

Mar. 20-23, 2018, Sessions Attended by Suzanne Hanchett (note-writer)

1. Session on Human Rights, Mar. 20
2. Women's Rights and Sustainable Development, Mar. 20
3. India Presentation: Isha Foundation, Mar. 21
4. Films Shown by Why Foundation, Mar. 21
5. Session on Unpaid Care Work (UCW), Mar. 22
6. Session on FGM (Female Circumcision), Mar. 22
7. Rural Women's Empowerment, El Cantare Foundation, Mar. 22
8. Rural Women's Human Rights: Challenges and Opportunities, Mar. 23

Topics Discussed

Activists living in exile; Persecution of rights activists; Governments and the SDGs; Differences between policies and practice;
Environmental & water resources: degradation and restoration; Agricultural extension services; Special interests of small-holder women; Monocrop agriculture; Large corporations buying up small farms; Women's access to land; Market supports for rural women;
Locally initiated strategies to stop FGM; Girls dropping out of school to get married; Education for disadvantaged and low caste girls in India and elsewhere; Child marriage;
Power of meditation;
Connections among multiple rural issues/solutions; Organizing strategies; Making people aware of the Nepali caste system; UN documents and Special Rapporteurs as helpful resources;
Translating SDGs into national policies; Sanitation problems in rural America; Racial discrimination in U.S.

Places - Burundi, Iran, Rohingya (Myanmar/Burma/Bangladesh), Venezuela, South Africa, Nigeria, Rwanda, Philippines, Trinidad and Tobago, Ghana, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Kenya (Masai), India, Brazil, United States

Memorable Quotes

NATION STATES AND OTHERS THAT VIOLATE HUMAN RIGHTS

- Burundi is no longer in the news. People think the problems have subsided. But they have not. (Ketty Nivyabandi, living in Canada as a refugee, Mar. 20)
- Human rights defenders are criminalized in many ways. (Wai Wai Nu, a Rohingya woman, Mar. 20)
- "Criminal states" have links with the mafia and other criminal organizations around the world. (Maria Cunia Machado, Vente Venezuela, Mar. 20)
- Peaceful protestors are being attacked by the military in the Philippines, and their leaders are

being labeled as terrorists. (Alma Sinumlag, Mar. 20)

- There are mass evacuations caused by corporate takeover of (indigenous people's) lands. Human rights defenders are being gunned down, one just last week who was protesting against a hydroelectric project. (Alma Sinumlag, Mar. 20)
- Our rights to “free, prior and informed consent” are disregarded. (Alma Sinumlag, Mar. 20)
- Only a global movement for human rights can counter this kind of injustice --governments persecuting rights activists. One country's people cannot do it on their own. (Ketty Nivyabandi, Mar. 20)

OTHER STATE-LEVEL ISSUES

- South Africa is not as bad as the other countries we've just heard about, but “we must keep a watch on democracy.” (Denise Robinson, South African MP, Mar. 20)
- South Africa has a good constitution, but the laws are not implemented or respected. And gender budgeting is getting no attention. (Denise Robinson, South African MP, Mar. 20)
- SDGs are international agreements, not laws. We have found it very difficult to make SDGs a reality. (Woman from India, Mar. 20)

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

- I am in the first generation to be educated. (Lily B'Soeur, Papua New Guinea, Mar. 20)
- Stopping FGM is “all about education” – keeping girls in school (Nice, a young Masai woman, and a Sudanese woman in the audience, Mar. 22)
- Why is girls' education important? Because girls will be mothers someday. If they are not educated, they will not be able to help their children to learn. (Mar. 22, El Cantare Foundation)

IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS AND WOMEN'S CAPACITY TO SURVIVE

- We women work a lot (doing unpaid care), but our contribution is not valued. (Betts Utamuliza Oliver, Mar. 22)
- Day care centers help women go out and earn money. (Betts Utamuliza Oliver, Mar. 22)
- There is a need for government support to help women come forward. (Comment from audience, Mar. 22)
- Economic empowerment leads to social empowerment.... Some women who formerly could not qualify for loans are now lending money to others. (Bishnu Maya Pariyar, Mar. 23)

- Climate change increases women's unpaid care work burdens. They must arrange shelter and food for their families, even in natural disasters. (Christina Kuwngari, ActionAid, Mar. 22)

AGRICULTURE vs. AGRIBUSINESS

- We use compost to fertilize our crops. It is better than chemical fertilizers. (Mary Lily, Ghana, Mar. 22)
- Agriculture has become an "aggressive process." (Sadhguru, Head of Isha Foundation, India, Mar. 21)
- Population displacement is going on in Brazil by private militias supporting the extension of monocrop agriculture. (Maria Luisa Mendonça, Mar. 23)
- Create alliances between rural producers and consumers of food. (Maria Luisa Mendonça, Mar. 23)

OUR PRIORITIES

- My main concerns are: the murder of young women, climate change, and the mining industry. (Gia Gaspard Taylor, Trinidad-Tobago, Mar. 20)
- Some commonalities in this discussion are: How do we marshal resources? And getting women a seat at the table. (Panel moderator, Mar. 20)
- We are having a demonstration in front of the UN today. We are saying, "Say No to FGM." Anyone who says this practice stops prostitution is telling you a big lie! (Leslie Chioma, from Nigeria)

SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

- One model community has adopted a river. They clear out plastic and do other solid waste management. (Gia Gaspard Taylor, Trinidad-Tobago, Mar. 20)
- The ActionAid program, POWER, is working to get unpaid care work recognized and redistributed. (Alia, an ActionAid project manager from Pakistan, Mar. 22)
- Youth leaders are promoting "alternative rites of passage," to discourage FGM. (Mar. 22)

RESPECTING THE ENVIRONMENT & OTHER SPECIES

- If insects disappeared, the planet would die. If humans disappeared, the planet would flourish. (Sadhguru, Head of Isha Foundation, India, Mar. 21)

MEN'S HELP NEEDED

- Men aren't just perpetrators. They also need to help the movement for women's rights. (Former

Canadian MP, affiliated with the Raol Wallenberg Foundation/Organization, Mar. 20)

- We can teach our sons a better way. (Denise Robinson, South African MP, Mar. 20)
- We need to talk to men too. ...We have had good results from showing boys videos of what actually happens at female circumcision ceremonies. This upsets them. Some get very angry. (Nice, a young Masai woman, Mar. 22)
- Men and women should share and redistribute unpaid care work. (Mary Lily, Mar. 23)

SOLVING PROBLEMS

- An important take-away point is, “The connection between problems.” (Moderator, Mar. 22)
- All issues – water, access to land, and others – are linked. UN people need to take the time to listen, find out what is going on. Think about how international processes can support women at the local levels. “There are no quick solutions.” (Inga Winkler, Mar. 23)
- “Normalization” of the rights discourse is a potential solution. (Mahnaz Afkhami, Mar. 20)
- Universal rights need to be “contextualized and adapted to each setting.” (Mahnaz Afkhami, Mar. 20)
- We are trying to respond to women’s own stated needs, not tell them things from higher-up. (Gia Gaspard Taylor, Mar. 20)
- Women do not know their rights. They do not all have access to media. (Sudanese woman’s comment, Mar. 20)
- Our women at grassroots level do not know what is in our constitution. We help them to know their rights. (Bishnu Maya Pariyar, Mar. 23)
- Structural conditions and racial discrimination associated with U.S. poverty are not usually discussed in connection with human rights. (Inga Winkler, Mar. 23)
- We are forming networks from the sub-national to the grassroots levels. (Louisa Eikhomun, ECOWA, Mar. 20)
- We are engaging with local leaders, chiefs of communities, to get by-laws written. (Mary Lily, of Ghana, Mar. 23)
- We are working to get the Nigerian government to see how programs are fitting with the SDGs: to do monitoring, gender review, and checking on equality strategies.(Louisa Eikhomun, ECOWA, Mar. 20)

- Our provincial government was second after the national government to make a gender-based violence plan. (Lily B'Soeur, Mar. 20)
- Our strategy as small-holder women is to work regionally and nationally, engaging with government at different levels, to get attention to our priorities....We are working to get government to respond to our needs. We have elected them, so they are accountable to us. We are pushing our legislators, from the lower levels up to MPs. (Woman from Tanzania, Mar. 22)
- The women's movement has to be global. (Mahnaz Afkhami, Mar. 20)
- Through our women farmers' platform, we have been able to get government to revive some dormant programs. (Woman from Tanzania, Mar. 22)
- Rural cooperatives in Rwanda are organized at different levels, from "primary cooperatives" to federations, up to the apex group, the confederation. These cooperatives have both men and women as members. The women have equal voices to the men. (Betts Utumuliza Oliver, Mar. 22)
- We need to make sure that women have enough time to participate in politics. Make it easier to get water, for example. (Comment from Mrs. Samawa, from Kenya, Mar. 23)
- Let's reduce the gap between the UN system and the grassroots. (Bishnu Maya Pariyar, Mar. 23)
- Within the UN we have important references. CEDAW and the reports from Special Rapporteurs, for example, have established the rights to food, housing, and other necessities.(Maria Luisa Mendonça, Mar. 23)
- International mechanisms may possibly support work on these issues [even in the U.S.]. (Inga Winkler, Mar. 23)
- We need to create solidarity among women's organizations in/between the global north and the global south. We need to transform our food system. Women farmers are protecting natural resources. (Maria Luisa Mendonça, Mar. 23)
- "Development justice" is needed. The global economic framework needs to be changed. (Alma Sinumlag, Mar. 20)