

*"Come, learn as we learn and collaborate with the United Nations in New York and around the world. Working together, we help create a more humane, just and sustainable world".*

Since our last UN Update we engaged in the **Commissions for Social Development (CSoCD)** and the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** with enthusiasm, aware that Social Protection, a theme of both commissions, is essential to lift people out of poverty. During the Commission for Social Development (CsoCD) Genevieve and Greta hosted a youth-led event. We welcomed Apefa Adjivon, a young refugee woman from Canada as speaker while Devopriya Dutta, India, recorded a video for the event. Cynthia CJ spoke about her work with Dalit women in India at both commissions.



Celebrating Youth-led Event held during CSoCD

During the Commission on Social Development (CSoCD) Greta focused on the implementation of social protection systems in different regions of the world. Read her [Regional Report](#). Meanwhile Genevieve shares her understanding of the [Nordic Model of Social Development](#). While the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) also dealt with social protection and other aspects of women's lives, it gave the participants ample opportunities to expand their knowledge. Genevieve addresses the common questions and misconceptions concerning [Universal Health Care](#) while Greta looks at the question of [Violence in the Work Place](#).

Read the [main conclusions](#) from The [Commission for Social Development](#) (CSoCD) and those of the [Commission on the Status of Women](#) (CSW) which Cynthia prepared for us. These are important questions to keep in mind and address in advocacy efforts.

We co-sponsored several events and joined with other NGOs and the Coalition for Global Citizenship to provide input to both Commissions. In all it was a huge but rewarding effort to advance our aim at creating a more humane, just and sustainable world for everybody.

## ECOSOC Youth Forum

Christina Zha and Genevieve Pinnington were our representatives at the Forum held on 8 – 9 April 2019. Their participation was the final stage of a process begun last September in which young people from our network were invited to contribute their experience and knowledge of issues related to education, inequality, infrastructure, climate change and peace, the sustainable Development Goals to be reviewed in July. Thanks to the teachers and students who took part in the project. A special thanks to our schools in **India** for the excellent input including videos of students speaking on these issues.



At Ward Center Toronto, Christina worked with students from the city who take part in programs run at the Centre. And, a special thanks to Greta and Genevieve who connected with IBVM and CJ sisters under 32 years of age and invited them to give their input to the process. Apart from WhatsApp and email communication they held three video conferences with sisters from Asia and Africa. This initiative enabled intercontinental exchange on global issues among the younger members of both Congregations. The input from around the world was prepared as statements for the Youth Forum.

### Who has joined us recently?

On 1 April 2019, Isobel Cunningham (Ireland) and Uyen Ha (Australia) took up the baton from Greta and Genevieve as Youth Representatives. They are already immersed in many aspects of the work and share a [video](#) of their first weeks as interns. Read Isobel's brief on the [Circular Economy](#), her "take away" and further research after a day dedicated to The Future of Work held at the United Nations. Uyen followed events for the International Day on Sports for Peace and produced [this document](#) in which she shows interconnections between the Sustainable Development Goals and Sport.

Recently, Kathryn Keigher ibvm English Province, joined us for an immersion experience. Kathryn's first week was a total immersion in the Financing for Development Forum. We will hear from Kathryn later.



Uyen Ha, Isobel Cunningham, Kathryn Keigher

## UN Related Meetings outside New York

### UN Environment Assembly – Nairobi, Kenya

Mary Owens ibvm, Kenya participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> UN Environment Assembly held in Nairobi from 4 – 15 March, 2019. An interesting fact was that Mary was able to register for the Forum under Faith-Based organizations, an initiative which the UN is trying to promote where possible. Given that spiritual values are the main drivers of individual behavior for more than 80% of the human population, a United Nations resolution of 2008 encouraged the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, tolerance and understanding. One of the results is the establishment of Faith



Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 4

Faith for Earth Initiative  
UN Environment  
March 11<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> 2019



for Earth by UN Environment. Mary notes that the presentations during the Assembly "brought to greater awareness the totally urgent need to take action on the ongoing devastation of our Earth:

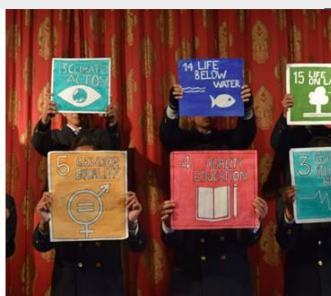
- the increasing amount of plastics getting into the seas with the consequent ingesting of plastics by fish and other sea species which can finally be ingested by humans
- the amount of food wasted each day in the developed world when millions other humans do not have enough to eat or are starving
- the overuse of natural resources in building and mining
- the lack of waste management leading to pollution
- biodiversity loss
- the injustice of gender inequality

The examples detailing this devastation were heartbreaking as was the reality that this devastation mostly affects the poor in our world." This is a call to the whole Mary

Ward Network to increase our efforts to save our planet.

### Spring Meetings of World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

We are members of the NGO Committee on Financing for Development in New York since it was established in 2003, when Evanne Hunter ibvm was our NGO Representative. Members of the Committee usually attend the Spring Meetings of the World Bank Group (WBG) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and host a civil society event there to raise awareness of our concerns. Cynthia attended the meetings in Washington DC from 8 – 12 April, 2019. Read her [Brief](#) on the composition of the World Bank Group, its work and their concerns about the present time. She recalls the urgency expressed by the President of the Group in the following quote. "It is critically important that we work tirelessly to foster broad-based growth, raise median incomes, create jobs, and fully incorporate women and young people in economies, to support a stronger, more stable global economy for everyone".



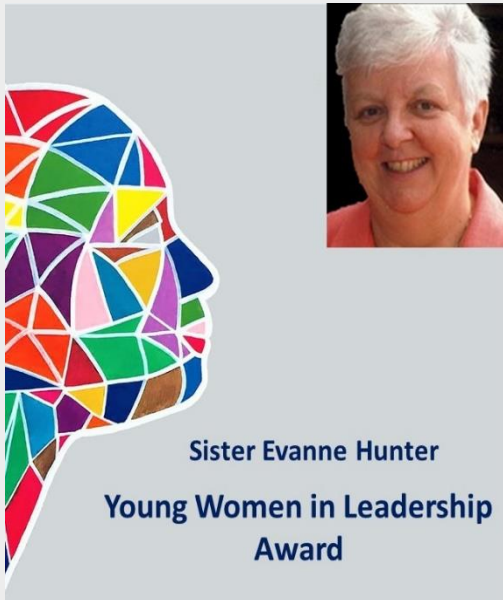
### From Worldwide IBVM/CJ Network

#### St. Mary's Convent School in Nainital, India.

Recently Mr. Sandeep from **St. Mary's Convent School in Nainital, India** wrote to inform us that the school has chosen the Sustainable Development goals (SDGs) and Global Citizenship as "the theme for various events during the academic session, including weekly and daily assemblies, annual sports day and various other activities". Students of primary classes made paper bags and senior classes distributed them in the town shops to spread awareness for a healthy environment and with a message of Not using polythene. Sandeep participated in the

Education Conference held in Pretoria, South Africa in 2017 and which produced the [Mary Ward Schools Compass](#). Our evolving culture and understanding allow us to recognize that all aspects of life are intertwined and so it is with the different elements highlighted in the Compass.

## The Sister Evanne Hunter Young Women in Leadership Award



The **Sister Evanne Hunter Young Women in Leadership Award** was recently inaugurated by the Toronto Catholic District School Board as a recognition of the contribution made by Evanne to Catholic Education over the years. The award will be given annually to **two exceptional female students** of the Toronto Catholic District School Board in their graduating year (**one grade 8 student and one grade 12 student**) for their leadership qualities and involvement in social justice efforts in their school and community. It will be presented to honor International Women's Day. Each November, all schools will be invited to nominate one female student in their graduating year (grade 8 or 12) for the award, together with the **nomination form** detailing the candidates' achievements or contributions. Following challenging award criteria, various steps along the way lead to the Board or Student Achievement and Well-Being Committee of the Toronto Catholic Schools where the process is finalized. The First Award recipients are:

- from St. Kateri Tekakwitha Catholic School – Grade 8 student, **Emily Karagossian**
- from Madonna Catholic School – Grade 12 student, **Adaeze Mbalaja**

What a moving example of promoting leadership and the best of what quality education can offer.

## A Twenty-Year Dream

Almost 25 years ago, Sr. Ephigenia Gachiri ibvm, Kenya, participated in the Fourth World Conference on Women, commonly known as **The Beijing Conference**, held in Beijing, China. The conference was a real a life-changing experience for Ephigenia. As a result, she decided to dedicate her energies to the task of ending Female Genital Mutilation in her country and region. Many hours and miles later, and after massive education and awareness raising efforts, Ephigenia witnessed the opening of the "Abundant Life Centre" which offers a space for education on the dangers of this practice and proposes an alternative ritual which honors the inherent dignity of all women. This is an eloquent example of the impact of a United Nations Conference, coupled with Ephigenia's desire to do good and the inspiration and tenacity to carry out that initial dream. She is a trailblazer in the efforts to end FGM worldwide. In the early 2000s she spoke about the issue at the United Nations. Her efforts, combined with those of other like-minded people brought about change. Since the 2008 [Commission on the Status of Women](#) (CSW) and continued with [General Assembly Resolutions](#) the impetus to end female genital mutilation world wide has been gathering momentum.

And **Beijing +25** is around the corner. It will be celebrated in 2020 with gatherings in several continents in addition to UN Head Quarters, New York. We hope that new dreams will be born there.



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