

# Action for Girls

Newsletter of the Working Group on Girls (WGG) and its International Network for Girls (INFG).

## WGG Organizes for International Day of the Girl

The second annual International Day of the Girl will be held on October 11. The theme for this year is "Innovating Girls' Education and Learning." The International Day of the Girl recognizes, supports and celebrates the activism and voices of girls creating change in their communities.



WGG will be involved in two events: 1) Day of the Girl Speak Out to be held in the UN ECOSOC Chamber on October 11 from 3 to 5pm; 2) the Day of the Girl Summit: 11 Days of Action ([www.DayoftheGirlSummit.org](http://www.DayoftheGirlSummit.org)).

The Day of the Girls Speak Out, co-sponsored by the Missions of Canada, Peru and Turkey, will provide a space for girls engaged in global action to speak with Member States, UN agencies and NGOs about their work, and how it could be supported and elevated by governments and agencies. About fifty percent of the girls presenting will be working on issues related to girls' education to highlight this year's theme. WGG has identified seven girl activists to present their work on the floor of the United Nations. Girls may watch the event LIVE and post questions for panelists on the website [www.DayoftheGirlSummit.org](http://www.DayoftheGirlSummit.org). Following the Girls Speak Out, WGG will hold a reception and celebration for the International Day of the Girl.

The Day of the Girl Summit: 11 Days of Action is a site where girls organize with other girls and girl-serving organizations



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to create change in their communities. Starting on October 1, [DayoftheGirlSummit.org](http://DayoftheGirlSummit.org) will feature a different topic and action related to girls' rights around the world. On October 1, WGG will kick off the 11 Days of Action with The World We Want, helping to gather information for the Post-2015 Agenda. Girls and interested allies should register for the Summit at: [www.DayoftheGirlSummit.org](http://www.DayoftheGirlSummit.org) and follow the Day of the Girl Summit on Facebook and Twitter @DayofGirlSummit or use the hashtag #IDG2013.

Susan O'Malley, IFBPW



Malala at UN

## Malala Celebrates Birthday at UN

On July 12, 2013 I had the opportunity to join Malala Yousafzai in celebrating her 16th birthday. This is no ordinary girl, so this was no ordinary celebration. Malala is a Pakistani girl who was shot in the forehead by the Taliban on 9 October 2012, on her way home from school. The Taliban meant to kill her. They try to deter young girls everywhere from wanting to get an education. But nine months later, Malala decided an appropriate way to celebrate her birthday would be with over 500 youth from over 80 countries to take over a meeting organized by the United Nations General Assembly and demand education for every young person. At this event, the first youth takeover on a global stage, the youth presented a resolution, "The Education We Want," which calls for a youth response to the education emergency.

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## Girls Testify on Violence in Their Lives

The Girls' Tribunal on Violence held 5 March 2013 was a unique opportunity for teen girls to share the impact that violence has had on their lives. The idea of teen leadership is crucial to the Working Group On Girls. Our motto "With Girls, For Girls" was well represented in the Tribunal.

The event was split into violence in the media, schools and communities. Each panel had girl case presenters, witnesses and reactions by four jurists (Faith Nenkai, girl activist; Dan Seymour, UN Women's Deputy Director of Programmes; Abigail Disney, executive producer of "Women, War & Peace" and "Pray the Devil Back to Hell" and Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Husseini, UN Permanent Representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan).

Violence in Media focused on how significant a role media plays in girls' lives. Explaining the hazards of media, Lizzy, Girl Advocate and member of Girls Learn International (GLI), and Varsha, Girl Scouts of the USA, introduced the topic. Varsha said "we are not even conscious of ... [these images] while the market continues to reinforce stereotypes that devalue women and girls, for profit." But media could also be used for good, Lizzy added, because "it all depends on who is piloting the plane." Emma and Annemarie from the SPARK movement that deals with sexual objectification of girls in the media linked the negative impact of media to sexual violence. Annemarie said, "People always ask, why would she [a rape victim] allow that to happen? But what we really should be asking is why do we create a culture that allows for such violence in the first place?" Emma spoke of her own personal struggles with an eating disorder and the "unrealistic, limited, and dangerous standards of beauty that the media upholds and perpetuates." She also described her petition to *Seventeen Magazine* and *Teen Vogue* to stop airbrushing their photos.

Violence in Schools, introduced by Vilde from PLAN Norway and Laila, Girl Advocate, emphasized the importance of safe and nurturing educational environments for children. Arawela, PLAN Finland, presented a video on bullying and name calling in Finland. She said "actions need to be taken against bullying...only then will the physical and psychological damage against girls be erased." Nicole, Girl Scouts of the USA, spoke about teen-dating violence.

She shared stories of friends who had gotten involved in abusive relationships, which prompted her to champion New Jersey's first "safe dating" bill and run a program in her school called MASK: Montgomery Advocates for Solidarity and Kindness. Angelica, Feminist Task Force El Salvador, ended the segment by telling accounts of children with physical disabilities or members of racial minorities who were abused and bullied in her school. She reminded us "we are all brothers and sisters."

Fueva, Grail/Mozambique, introduced the Violence in Communities presentation by saying that "violence in communities is a system: all who are part of it [the

community] are accomplices." Christina, WGG Girl Advocate and GLI, said that violence in communities doesn't necessarily mean physical harm: "Women earn 70 cents to every man's dollar. What message is this sending? That no matter how hard they work, it will never be enough." The first speaker, Ursula from The Grail in Mozambique, told of her own experiences of being bullied. She said that the Tribunal made her realize that "violence is a global issue." Thais from The Grail in Brazil said that violence in

her community is caused by extreme poverty. Girls have gone missing and are exploited daily. Her work with The Grail has made her community safer. Julia from GLI, Los Angeles, spoke about being bullied for being gay. She said, "I think of feminism when I think of how often women's and girl's sexualities are not taken seriously because men are angered simply by the fact that a woman dare to own a sexuality that does not include them." Celia from the Loretto Community in Mexico was unable to obtain a visa so the testimony of Celia, Loretto Community in Mexico, was read by Sarah, The Grail. Celia told of sexual violence and street violence against girls in her community.

The Tribunal was an inspiring reminder of how powerful girls can be. It was difficult hearing about the abuse of girls in our global culture, but it was also hopeful to see girls on the front lines of activism, telling their stories, and as Anita said, "breathing new hope to their peers."

Laila Morgan, Girl Advocate



Tribunal - Girls in audience at Tribunal

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## Rwandan Girls Promote Youth Participation in MY World Survey for Post-2015 Agenda



Rwandan girls lead the way - Mark Darrrough/Girl Hub Rwanda

**T**he MY World Survey, a groundbreaking initiative by the UN and partners, invites citizens of the world to voice their opinions on the most important issues that the individual countries and the global community must address when the priorities agreed on in 2000, known as the Millennium Development Goals, have reached their 2015 deadline. Girl Hub is a collaborative effort of the United Kingdom Department of International Development and the Nike Foundation meant to transform the lives of Rwandan girls by empowering them to participate in changing their own lives. *Ni Nyampinga*, the first Magazine and radio show for teenage girls, is a project of Girl Hub.

In April, Girl Hub Rwanda's *Ni Nyampinga* girl ambassadors helped distribute 80,000 copies of the MY World Survey to youth in schools and refugee camps across the 30 districts of Rwanda. Other partners included UNICEF, Girl Guides, Plan Rwanda and the Peace Corps. As of May, over 560,000 people from 194 countries have voted online on the MY World website ([www.myworld2015.org](http://www.myworld2015.org)), by mobile phone or by pen and paper. Nearly 84,000 voters have been age 15 or under.

"Girls across Rwanda are leading the charge to amplify youth voices in the post-2015 agenda," said Amina Mohammed, special adviser to the UN Secretary General on post-2015 development planning. "This commitment and approach in Rwanda should serve as an example to the rest of the world." To date, global participants have identified the same top seven priorities, though in a slightly different order. Topping the lists in all groups of participants are #1, a good education #2, better healthcare and #3, an honest and responsive government.

Jackie Shapiro, ECPAT-USA

## Malala Celebrates Birthday at UN, cont.

The Taliban, instead of deterring youth from wanting an education, had inspired an international movement like no other!

This morning, anxious to listen to one of the most courageous people I had ever heard of, I was at the United Nations as a representative of The Salvation Army and its International Social Justice Commission and eager to respond to the call to action for the right to education. After introductory remarks from the President of the General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General and the UN Special Envoy on Global Education, it was time for Malala to give her speech. It moved me to tears. She emphasized that Malala Day was not her day, but a day for every person who has spoken up for his or her rights and the rights of others. She also spoke about the shooting and how she was influenced by her role models to pursue a non-violent response. She spoke on forgiveness saying, *"I don't even hate the Taliban who shot me. Even if there is a gun in my hand and he stands in front of me, I would not shoot him...this is the forgiveness that I have learned from my mother and father. This is what my soul is telling me, be peaceful and love everyone."*

Throughout her speech I thought about how courageous and loving Malala is. She could have taken the easy route and been frightened into silence, but she did not. Instead Malala inspired us spiritually, making forgiveness a priority. She pushed me in my advocacy and pushed me to continue to stand for what is right and not to give in to society. She pushed me in life, encouraging me to never give up hope.

On Malala's day, I met Cherlene Thomasso, a 16-year-old Salvationist from Cape Town, South Africa. Cherlene, who is passionate about education, was representing her school at the United Nations. Meeting Cherlene showed me that we live in a world where strong, vocal young Salvationists, working with youth from around the world, can fight against injustice in our local communities and on a global scale. Indeed, let us continue to stand together with Malala for universal education, so that the estimated 57 million children who are denied the right to education can go to school and be empowered by "the weapon of knowledge."

Malala's speech may be heard at [www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=45395](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=45395)

Sarah Medina, Former Salvation Army Intern



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## Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka is New Executive Director of UN Women



Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka became the second Executive Director of UN Women and Under Secretary General of the UN on 19 August 2013. A native of South Africa, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka was elected to Parliament in 1994, served as Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister of Minerals and Energy, and is the first female to hold the Office of Deputy President of South Africa.

One week into her office, WGG members were invited to the first meeting of NGOs with Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka. The Executive Director spoke of her own 'coming of age' in the leadership of civil society organizations, such as those in the WGG coalition. She told of moving through the ranks of the YWCA, serving as the Young Woman's Coordinator for the World Young Women's Christian Organization in Geneva and thanked WGG member Doris Salah for her mentorship at the YWCA. Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka also served as president of the NGO, Natal Organization of Women in South Africa, and founded the Umlambo Foundation that provides support to schools without resources.

Several WGG members asked about UN Women's commitment to the girl child. Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka assured us girls' rights and opportunities are a high priority on the UN Women's agenda, and she gave us permission to call her attention to issues she might miss concerning girls.

By the end of the meeting, she was wearing the WGG signature green wristband printed with the motto "Girls Rights are Human Rights!"

Beth Adamson, Anglican Women's Empowerment

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*Please address questions about the articles to the authors at [wggcontact@gmail.com](mailto:wggcontact@gmail.com) Reprinting of articles is encouraged with credit given to Action for Girls. We welcome articles by NGOs.*

## Adwoa Aidoo and Emily Bent Elected Co-Chairs of WGG

At the June meeting of WGG Adwoa Aidoo and Emily Bent were elected co-chairs for 2013-2015. Asked about what they wanted to accomplish over the next two years, they said elevating the voices of girls at the UN by:

- Developing the WGG Girl Advocate program by increasing participation and leadership opportunities within the WGG
- Increasing participation of girls at the UN, including representation at high level meetings, conferences and youth-driven initiatives
- Helping to ensure that girls' rights and experiences shape the conversation around the MDGs and Post-2015 Agenda
- Facilitating the continued professionalization of the WGG as a 501 (c)3 nonprofit organization
- Advancing the WGG's online presence by strengthening our communication with girls, policy makers, NGOs and civil society
- Showcasing the history and success of WGG initiatives with and for girls through producing resources such as toolkits and best practices.

Both Emily Bent and Adwoa Aidoo have extensive experience that has prepared them to lead the WGG.

Emily Bent was the Co-Chair for the WGG Girls Participation Task Force from 2007-2013. She has a Ph.D. in Global Women's Studies from the National University of Ireland, Galway, an M.A. in Women's and Gender Studies from Rutgers University and a B.A. in Women and Gender Studies, summa cum laude, from the College of New Jersey. She teaches at the College of New Jersey in the Women's and Gender Studies Department and has taught at the National University of Ireland, Galway.

Adwoa Aidoo also co-chaired the WGG Girls Participation Task Force from 2007-2013. She is the Global Action Manager for Girls Scouts of the USA, where she is responsible for infusing education and awareness of global issues and global advocacy throughout Girl Scout programming and serves as the organization's primary UN representative. Previously she served as the Program Coordinator for the Nigeria and Rwanda Country Teams in Washington, DC. Adwoa has a B.B.A. in Management & International Relationships from Emory University and an M.A. in Intercultural Relations from the School of International Training.

Margery Cohen, League of Women Voters



Adwoa Aidoo and Emily Bent, WGG Co-Chairs