

OCTOBER 2010

Dear WNUSP Friends,
Welcome to the October 2010 Edition of WNUSP-News.

ANNOUNCEMENT - WNUSP members elected to CRPD Committee



WNUSP is proud to announce that, during the 2010 Conference of States Parties held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from September 1 - 3, 2010, Edah Maina and Gabor Gombos were elected to the CRPD Committee to monitor international compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Edah, a CRPD consultant to the WNUSP Board, has already served one term and will be serving a second term starting in January 2011 and Gabor will be serving his first term.

Congratulations to both Edah and Gabor!

Board Changes

In other news, WNUSP is announcing several changes to our Board:

Tina Minkowitz has resigned as Co-chair and will no longer be a voting member of the Board. Tina will continue to serve on the Board as a non-voting member and will formally take on a new role as WNUSP's International Representative. The Board is working with Tina to develop mutually agreed upon terms of reference for this new position.

Gabor Gombos has resigned as Co-chair and as a member of the Board of WNUSP. We are happy that he will continue to advocate for WNUSP issues as a member of the CRPD Committee.

Salam Gomez, from Columbia, has stepped up to serve as a voting member of the Board as a second representative of the Americas.

Moosa Salie will continue as the sole Chair of WNUSP until such time as the Board decides to appoint a willing Co-chair.

News from the UN



In the picture are members of the WNUSP's "Dream Team" who attended the Conference of State Parties at the UN. They include members of CHRUSP, WeThePeople, WNUSP Board and MindFreedom Ghana. From left to right are Eva Dech, Vince Boehm, Dally Sanchez, Kathie Cascio, Tina Minkowitz, Moosa Salie and Musah Sumaila. The picture was taken in front of a painting of Nelson Mandela in one of the lounges at the UN. Other attendees were Daniel Hazen and Myra Kovary.

WNUSP and CHRUSP Side Events

WNUSP and the Center for the Human Rights of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry (CHRUSP) co-sponsored two side events in New York City during the Conference of States Parties at the UN associated with the CRPD.

The two-part series was entitled Mental Health, Criminal Justice, and Trauma: The Need for New Approaches Consistent with the CRPD.



The focus was on the need for trauma-informed support and the importance of first-person experience as a source of knowledge and development of appropriate policy choices. Two films were shown: "Healing Neen" and "Behind Closed Doors". Speakers included Tonier Cain, Laura

Prescott, Daniel Hazen, and Celia Brown.

Both sessions were very well attended by colleagues from the user/survivor community, colleagues from the international disability rights community, and also by some government officials.

See www.chrusp.org for information including the presentations and links for the films.

Trauma-informed support

Trauma-informed support is an important angle for advocacy of alternatives to the usual mental health system. It asks the questions “What happened to you/ what is happening to you?” and “What do you need?” instead of labeling the person from outside and suppressing feelings and memories with drugs and electroshock.

Trauma-informed support also highlights that practices like forced and coerced drugging and electroshock, restraint, and seclusion are traumatizing and retraumatizing.

A majority of people seeking mental health services or being treated against their will are survivors of trauma before they come into the mental health system, which then retraumatizes them. Trauma-informed support is a counter to the medical model and coercion, and is a way of meeting people’s needs for healing.

For more information, see www.sisterwitness.org and www.samhsa.gov/nctic/.

A trauma-informed approach also is relevant in the prison system. A huge number of people in jails and prisons are survivors of trauma, and this has led to calls for more mental health treatment in prisons, or removal from prison to psychiatric institutions or compulsory outpatient treatment. A trauma-informed approach in prison recognizes that people need healing and not the retraumatization of medical-model, coercive mental health systems. And above all the practices that traumatize people in prison – the degradation of strip searches, isolation, routine humiliations and even forced drugging – all similar to what is done in psychiatric institutions, need to be stopped.

Summary of presentations at side event



Speaker Tonier Cain inspired all of us to believe that everyone can heal and go on to change their own lives and contribute meaningfully to the world, and said that she has actually had more success with prison officials than with mental health agencies in convincing them to adopt a trauma-informed approach.

Laura Prescott highlighted the need for policy that puts trauma concerns ahead of concerns about safety, which has a lot of resonance with our belief in the “dignity of risk” and the need to put human beings ahead of bureaucracy.

Daniel Hazen addressed the similarity between the prison system and the mental health system and quoted from letters written to him by prisoners experiencing forced drugging and other abuses.

Celia Brown gave practical advice on supporting people rather than using guardianship (which would damage family relationships) and highlighted the roles of people with psychosocial disabilities as parents responsible for similar decisions about how to respect our children’s autonomy and choices.

Conference of States Parties and WNUSP

The side event was the most successful aspect of this year’s Conference of States Parties, as well as the election/re-election of Edah and Gabor to the CRPD Committee. Moosa Salie had planned to speak as an IDA representative from the floor on Article 19 (living independently in the community) but unfortunately was not called on by the individual chairing the meeting. One of the issues he planned to raise was the targeting of people with psychosocial disabilities for accusations of witchcraft, and consequent torture and ill-treatment. This issue was, however, picked up by the Chair in her summary on Friday morning.

In addition, as a result of a conversation held at the COSP, DESA offered to include WNUSP

resource materials on their website in relation to mental health and development.

We submitted those materials and they can be found at:
www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1545

Since the Conference of States Parties is linked with the development aspect of the CRPD (its requirements for good practices in implementation), we should continue thinking about how to promote these good practices, including necessary changes in law, for future meetings. The COSP meets annually in New York to discuss matters related to implementation of the CRPD, and on alternate years also elects new members of the CRPD Committee, the Committee of Experts that meets in Geneva to monitor states' compliance with the CRPD.

For more information see www.un.org/disabilities

Other UN work related to the CRPD

The meetings of the CRPD Committee are part of the human rights monitoring mechanisms of the United Nations, along with the Human Rights Council (including Universal Periodic Review), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Procedures investigating human rights violations (like the Special Rapporteur on Torture), and other treaty monitoring committees.

www2.ohchr.org/English/issues/disability

Some WNUSP members are already engaging with the activities in Geneva, especially by reporting on conditions in their countries, and this helps to inform the UN about the actual human rights violations as well as helping to create remedies. One great example is the work by our member Hege Orefellen from Norway, who has submitted cases to the Special Rapporteur on Torture. One of these cases is mentioned in the Special Rapporteur's annual report to the Human Rights Council for 2010. Norway has now begun to review the Mental Health Act with the question of whether it should be abolished, and Hege is a member of the review commission.

Mainstreaming users and survivors of psychiatry in human rights

issues

WNUSP has prepared a submission on accessibility for the Day of General Discussion on this issue sponsored by the CRPD Committee, related to Article 9 of the CRPD. This has given us the opportunity to reflect on what accessibility means for us – in what ways are users and survivors of psychiatry barred from access to things that matter to us in society.

Please see the submission,
www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/advocacy-work/committee-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/4th-session-october-2010/.

IDA Meetings

Tina Minkowitz represented WNUSP in the International Disability Alliance meetings held from August 28-30, with support from Moosa Salie, who attended in his capacity of assistant to the representative from the Secretariat of the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities. On August 28, Tina coordinated a seminar on legal capacity for members and staff, together with Connie Laurin-Bowie from Inclusion International. Tina and Connie presented the issue of legal capacity from the perspectives of their respective organizations, and Tina's presentation will soon be uploaded onto the WNUSP website.

IDA has hired staff for a secretariat with personnel in Geneva and New York, who will have a regular presence at the United Nations. This poses a challenge to IDA members including WNUSP, to ensure that staff are well-informed about our human rights issues, and to be able to contribute to a large volume of advocacy now being generated by the secretariat (such as recommendations for Human Rights Council resolutions and for concluding observations on reports to treaty monitoring committees).

Tina will hold a training session for staff in Geneva on Oct. 6, and will continue to monitor the email list and contribute to matters needing WNUSP attention. In addition, IDA is beginning a number of new projects including capacity-building of disabled people's organizations (DPO's) in the global South to prepare shadow reports on the CRPD. WNUSP will do our best to make sure that the countries chosen include WNUSP members, and that WNUSP itself is involved in supplying information and contributing training and materials on our issues.

MEMBERS' NEWS NOTICE

The WNUSP Newsletter aims to present the global struggles and achievements of users and survivors of psychiatry. We invite all members of the WNUSP to write in, sharing your views and giving news about your activities. News reports must be in English, brief (250 words) and giving your name and contact details. You may also submit ideas or proposals for articles to be considered for publication in the newsletter. Write to the Editor, WNUSP-News at editor@wnusp.net

Moosa Salie,
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