

Policy Watch

Special UNCSW Edition

Welcome to the first edition of 'Policy Watch' in 2018, the newsletter which contains updates about Mothers' Union's policy, advocacy and campaigns work. This edition we have a special focus on the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) taking place in March 2018 in New York.

UNCSW is a commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations, and was established in 1946 in order to promote, report on and monitor issues relating to the political, economic, civil, social and educational rights of women. One of the guiding principles of UNCSW is to;

"...raise the status of women, irrespective of nationality, race, language or religion, to equality with men in all fields of human enterprise, and to eliminate all discrimination against women in the provisions of statutory law, in legal maxims or rules, or in interpretation of customary law."

UNCSW Session 62: 12th to 23rd March 2018

Every year, Mothers' Union attends and participates in UNCSW, seeking to represent and magnify the voice and views of our four million members around the world.

In March 2018, the 62nd Commission on the Status of Women will be held, and the theme will be around the challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of rural women and girls.



To prepare for this meeting, in the autumn of 2017 Mothers' Union carried out a survey amongst its members around the world to find out about their experiences of rural life. It found that isolation and loneliness are challenges in both the global north and south and the issues of economic empowerment are even more acute in rural than urban communities.

Women in both the UK and internationally reported the difficulties they face from a lack of transport and access to essential services including healthcare, education and employment. The majority of unpaid care and work still falls on the shoulders of women, and members felt that women who care for children full-time in rural settings can be increasingly isolated due to a lack of transport and affordable childcare.

Older women felt that isolation was an issue of concern, especially those with poor health or widows living alone. Members also felt that attitudes towards women and girls in rural communities were more regressive than in urban areas preventing women's voices from being heard and excluding them from being involved in leadership or decision-making.

Meet our delegates

Shara Golden – Canada



Shara is Vice President of the Canadian Council of the Mothers' Union. She is a retired civil servant and worked for the Province of New Brunswick for 39 years. Her last position was with the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission where she provided educational training and services for 13 years. Shara has been involved with the Anglican Church of Canada in various capacities and is currently a member of the Council of General Synod. She has actively taken part in many workshops and conversations on the rights of women.

"I am a woman who lives in a rural community and I am involved in several community organisations that affect the rights of women. I am an advocate for the rights of women, the rights of dignity, worth and protection."

Ekua Swanzy – Ghana



Ekua has been a very active Mothers' Union member since 2005. She is a women's organiser in Ghana's central region. She has also been a member of her local district committee for five years and as Secretary of its Women's and Children committee she advocated and lobbied for women's and child rights in her area.

"As a women's organiser most of my work is centred around women's welfare and that of their children and I do my best to empower them. I have taken upon myself to help women especially single mothers to be self-sufficient in even the smallest endeavour they pursue. My wish is that I can do more for them."

Felicia Yeboah Asuamah – Ghana



Felicia is the Mothers' Union President for Ghana. In the past she contributed as a Lay Women's representative from Ghana on the West Africa Provincial Synod where she contributed to policy and decision making concerning the church with women as the focus. She campaigns for women's empowerment and has run programmes aimed at helping young women from deprived areas.

"In my diocese Mothers' Union organises advocacy and campaign programmes with other women's groups within the church and government. I plan to use these platforms on my return as an opportunity to share the outcomes of UNCSW."

Leah Chipepa – Zambia



Leah has extensive experience working as a women's rights advocate and campaigner in Africa and internationally. She was Executive Director of Akina Mama wa Afrika, a Ugandan-based organisation promoting and protecting women's and girls' rights through advocacy and campaigns at a regional and international level. She has chaired a number of committees aimed at empowering women and girls, including the Africa CSW NGO sub-committee on Information and Communication which was responsible for developing the communication strategy to ensure Africa's effective participation at CSW. On her return to Zambia she plans to prepare a report and provide feedback to her diocese as well as meet and collaborate with other faith-based organisations.

"I plan to engage with Zambia's Minister of Guidance and Religious Affairs using the outcomes document as the basis for discussion on how Mothers' Union can work with government to promote gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in rural areas at national and provincial levels."

Annie Beckley – United States of America



Annie Beckley is Provincial President of Mothers' Union in USA Province and has been a member since 1998 and became Provincial President in 2014 when she made the pledge of making homelessness a thing of the past. The United States has a large number of homeless women and children. Mothers' Union USA has partnered and participated with other church groups to lobby local governments to bring awareness to the serious issue and made feeding and housing the homeless their priority.

"The United States lacks organisations like the NAACP to fight for women and minorities. I plan to use my attendance at the UNCSW for the benefit of Mothers' Union in the United States to continue bringing awareness to government agencies."

Mothers' Union staff members Beverley Jullien (CEO) and Rachael Anderson (Events & Digital Communications Manager) will also be attending. Bev comments:

"I'm proud to be leading such an important global movement as Mothers' Union. Our attendance at CSW is important as we represent the voices of more than four million globally. Our position on the issues facing rural women, the theme this year, is informed by responses from over 250 members across the world. I am honoured that our delegates have direct experience of the issues and will be advocating nationally to urge these to be addressed."



What we are calling for

Mothers' Union is calling on member states to recognise and value the vital contribution of women to rural communities, and wider society, and to create and implement policies which address the unique challenges that they face, including:

1. The economic empowerment of rural women
2. The universal and gender sensitive implementation of agenda 2030
3. Women's meaningful participation and representation in decision-making
4. Eradication of Gender based violence and harmful practices
5. Access to services and infrastructure
6. Addressing attitudes towards women and girls

To read our full statement please visit our website: www.mothersunion.org/mu-uncsw

Social media at UNCSW

If you are on Twitter you can follow all the latest news from our UNCSW delegates by following @MothersUnion and the hashtag #CSW62

Please also keep an eye on our website and the Anglican Communion News Service (ACNS) as one of our delegates, Leah, will be writing a blog whilst in New York and our delegation will also feature in a joint video with the ACNS. We will also be posting various articles and pictures on our website and social media so you can keep up to date with what we are involved in there.

Prayer focus

Please pray:

- For governments and civil society as they prepare for UNCSW62
- For safety for all travelling to UNCSW and whilst at the Commission
- For our Mothers' Union delegates to have a positive influence on the outcome of the week
- For mutual respect between representatives of nations and agencies, whatever the diversity of views and challenges faced
- That the conclusions of the Commission will be acted upon; leading to greater gender equality and empowerment of rural women and girls
- That God's values of justice, righteousness and mercy will increasingly prevail throughout the world