

WFWP USA: Let's Join Hands and Heal this Planet Together!

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[CSW66 Parallel Event] Building Bridges: Fostering Mutual Empowerment Through Environmental Healing

During the 66th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66), the Virtual Parallel Event, "Building Bridges: Fostering Mutual Empowerment Through Environmental Healing" was held on March 21, 2022. The CSW66 Parallel Event was organized by WFWPI, in collaboration with WFWP Korea.

The world knows that we need to work together, yet we find it difficult to overcome fundamental differences in worldviews and values. Through storytelling and interactive dialogue, WFWPI and WFWP Korea aimed to create a space that encouraged the exploration of how we as women and girls can be empowered by leading the way in transcending obstacles of self-interest and fostering relationships of trust for the sake of a mutual goal of environmental healing in our communities. The climate crisis is increasingly affecting all communities around the world and WFWPI has a vision that the solution can be based on building bridges between the government and civil society, men and women, as well as between people and nature.

Ms. Srruthi Lehka, the UN Representative at the WFWPI Office for UN Relations in Geneva, was the moderator of the program and welcomed Mrs. Merly Barlaan, Deputy Director of the WFWPI Offices for UN Relations, for the Opening Remarks. She described how some of the GFGI projects bridged divides, such as in Ghana, where "WFWP volunteers built partnerships with local NGOs and schools, to show students what sustainable practice looks like by creating art from waste." In a hope-filled message Mrs. Barlaan said it is through these efforts where we can "see that there are initiatives around the world which are creating a wave of women-empowering climate adaptation initiatives, building bridges of trust and collaboration for the sake of healing the earth."

Next, Ms. Hyang Jeong Lee, Member of the Mirae, WFWP Korea, introduced the youth think tank Mirae. She explained the meaning behind the word Mirae which means "Future" in Korean. Ms. Lee shared that Mirae is a place for young people to take on the vision of the future because "we believe that when we take the initiative to solve problems with a sense of ownership more than anyone else, we can bring the winds of change."

The first featured, youth speaker was Ms. Kefilwe Lebepe, Coordinator of the GFGI Cloth Nappy Climate Action Project. Ms. Lebepe emphasized the importance of research, transparency, and partnerships in building the Cloth Nappy project. Her project beautifully exemplified what it meant to raise empowering women leaders sustainably, by listening to the people, gaining trust from the people and having the village take ownership. Through each of these efforts, "at the official end of the project, we were able to hand over the project to Queen Dikgale and her people." This ensured the project was truly benefiting the community and could be run independently.

Our second set of speakers were Ms. Christine Bulayo and Mr. Dale Dejecacion, Co-Project Managers of the WFWP Permaculture Literacy Program in the Philippines. Although permaculture is generally seen as an agricultural practice, Ms. Bulayo and Mr. Dejecacion explained that it is more than that, it is "a way of thinking - knowing nature, being one with nature, and working with nature, not against nature." This eye-opening presentation taught the audience how permaculture can be practiced even if you don't have a garden. Ms. Bulayo explains this saying "you can integrate the design and movement of the wind, the existing water formation, the land formation, and the plants according to the existing movement of these elements." As long as you follow this system you can create your own permaculture garden! This presentation invigorated the audience with hope as with the permaculture mindset in place, "every child, all men, and women, will enjoy the human and universal right to a clean and healthy environment."

The audience were given opportunities to engage through the conversations which took place in between each part of the program and had time to ask questions directly to the speakers.

In conclusion Mrs. Carolyn Handschin, Director of the WFWPI Offices for UN Relations, expressed her gratitude to the UN for choosing a theme on the environment which "easily unites us, something that [we] can find partnership in easily: between households, within communities" and "something that propagates the sense that my success is yours."

So let's join hands and heal this planet together!

The full recording of the CSW66 Parallel Event can be [viewed here](#)

