

## CSW61 Reflection: Intergenerational Collaboration: Insights To Solve Social Ills

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I am truly thankful to have been a part of organizing WFWPI's CSW61 parallel event entitled: "Women Fostering Peace and Co-Prosperity: Creating Intergenerational Collaboration sans Arrogance." It was wonderful to see women across generations and nationalities, come together each week to share ideas, experiences, and constructive criticism to plan such a meaningful event. When I attended the well-received parallel event, I could not have asked for a better send off to my week at the United Nations on behalf of WFWPI.

As with WFWPI's parallel event, a common theme ran through all the side events: the importance of youth and older generations working together. I was most struck by this in the side event, "The Gambia – Engaging and Providing Structural Strategies that Encourage Women and Girls to Enable Them to Empower Each Other at Every Step of Their Lives." The discussion centered on the need to end female genital mutilation (FGM), in the Gambia. Honorable Minister Touray spoke of her devotion to the cause. The Minister explained her story of having been a victim of FGM herself. FGM is a 5,000-year-old practice rooted deeply in religion, and has only seen change in the last 50 years. The Minister thanked the young women in the room who are willing to fight for the elimination of FGM through sharing their own stories, using social media and technology, and educating other youth and communities. Their message is that FGM is a practice based on male dominance that negatively impacts the female reproductive system and has a 76% fatality rate.

When I returned from my week at the UN, I was asked about my trip. I find it difficult to put into words how incredible my experience participating in the CSW61 at the UN experience truly was. I attended seven side events, all of which were influential to my identity as a woman, social worker, supervisor, and most importantly, human being. My ongoing answer went something like this, "It was unreal to sit in a room, next to some of the most influential people in the world who were all so humble. Everyone was there with the same goal in mind, to work together and advocate for women's human rights. Although the topics discussed were not particularly uplifting, the overall feel was peaceful, and I could not have asked for a better educational experience."

It was a great honor to take part in the CSW61 at the UN. The Gambia side event was only one part of my overall experience. I found each side event to be very influential. Each event reminded me of the most important skills needed to advocate for fellow women and humans in general, communication and language being at the forefront. In order to have a positive impact on any individual, community, or country, a person must be able to talk to the people and build trust relationships.

I realize that a holistic approach is needed to achieve the necessary success. I will continue to enhance these skills in my social work practice as a mental health professional to further the rights of my community and agency and look forward to my future work with WFWPI.