Zonta International, Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom and IAW, has spread throughout the US. Today, it has more than 70 cities, counties and states that have passed CEDAW

ordinances or resolutions. CEDAW cities include Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Toledo, Ohio, Kansas City and New Orleans.

For CSW, working with the Bureau was (and remains) a critical part of our role at NGO CSW/NY in order to influence the outcome document negotiations and provide civil society's recommendations. In 2015, when the CSW Working Methods were under consideration, we sent a protest letter to the CSW Bureau demanding that we be admitted to the negotiations process. Nevertheless—even through various reviews—the Working Methods remain largely unchanged. Thus, the CSW negotiations has become one of the most closed civil society spaces at the UN, while others like the High Level Political Forum with its major groups and Human Rights Commission meetings have enlarged theirs. Reform of the CSW is critical if the NGO CSW/NY is to make an important contribution to the UN as a whole.

To expand the networks beyond UN-interested groups, we set up an advisory group that included media, private sector and entertainment with the mandate of being available to all EC members for consultation as needed. They were also occasionally asked to play special roles such as chairing events. On special invitation, they sometimes participated in EC meetings. We also had a second smaller advisory group called the Fat Radish Group because we first met at The Fat Radish restaurant. This group specifically focused on brainstorming and laying the groundwork for a global communications campaign in 2015 to commemorate Beijing+20. The goal for both groups was to ensure that feminist leaders who often were not active in NGO CSW/NY became part of our political process.

My experiences as Chair of this committee has helped shape my vision for future committee chairs. It is important to remember that our job is to raise the ambitions of our members to higher levels. It is like keeping a gaze on higher cliffs to climb and making sure others can follow. Then, when a chasm in the rocks appears that may seem insurmountable, NGO leaders must create the bridge so that everyone can safely cross. Others may be leading the crowd, and the bridge may at times seem like it may break, but the NGO leaders' job is to keep it strong and secure, sometimes out of sight from below its rafters.

What lessons have I learned through my tenure? First, we must continue to be the open, democratic forum which is the mandate under CoNGO. That means accommodating points of view which may not be in agreement with the members of the Executive Committee. Second, we need to help reform the CSW so that it opens its doors in its Working Methods to allow NGOs to be observers during the negotiations on the Agreed Conclusions. Third, we must continue to push the CSW Bureau to be more than the administrators of reports on the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW. The CSW must return to its original mission to be the normative leaders by revitalizing UN institutions. Only then, can the NGO Forum thrive as its partner and adapt to the challenges of future generations and youth. We need to always focus on CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action, but also create bridges to all other UN processes that we can advance women's rights throughout the UN.





# SUSAN O'MALLEY

Chair of NGO CSW/NY during  
**2015 - 2019**

**INTERNATIONAL  
FEDERATION OF  
BUSINESS &  
PROFESSIONAL  
WOMEN**



# HIGHLIGHTS

**QUADRUPLED NGO CSW/NY'S MEMBERSHIP**



**BI-WEEKLY PLANNING  
COMMITTEE MEETINGS TO  
ORGANIZE THE NGO CSW  
FORUM WITH LOCAL  
MEMBERS**

**EXPANDED THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM**

**700+ PARALLEL EVENTS AT THE FORUM**



# SUSAN O'MALLEY

## 2015 – 2019

When I was close to retirement, Eva Richter, who had recently retired from the City University of New York (CUNY) and was on NGO CSW/NY Executive Committee, suggested

that I attend NGO CSW/NY monthly meetings and join her non-governmental organization (NGO), the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW). When I said I had too many papers to grade, Eva replied, "There is an opening and when you retire you will have something to do." She also arranged for us to have lunch with Claire Fulcher, an extraordinary woman who had been instrumental in the founding of the CSW, organizing the International United Nations Women's Conferences and working with BPW. After several hours with Claire, I immediately signed up.

The following spring, I was asked if I were interested in running for the NGO CSW/NY Executive Committee. I agreed to run for Member-at-Large. Soon-Young Yoon, a woman with deep knowledge of the United Nations (UN), who had worked with the World Health Organization (WHO) and was currently Vice Chair of NGO CSW/NY, was running for Chair. After an extraordinary Korean dinner with Soon-Young, I found I was running as her Vice Chair. My only experience with the UN was my father taking me on the train from Boston to the UN when I was in the 4th grade and my vowing someday I would return. I had, however, experience in running things: Chair of the CUNY Faculty Senate made up of 22 colleges, and Faculty Trustee; Chair of my campus union; officer of the Professional Staff Congress (CUNY Union). Working as Soon-Young's Vice Chair was a thorough education about the UN and the possibilities of NGOs. She secured grants from several Member States to write A Guide for NGOs and Women's Human Rights Activists at the UN and CSW which we produced in 5 languages and used to do advocacy training. She also was instrumental in the formation of global NGO CSWs (Africa, Arab States and Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Asia Pacific, Latin America/Caribbean) to join NGO CSW/NY, Vienna, and Geneva.

During the 4 years that I was Vice Chair I organized the majority of our monthly meetings at the Church Center for the United Nations (CCUN) with speakers from NGOs, UN Women, and Member States with meetings based on what was being commemorated at the UN: International Day of the Girl, Human Rights Day, Resolution 1325, International Women's Day. We also had good relations with Peggy Kerry and Laurie Phipps at the United States Mission to the UN and with many Member States, particularly those on the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) Bureau and those who funded our Advocacy Guides.

When I was elected Chair of NGO CSW/NY, my goals were to increase our local membership,

build a team of interns who would become knowledgeable about the UN, strengthen the regional NGO CSWs, and organize our office to be a place where we would talk, strategize, plan, dream, and learn from each other.

The office in the Church Center that Soon-Young had secured for us during her term was transformed. Vice Chair Betty Levy and I had the office painted light green, the biggest desk was moved to the back room and assigned to Ilana Gelb, the Office Coordinator/Program Manager with the Chair's smaller desk nearby and a desk for our accountant or whoever needed a desk. The front room had a large table where our 7-13 interns from Togo, India, UK, Taiwan, Ghana, Australia, US, Italy, Indonesia, Spain, Russia, and Colombia worked, although usually only 5 worked in one day. All the interns had ground passes to the UN, attended meetings, and wrote reports. Interns also spoke at monthly meetings and were an enormous help during NGO CSW Forums. Because there were no windows, we hung a large photograph poster of a window looking out at the NYC skyline. And there was an electric tea kettle, a small refrigerator, a microwave, and lots of tea.

We started working on CSW as soon as the UN General Assembly meetings were over. In 2016 there were 59 members working on the Planning Committee staffing committees for the Woman of Distinction Award, the Celebration Rally, Reception, Handbook, Artisan Fair, Parallel Events, Logistics, Advocacy and Consultation Day. We met every 2 weeks at the Baha'i Center for updates from UN Women, Committee Chairs, and the Chair and then went into working committees.

I think it is important to list the events, practices, and problems before we forget them because so much has changed since COVID. There was a wonderful sense of camaraderie and energy at Consultation Day as old friends reunited and new friends were made. First, Consultation Day was an extravagant event held at venues like

the Apollo Theater with entertainment (Climbing Poetree; Poet Rupi Kaur; Gaida, a Syrian singer; LeeOlive Tucker, Harlem Diva), an interview and conversation between the

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**“MY GOALS WERE TO INCREASE OUR LOCAL MEMBERSHIP, BUILD A TEAM OF INTERNS... STRENGTHEN THE REGIONAL NGO CSWS, AND ORGANIZE OUR OFFICE TO BE A PLACE WHERE WE WOULD TALK, STRATEGIZE, PLAN, DREAM, AND LEARN FROM EACH OTHER.”**

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Chair of the CSW Bureau (Amb. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, Brazil; Amb. Geraldine Byrne Nason, Ireland) and the Executive Director of UN Women (Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka) led by a journalist, a keynote address by the Woman of Distinction: Bandana Rana, Nepal; Mabel Bianco, Argentina; Gharsanay Ibnul Ameen, Afghanistan; Sizani Ngubane, South Africa; a panel on the priority theme that included speakers and discussants such as Rosa Lizarde, Karen AbuZayd, Barbara Adams, Lakshmi Puri, Charlotte Bunch, Sean Southey, Elizabeth Tang, Esther Mwaura, Kevin Cassidy, Memory Kachambwa, and Heather Ibrahim. In the afternoon there were breakout groups on Advocacy Training and the Priority and Review Theme with a report back and finally a singing of the song “Keep on Movin’ Forward” and dancing.

Other events we sponsored were the Artisan Fair, the Celebration Rally in Dag Hammarskjold Park, the Woman of Distinction contest, the gala reception where we networked and renewed friendships and about 700 parallel events. Each year UN Women asked if we could reduce the number!



# HOURY GEUDELEKIAN

Chair of NGO CSW/NY during  
**2019 - 2023**

**UNCHAINED AT LAST**



# HIGHLIGHTS

**ADJUSTED NGO CSW/NY'S WORK TO  
VIRTUAL DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**



**FIRST VIRTUAL NGO CSW  
FORUM IN 2021 AND FIRST  
HYBRID FORUM IN 2023**

**GREW OUR REACH GLOBALLY TO  
GRASSROOTS COMMUNITIES**

**CONVENED GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY FOR THE  
GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM**

**INCREASED & IMPROVED ADVOCACY WITH  
MEMBER STATES FOR CSW**



# HOURLY GEUDELEKIAN

2019 – 2023

Here we are, the final chapter of NGO CSW/NY 50th Anniversary history book! Hope you took the time to delve into each past Chair's journey and contributions. As the current chair I am very aware of the shoulders I am standing on. I have been lucky enough to work with each of the chairs from the past 20 years in different capacities and they have all inspired me. Two stand out and those are the two immediate past chairs. The truth is neither I nor Susan O'Malley would be Chair if it was not for Soon-Young Yoon. This book itself is inspired by Dr. Soon-Young Yoon. She instigated us all during our joyful in person celebration on June 2nd 2022.

My story of NGO CSW/NY can be considered quite unique since until 2010 I was a business woman living the life of fashion and beauty in NYC while my current global sisters were fighting for global feminist rights. I often reflect on that and think how grateful I am that this movement that I am proud to be a part of has been building for generations!

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**"FOR ME THE BIGGEST  
[SUCCESS] WAS CREATING  
A COLLABORATIVE,  
TRANSPARENT, SHARED  
LEADERSHIP MODEL."**

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As an Armenian born in Beirut Lebanon who happens to have been married at the age of 14, I was fortunate to have been living in NYC when I had to make the legal choice of having an abortion so I can build a life before becoming a mom. I carry a lot of the causes I fight for in my veins. I am passionate about the right for abortion, ending early or forced marriage, demilitarization for peace and security and the safety of all, especially women and girls and marginalized people. If we are serious about climate justice the first thing to address is demilitarization and fossil fuel. I will fight for LGBTQI community as well as all migrants and the right to education. The list goes on and at the end of the day it is all based on human rights for all.

Since I admit not knowing too much about any of this before 2011, I will go

back to the moment I stepped into the United Nations during CSW55. I was just recently divorced, looking for a new passion to pursue when a friend from the Armenian Relief Society asked me if I could join their delegation at the Commission on the Status of Women. Like many others who experienced CSW for the first time, I was mesmerized. My timing was impeccable. It was the year UN Women was established and its first Executive Director, Michelle Bachelet was inaugurated with a passionate speech. Every single word she uttered made sense to me and added to my new passion. I made up my mind to find a way to engage and help achieve what she clearly stated:

*In addition to our role of mobilizing, coordinating and leveraging the efforts of others, UN Women will focus on five areas:*

- 1.Expanding women's voice, leadership and participation;*
- 2.Ending violence against women;*
- 3.Strengthening women's full participation in conflict resolution and peace processes;*
- 4.Enhancing women's economic empowerment; and*
- 5.Ensuring gender priorities are reflected in national plans and budgets, including capacity to support CEDAW reporting.*

With my goal set, I was lucky to learn about NGO CSW through friends I was making in the hallways of the United Nations. It was also the year leadership was changing and I was lucky enough to find myself at a monthly meeting where Soon Young Yoon became the new Chair. She was already someone I was aligned with the idea of encouraging youth leadership. I am so grateful she brought me into her circle of thinkers as an advisor which exposed me to dozens of volunteers who were working or volunteering to improve gender equality. Two years later I was appointed as one of the Executive Members at Large. Those first two years we established the NGO CSW in the regions and began the Cities for CEDAW campaign. For more details read Soon Young Yoon's chapter followed by the next leader Susan O'Malley.

One specific year that shaped my personal journey was 2015 so I will mention it here even though Soon Young was chair. It was a pivotal year celebrating Beijing+20. You might already know that CSW themes are based on Beijing Platform for Action. The document that all member states agreed upon in 1995 in Beijing. I was the Communication Secretary and Susan O'Malley was Vice Chair, and ready to take the position of chair by that June. Soon-Young had appointed us as co-chairs



of the Forum and trusted us to shape it as we wished. It was so empowering to have her trust that I excelled even my own expectations. We organized so many powerful events including Consultation Day at Apollo Theatre followed by a rally in partnership with UN Women to Times Square. We truly felt like we were pushing all limits for better and stronger results. We wanted the realization and implementation of BPfA once and for all. I was so inspired by our team and all that we were accomplishing, for the first time I came out and told my truth about my background and how I was finally coming out of the closet as a feminist in a conservative community.

My role with this chapter is to walk you through the four years I was privileged and honored to lead starting with a challenged election in June 2019. Leading up to 2019, there were a lot of disappointments in how CSW agreed conclusions were sabotaged by a few conservative governments. Global Civil Society and feminist activists including Women's Major Group and other coalitions were working around the clock in creative ways to make needed recommendations knowing what works and doesn't work on the ground. Although we had very good relationships with most Bureau members and many progressive Missions, at the end of the two weeks of Commission on the Status of Women we were all inevitably disappointed with weakened language or flat out no agreed conclusions. Something had to change, and I do believe one of the reasons I was elected over my opponent was because I was an outsider, my background was in business, marketing, and event planning. I knew how to problem solve and think creatively. I had also learned that some of the issues we as civil society had was not trusting each other, working in silos and the feeling of scarcity of space. These were not unfounded, because of unsuccessful results some advocates didn't trust each other. There were certainly amazing, brave, and big-hearted individuals who also modeled the complete opposite, but we needed a new way of doing what we did for better results.

At this time, there were also rumors that UN Women was thinking along similar lines except no one knew what it was. While I was thinking of my own plans leading up to NGO CSW elections, I got a call to a last-minute meeting at UN Women organized by the head of the Civil Society section, Lopa Banerjee. I will never forget this meeting, no one knew what the topic was. By the end of the meeting, we learned there were representatives of the Gates Foundation, along with Mexico and France governments. What stood out for me was what Lopa was talking about. It seemed they were also trying to think outside the box and creatively for better results from CSW. The seed that was planted that day was the Generation



*Lopa Banerjee discussing the idea for GEF*

Equality Forum (GEF). What I took away from the meeting was the joy (literally), Lopa was planting. Joy was something I worked from. With all the negativity around me, even growing up I had developed this joyful approach to take the edge off difficult issues.

Of course, the Generation Equality Forum with its five-year plan was more than simply joy. It is certainly an ambitious and challenging plan. The idea is to bring multi-stakeholders who want to improve Gender Equality collaborating together for better results. It is supposed to be working parallel to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. It is for those who are unafraid to dream big and accelerate promises made in 1995 in a transformative way. It was not to replace CSW, simply challenge it and perhaps discover new ways of achieving our goals towards Gender Equality. Once UN Women established the Secretariat for GEF with France and Mexico, they needed a Civil Society Convener. I was privileged to be asked to lead in that role with the help of my Vice Chair Ivy Koek and Devan Zingler, our then Office Manager. Devan was the third full-time Office Manager who became our Program Manager within a year. Once we took on the convener role, we proceeded to choose 21 advocates for the Civil Society Advisory Group (CSAG) from hundreds of applicants. Seeing the interest of global activists, we asked the remaining applicants to join The Advisory Working Group. This one move was in a way what was going to be how I convened CSAG and Chaired NGO CSW/NY. It is based on the fact that you never deny someone who volunteers to help, if there's no room for them in one role you try and figure out another way for them to serve their talent.

The year was 2020 and we had to also commemorate Beijing+25. It was twenty five years since 189 countries agreed on one of the most powerful global agreements on gender equality that changed the feminist movement, yet we still had a long way to go for equality. In September of that year we hit the ground running organizing the largest NGO CSW Forum since I started in 2010. UN Women had about 8,000 advocates signed up to attend the official CSW64 and we had scheduled about 550 in person parallel events while working with the Civil Society Advisory Group and Advisory Working Group to see how we were going to launch GEF. Six months into these plans, on March 2nd, the CSW Bureau convened a meeting with Member States and Civil Society to inform us of his official plans to shut down The United Nations due to COVID. The World was already following this deadly virus's lethal journey, although we were so busy to kick off our Forum we did not want to believe it. On a personal level the seriousness of this deadly disease did not register until late April. We had to cancel thousands of attendees and hundreds of events including a Consultation Day at Apollo Theatre. The Secretary General Antonio Guterres, ordered the United Nations to close down on March 5th or 6th, so the meeting with the CSW Bureau was the last time we were there in person until 2022. This was obviously historic and as I mentioned above, our initial reaction was simply putting out fires and helping the thousands of people on their way to New York cancel their trips and reservations. My old event planning self went right into action cancelling all of our venues and trying to get

refunds for the monies we desperately needed to pay our own bills. Once the dust settled and we realized and processed the seriousness of the issue, I put on my problem solving hat. We were already integrating zoom into some of our monthly meetings but now we needed to raise the bar on virtual meetings. We had GEF/CSAG to handle, we also needed to figure out how to gather virtually if we can't meet in person for at least a year or two. Here I want to give a huge shout out to our Executive Committee and of course by now, our Program Manager including our tech person. By the time the next CSW came around, we already had a fully virtual Forum planned which hosted over 700 parallel events and somehow we were able to welcome 27,000 advocates globally on one virtual platform. This was not only a gathering success, we also managed to make money. I used my old business models to create a pricing that was acceptable to 99.9% of participants as well as successful in engaging for advocacy. As a matter of fact our amateur virtual platform with Pathable was more accessible and cost less than both Mexico and Paris Forums which ended up being fully virtual in Mexico and hybrid for Paris.

Circling back to how we handled CSAG and Generation Equality Forum, I wish I could say I am as proud of that process as I am of NGO CSW/NY. We did the best we could considering the difficulties of working within the UN Women system, two governments and the most diverse civil society groups ever assembled. As an example, as conveners of CSAG, we qualified for a half a million dollar grant. This was to help us amplify the GEF process globally and thematically, and NGO CSW/NY was in charge. We were methodical in the way we distributed the subgrants to the 21 CSAG members and how we applied some of it to amplify it during CSW65. We should all be very proud of what we pulled off despite a global pandemic. GEF secretariat did an amazing job bringing in all the different stakeholders and by summer of 2021, at the hybrid Paris Forum they proudly announced \$40 billion raised towards gender equality for six Action Coalitions, Peace and Security Compact and Care Alliance.



Reflecting on my position as Chair of NGO CSW/NY, there are so many achievements to be proud of. For me the biggest one was creating a collaborative, transparent, shared leadership model. It took a while for cohorts and partners to trust the process, yet we kept circling back to it over and over again. After our first all virtual Forum in 2021, we organized a second one with more emphasis on

advocacy, creating a Virtual Vienna Cafe with more partnerships and other feminist coalitions. For an experiment it was successful, yet it also taught us that sometimes it is Civil Society that needs more prompting to show up and engage. Youth and adolescent girls were much more prepared and reliable. It was a proud moment for us as die hard

supporters of youth and adolescent voices. A noteworthy shoutout also goes to our newly upgraded Youth Leadership and Young Professionals, they have been effective and influential. The credit of course goes to the three co-chairs who took on the challenge earlier on in our journey, they are Saphira Rameshfar, Saeeda Rizvi and none other than our Program Manager Devan Zingler. It is also worth mentioning here how

proud I am of how we have supported and nourished our own youth like Devan. She was our intern when I was the Office Manager before running for chair and then out of dozens of strong candidates, we were so lucky she took on the office manager role, she rose to the challenge over and over again and we are where we are because of her commitment and resolve to find solutions. She has been my rock, my editor, and conscience when I



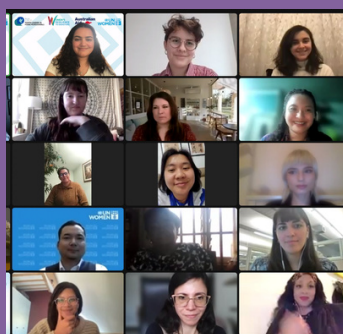
doubted myself. I must also mention my Vice Chair, Ivy Koek. She was always my calm voice and clear thinker when I was burning hot. She was always there with an abundance of knowledge when it came to UN processes and documents. We balanced each other perfectly. Although I am grateful to every single Executive Committee member from both of my terms, it is important to recognize my treasurer in the first term, Margaretha Jones, who worked tirelessly to learn and support our half a million dollar grant from Gates. None of us had taken on a challenge like that. Her commitment and honesty is what made us successful in that endeavor.

Moving forward, I would only hope that future leaders and participants can build on what we have already created and bring the lessons learned for a better future with Gender Equality.





# HISTORY OF THE YOUTH LEADERS & YOUNG PROFESSIONALS



In 2009, on the eve of the 15 year anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the NGO CSW/NY initiated a Young Professionals membership program to connect younger generations with an interest in women's rights and international policy advocacy to NGO CSW/NY's work at the UN. This objective was to give young professionals the opportunity to work in partnership with experienced Committee members in advancing women's rights around the world.

Young Professionals members had the opportunity to:

- add the perspective of young women and men to the activities and direction of NGO CSW/NY;
- participate in a substantive intergenerational discussion around gender issues;
- Extend the mission of the NGO CSW/NY to a larger population;
- Engage with other people interested in advancing women's rights around the world.

The Young Professionals program quickly evolved into a vast network for professional development and an outlet to engage and empower young professionals in the discussion of women's issues globally. As youth voices are often neglected or ignored in professional spaces, especially ones dominated by men, it was necessary to create a space to empower youth and make their voices heard.

The 'Young Professionals' program eventually evolved into the 'Youth Leaders & Young Professionals (YLYPs)' program in 2020. The YLYP's mission is to amplify the voices of youth leaders and young professionals, providing a platform for their perspectives on gender equality and channels for their advocacy at the United Nations, as well as to convene young people to consult and contribute to the advancement of the international feminist movement.

Starting in 2021, the YLYPs have hosted an annual eight-event Youth Preparation Series to help our youth network prepare for the CSW and NGO CSW Forum. The YLYPs also focus on creating youth spaces and organizing youth-centered events during the CSW and NGO CSW Forum, connecting UN youth spaces and promoting the integration of youth across all relevant UN Commissions, and working with regional partners and their communities to mobilize a coalition that prioritizes advocacy and action.



[LEARN MORE ABOUT THE YLYPS](#)

# TIMELINE OF FEMINIST MILESTONES AT THE UNITED NATIONS

1945

## FOUNDING OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations (UN) commitments to the advancement of women began with the signing of the United Nations Charter in San Francisco in 1945. In its preamble, it reaffirms “...the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.” Of the 160 signatories, only four were women— Minerva Bernardino (Dominican Republic), Virginia Gildersleeve (United States), Bertha Lutz (Brazil) and Wu Yi-Fang (China).

## SUBCOMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

The Subcommission on the Status of Women was established in 1946 at the inaugural meetings of the UN General Assembly in London in February 1946 under the Commission on Human Rights.

On 21 June 1946, the Subcommission formally became the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), a full-fledged commission under the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It was dedicated to ensuring women’s equality and promoting women’s rights. Its mandate was to “prepare recommendations and reports to the Economic and Social Council on promoting women’s rights in political, economic, civil, social and educational fields” and to make recommendations on “urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women’s rights.”

1946

# TIMELINE OF FEMINIST MILESTONES AT THE UNITED NATIONS

1948

## UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was established as a milestone document setting out for the first time fundamental human rights to be universally protected. While the leading role of Eleanor Roosevelt as the Chairperson of the drafting committee of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been well documented, other women also played an essential role in the drafting of the UDHR. Others include Hansa Mehta of India, Bertha Lutz of Brazil, Isabel de Vidal of Uruguay, Dominican Republic, Minerva Bernardino, Shaista Ikramullah of Pakistan, Bodil Begtrup of Denmark, Marie-Hélène Lefauchaux of France, Mary Sutherland of the United Kingdom, among others.

## CREATION OF NGO CSW/NY

The NGO Committee on the Status of Women, NY (NGO CSW/NY) was created in 1972 as one of the NGO Committees of the Conference of NGOs (CoNGO). It was formed in preparation for the International Women's Year (1975), the UN Decade of Women (1975-1985) and the First World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975.

NGO CSW/NY was created to provide a forum for exchange of information on global women's issues (our annual NGO CSW Forum), facilitating our global community of members, and later, assisting the international community in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and other UN agreements.

1972

1973

## CREATION OF NGO CSW GENEVA

NGO CSW Geneva was established in 1973. Learn more about them [here](#).

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S YEAR

The CSW recommended that 1975 be designated International Women's Year (IWY) to mark its 25th anniversary. Observance of the year was intended to remind the international community that discrimination against women, entrenched in law and deeply rooted cultural beliefs, was a persistent global problem. IWY would also serve to encourage governments, NGOs and individuals to increase their efforts to promote equality between men and women, and to enhance their recognition of women's contributions to development.

1975

## FIRST WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

The First World Conference of the International Women's Year took place in Mexico City in 1975. It drew 133 governments, and for the first time, 6,000 representatives of NGOs attended a parallel forum, the International Women's Year Tribune. The conference defined a World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year, which offered comprehensive guidelines for the advancement of women.

1975-  
1985

## UN DECADE FOR WOMEN

Following a recommendation from the World Conference of the International Women's Year, the UN declared 1976 to 1985 the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace. The Decade contributed to bringing further legitimacy to the international women's movement and advanced women's issues on the global agenda. It served to underscore the recognition that global development was not possible without women.

1976

## CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)

The drafting of CEDAW was a major task for the CSW during the Decade for Women. Drafting had been mandated by the Plan of Action adopted at the Mexico City conference, which called for a convention on the elimination of discrimination against women with effective implementation procedures. The text of the Convention was prepared by working groups within the CSW starting in 1976. Extensive deliberations continued from 1977 to 1979. The Convention was finally adopted by the General Assembly in 1979. It entered into force on 3 September 1981, just 30 days after the 20th State had ratified it, faster than any previous human rights convention. By the tenth anniversary of the Convention in 1989, almost one hundred nations had agreed to be bound by its provisions.

## 2ND WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

The Second World Conference on Women was held during the UN Decade for Women in July 1980. 145 Member States gathered for the mid-decade conference organized in Copenhagen, Denmark. In addition to reaffirming the importance of CEDAW, the Conference sought a short history of the CSW with a focus on three areas of urgent concern for women: employment, health and education. The 1980 Programme of Action agreed in Copenhagen called for stronger national measures to ensure women's ownership and control of property, as well as improvements in women's rights to inheritance, child custody and loss of nationality. Over 8,000 participants from 187 countries attended the parallel NGO Forum to network and discuss the major themes of the Conference.

1980

## CREATION OF NGO CSW VIENNA

NGO CSW Vienna was established in 1982. Learn more about them [here](#).

1982

1985

## WORLD CONFERENCE TO REVIEW AND APPRAISE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE UN DECADE FOR WOMEN

The 1985 World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace opened in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1985, with a mandate to establish concrete measures to overcome the obstacles to achieving the Decade's goals. Participants included 1,900 delegates from 157 Member States. The parallel NGO Forum held at the University of Nairobi attracted around 12,000 participants from all over the world, with many African, and in particular Kenyan, women in attendance. The UN adopted by consensus the 372-paragraph Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, a blueprint for the future of women to the end of the century. It outlined a series of measures for achieving gender equality at the national level and for promoting women's participation in peace efforts.

## GLOBAL CONFERENCES & MEETINGS

During the 1990s, a series of global conferences and summit meetings on critical aspects of development were held by the UN to establish an integrated global agenda for development. These included the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED or the Rio Conference) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Austria; the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, Egypt; the 1995 World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen, Denmark; the 1996 Habitat II Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul, Turkey; and the 1996 World Food Summit in Rome, Italy.

1990'S

1995

## FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

The Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China in 1995, and also referred to as the Beijing Women's Conference, was one of the greatest achievements of the CSW. It significantly advanced the global agenda for women's human rights and gender equality. The Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration were adopted in a very participatory and comprehensive manner that included five regional preparatory meetings in 1994 as well as several NGO meetings.

The intergovernmental meeting held in Beijing and the related NGO Forum in nearby Huairou were the largest gatherings of government, NGO and media representatives ever for a UN conference. It convened 6,000 delegates from 189 governments, more than 4,000 accredited NGO representatives, and about 4,000 journalists and media representatives.

## BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION REVIEWS

The Beijing+5 Review, "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century," was a special session that took place at United Nations Headquarters in New York for the review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action. Such "+5" reviews were held in 2005, (CSW49), 2010 (CSW54) and 2015 (CSW59), as part of the CSW's multi-year program of work.

2000-  
2015

2000

## SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1325

In 2000, the UN Security Council (UNSC) formally acknowledged through the creation of Resolution 1325 the changing nature of warfare, in which civilians are increasingly targeted, and women continue to be excluded from participation in peace processes. The resolution specifically addresses how women and girls are disproportionately impacted by violent conflict and war and recognizes the critical role that women can and already do play in peacebuilding efforts. UNSCR 1325 affirms that peace and security efforts are more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts and in the forging of lasting peace.

## GENDER EQUALITY ARCHITECTURE REFORM CAMPAIGN (GEAR)

Following the recommendations in 2006 of a High-Level Panel on strengthening coherence and coordination at the UN, women's organizations gathered to kick-off a campaign to examine the gender equality architecture at the UN. Under the leadership of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), 50 women activists from around the world met to develop a comprehensive and multi-faceted strategy for global, regional and national action for a stronger and single, fully-resourced women's entity at the UN. The result was the Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign in February 2008, to mobilize women's groups and allies to push for the adoption of the new UN entity for gender equality and women's empowerment. It grew quickly to include over 275 organizations in more than 50 countries resulting in adoption of a 62nd General Assembly resolution by consensus to elaborate on a new women's entity based on the model advocated by the GEAR campaign. The end result was the co-creation of UN Women.

2007-  
2010

2000

## CREATION OF NGO CSW/NY YOUNG PROFESSIONALS PROGRAM

(Now known as the Youth Leaders and Young Professionals program)

In 2009, on the eve of the 15 year anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the NGO CSW/NY initiated a Young Professionals membership program to connect younger generations with an interest in women's rights and international policy advocacy to NGO CSW/NY's work at the UN. This objective was to give young professionals the opportunity to work in partnership with experienced Committee members in advancing women's rights around the world.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF UN WOMEN

The establishment of UN Women was by far the most momentous institutional change in addressing gender issues in the UN. It came with the decision by the General Assembly in July 2010, to establish UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The new entity consolidated four previously distinct parts of the United Nations system that focused exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment, namely: the Division for the Advancement of Women and the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women of the Secretariat; the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW); and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). This creation of UN Women was due to the hard work by the GEAR Campaign, an initiative of the women's movement, and the direct relevance of the CSW as its previous secretariat and the Division for the Advancement of Women, as well as champion member states.

2010

2014

## CREATION OF THE REGIONAL NGO CSWS

In addition to NGO CSW Geneva and NGO CSW Vienna, the NGO CSWs in the regions were established in 2014 to help facilitate advocacy, accountability, and implementation. NGO CSWs in Africa, Arab States/MENA, Asia/Pacific, and Latin America/Caribbean are run by local feminist activists who engage with NGO CSW/NY throughout the year and during the annual Commission on the Status of Women.

## 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which set a 2030 deadline to achieve its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). During its fifty-fourth session (2015), the CSW laid the groundwork for future close linkages between implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and what would become the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

2015

2017

## 45TH ANNIVERSARY OF NGO CSW/NY

To honor the voices that have made NGO CSW one of the biggest platforms for women's empowerment, a video produced by interns in 2017 commemorated the 45th anniversary of NGO CSW/NY. Here, past chairs including Mary Powers (1991-1995), Leslie Wright (2000-2003), Bani Dugal (2003-2005), Jackie Shapiro (2005-2007), Soon-Young Yoon (2011-2015), and Susan O'Malley, the 2017 chair, spoke on NGO CSW/NY and its reach across the globe. They highlighted accomplishments in their terms and the terms before.

## BEIJING+25

The UN marked the 25th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic all 25th Anniversary activities were canceled in 2020 and postponed to the next year.

## NGO CSW FORUM CANCELED

For the first time ever, the NGO CSW Forum was canceled due to the Covid 19 pandemic. The CSW and the NGO CSW Forum were the first meetings to be canceled at the UN because of the pandemic. Subsequent meetings at the UN were canceled or strictly limited NGO attendance for the duration of approximately two years.

2020

## GLOBAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Due to the online nature of the NGO CSW Forum and CSW planning, the Global Planning Committee was established which included all the Global NGO CSWs.

2020-  
2021

## GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM

As part of the 25th Anniversary Commemoration, UN Women created the Generation Equality Forum (GEF), a landmark initiative to accelerate equality, leadership, investment and the implementation on gender equality. The GEF was held in 2021 due to the Covid 19 pandemic which canceled activities set for 2020. The GEF created 6 Action Coalitions and a Global Compact on Women, Peace and Security.

## FIRST-EVER VIRTUAL NGO CSW FORUM

The global COVID-19 pandemic affected the feminist and women's movement activism and work in a multitude of ways. It created new inequalities and exasperated extant ones, prevented travel and in-person gatherings around the world, and wreaked havoc on our daily lives.

In this context, NGO CSW/NY made a commitment to continue engaging our members virtually in a meaningful way that would allow us to strengthen our global community and continue our activism in these unprecedented times. Thus, in 2021, the NGO CSW65 Forum became totally virtual for the first time ever. While this was totally new territory for the NGO CSW NY, and despite pushback, a global health pandemic, logistical obstacles, including global time zone differences, languages, and technological issues, the Forum was a success! Over 27,000 participants joined the 700+ events during the Forum, making it one of the largest global gatherings of women's movements and feminist civil society. Read the full report about the landmark NGO CSW65 Forum in 2021 [here](#).

2021

2022

## 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF NGO CSW/NY

NGO CSW/NY celebrated 50 years in 2022! This golden anniversary was a major milestone! Throughout the year, the NGO CSW/NY held various events and campaigns to look back on the memories of the last 50 years and reflect on the vision of the next 50 years.

## CONSULTATION DAY AT THE APOLLO

The first 50th anniversary celebration of NGO CSW/NY was the Consultation Day event on March 13, 2022 at the historic Apollo Theater in Harlem. While it was a hybrid event (online and in-person) for many in the audience it was the first in-person gathering after two years of the Covid-19 pandemic. Watch the live stream recording of the event [here](#).

## FIRST-EVER HYBRID NGO CSW FORUM

With global travel and in-person meetings being safer, we wanted to allow in-person participation for the NGO CSW67 Forum. We know our community has missed the energizing physical space at the CSW in New York City and meeting other advocates from around the world. However, providing virtual spaces and opportunities has considerably expanded our reach and has allowed those without the resources to travel a chance to meaningfully engage in the NGO CSW Forum. We cannot let go of these virtual spaces that have made the Forum accessible to thousands more people around the globe.

With all of this in mind, NGO CSW/NY endeavored to host its first-ever hybrid NGO CSW Forum. While we've learned many lessons from this hybrid experiment, the new format was ultimately a success! It allowed participants to come to New York and join over 300 in-person events, while also providing over 400 virtual sessions and spaces on our virtual portal for those who were not able to participate in-person.

See the [NGO CSW67 Forum report](#) for more details about this endeavor!

2023





# NGO CSW FORUM REPORTS

Since 2021, NGO CSW/NY has published NGO CSW Forum Reports outlining that year's NGO CSW Forum, including the program, reflections and ways to improve, statistics, participant feedback, and outcomes. Read the NGO CSW Forum Reports below.



## NGO CSW67 FORUM REPORT (2023)

Download the report to get a recap of the Forum and learn about different aspects of the Forum, the planning process, outcomes, and how we plan to improve future NGO CSW Forums!

[Download](#)



## NGO CSW66 FORUM REPORT (2022)

We wrapped up our second fully virtual NGO CSW Forum on 25 March exhausted and excited for all the opportunities we created for the global feminist movement.

[Download](#)



## NGO CSW65 VIRTUAL FORUM REPORT (2021)

Despite pushbacks, despite a pandemic, and despite all obstacles including global time zones, languages, and tech issues, our first ever virtual NGO CSW Forum was a success!

[Download](#)



# 45th Anniversary | 2017



In 2017, NGO CSW/NY celebrated its 45th anniversary. Along with other events and campaigns, we commemorated the occasion through the creation of a video

produced by interns. Here, past chairs including Mary Powers (1991-1995), Leslie Wright (2000-2003), Bani Dugal (2003-2005), Jackie Shapiro (2005-2007), Soon-Young Yoon (2011-2015), and Susan O'Malley (2015-2019) spoke about NGO CSW/NY and its reach across the globe. They highlighted accomplishments in their terms and the terms before.



## 50th Anniversary | 2022

On 2 June 2022, NGO CSW/NY celebrated its 50th anniversary in New York City at our first fully in-person event since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Old friends reunited and new connections were made. We also heard from past NGO CSW/NY Chairs about their experience throughout the years. Watch this video for an overview of the celebration!

# NGO CSW/NY ANNIVERSARY VIDEOS

# NGO CSW FORUM HANDBOOKS

**For each NGO CSW Forum, NGO CSW/NY develops an accompanying Handbook to provide participants everything they need to know about engaging in the Forum. While the content, structure, and style of the Handbook has changed throughout the years, it always includes the event schedule, information about NGO CSW/NY, and handbook advertisements. Handbooks have also included exclusive high-level statements, behind-the-scenes looks at the making of the Forum, highlighted awardees, members of our Planning Committee and so much more!**

**To experience the NGO CSW Forums throughout the years and get a comprehensive look at the history of this annual event, [visit our archive of Handbooks](#).**

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NGO CSW/NY facilitates a platform for the voices and leadership of feminists and women's rights organizations globally who lobby for their inclusion in the UN deliberations in pursuit of gender equality. [Learn more about our work.](#)

**This project was spearheaded by the History Working Group**, consisting of Ivy Koek, Rosa Lizarde, Susan O'Malley, and Devan Zingler.

NGO CSW/NY thanks everyone who helped to make this history project possible, namely the History Working Group, Executive Committee, former NGO CSW/NY Chairs, and interns.

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