Celebrating 20 Years of FAWCO Engagement at the UN

by UN Liaison Laurie Richardson, AWA Vienna

“We are citizens of the world.” August 2017 marked 20 years since FAWCO was granted Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and a voice at the global level with the UN and UN-accredited international NGOs. Advocacy at the UN gives FAWCO the opportunity to influence global decision-makers.

FAWCO’s UN program began in 1993, when President Barbara Johnson suggested that FAWCO apply for accreditation with the UN Department of Public Information (DPI), pursuing this goal with 1st Vice President Peggy Rigaud. On June 15, 1995, FAWCO was approved for association with the UN DPI. In September 1995, seven FAWCO delegates attended the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing: Helen Hootsmans (AWC Amsterdam), Lois Pott (AWC The Hague), Becky Tan (AWC Hamburg), Donna Sebti (AWC Casablanca), Jeanne Schapp (AWC London), Leslie Fiac (AWC The Taunus), and Peggy Rigaud (AWG Languedoc-Roussillon). The Beijing conference, so critical to the women’s rights movement with the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, became the stimulus for increasing FAWCO’s UN involvement, leading FAWCO to apply for consultative status with ECOSOC.

(Continued on page 2)

Message from the President

by Sallie Chabollier, AAWE Paris, FAWCO President 2017-2019

“It’s who we are and what we do.” As I reflect on 2017, I realize what a banner year it has been for FAWCO. As you’ll read in this issue of The FORUM, we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of FAWCO receiving consultative status with ECOSOC at the United Nations. Our UN Team is more active than ever, coordinating with the ever-thriving Global Issues Teams. Our new Target Project, Hope Beyond Displacement, is off to a strong start and a delegation of FAWCO members will visit the Collateral Repair Project in Amman, Jordan next spring. The new Advancement Committee is looking at ways FAWCO can expand and diversify its revenue streams, as well as the possibility of applying for grants. The Youth Program is exploring new projects. Last year, we inaugurated a successful new quarterly online magazine, Inspiring Women, and more. We have so much to be proud of.

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Looking back on 1997, at the March 2012 FAWCO conference in Dublin, President My-Linh Kunst awarded the Circle of Honor Award to Peggy Rigaud, saying, “…Wishing to strengthen FAWCO's position in the global community, Peggy shepherded FAWCO through the process that led to FAWCO's receiving Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC in 1997.” In her acceptance of the award, Peggy Rigaud noted the extent to which we have become increasingly aware of how powerful we can be and of how our work can influence the world scene, “…We are citizens of the world. FAWCO has had many big moments and turning points; this was definitely one of them.”

Today, FAWCO UN Representatives are found in leadership roles on NGO Committees on the Status of Women and the NGO Committee on Migration, and collaborate with NGO partners in advocacy and activism. Our UN Reps participate in meetings of the General Assembly and the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna, the Climate Change Conference in Bonn, and the Interagency Forum of the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Greece.

FAWCO’s Target Program, Global Issues Teams’ activities and The FAWCO Foundation’s Development Grants, demonstrate FAWCO’s global efforts on education, environment, health, and human rights.

At the Dublin Conference, Peggy Rigaud (AWG Languedoc-Roussillon) spoke about the beginnings of FAWCO’s involvement as a UN-accredited NGO and received the Circle of Honor, FAWCO’s highest award.

On International Women’s Day at the Bern Conference, US Ambassador to the UN in Geneva Betty King gave the keynote address and joined FAWCO members in the “Join Me on the Bridge” march.

FAWCO delegations have attended every CSW since 2013.

FAWCO’s first UN Youth Rep was Gavin Higbie, followed by Vaia Mitsakis (2015), Paige Higbie and Samuel Witt (2017).

UN Reps Sara von Moos and Anne Riz (AWC Bern) played key roles in organizing the NGO Forum for the Beijing+20 Regional Review in Geneva. Sixteen FAWCO members participated in the Forum, and the mother-daughter duo of Robin and Julia Goldsby (AWC Cologne) performed at the closing ceremony.

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The Target Program for Education is well into its second year with both of its key components, the Awareness Raising Campaign and the Target Project, going strong. This Fall, the Awareness Raising Campaign has developed with five speaking engagements at three Regional Meetings and two Member Clubs, with more dates in the works. The blog “Let’s Get Schooled” continues to receive positive feedback, as does the monthly Target Bulletin.

We have a new logo designed to specifically reference the FAWCO Target Project for Education “Hope Beyond Displacement”, recognizing CRP as the organization carrying out the work.

Hope Beyond Displacement Programming has Launched!

Educational Support
As the summer drew to a close in August, the Back to School program was busy purchasing backpacks, school supplies and uniforms for girls to return to the classroom in September. The recent announcement by the Jordanian Ministry of Education that school registration and book fees would be waived for ALL refugees in the country means that the money budgeted to send 100 girls to school went much farther… allowing 359 girls to resume their education!

Backsong Women Empowering Project
In September, the Women’s Empowerment 101 (women) and Youth (men) program began in parallel - each group meets twice a week in groups of 20 for a 3-month period to discuss women’s rights, their roles in society, gender attitudes and behaviors. There will be a total of eight course cycles, graduating 160 women and 160 men and youth by the completion of the Target Project.

The FAWCO Foundation is off to a great start with over $42,700 already collected. For this we have Member Clubs, individual members, Regions and FAUSA to thank for their donations. Motivating club donations is a $10,000 matching grant program sponsored by The de Groot Foundation! Complementing these donations are the profits from the Backsong Women Boutique.

A Win-Win fundraising strategy was introduced by three FAUSA member advertisers. They are each donating 5% of profits from their services and sales to the FAWCO Target Project “Hope Beyond Displacement” from any completed transactions with FAWCO/FAUSA members or their friends and family.

Curiouser and Curiouser (Overseas Americans through a negative looking glass)

Do you ever wonder what happened to the world you thought you knew? For the 9.1 million Americans living and working abroad, the “landscape” is becoming increasingly complex, as laws are being passed that appear to ignore the existence of overseas Americans while having a major impact on their daily lives.

This is the case, not only for the much discussed FATCA (Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act), but also true of the US tax reform we are hearing so much about. In both cases, Americans abroad are often being placed at an unfair disadvantage compared to their counterparts residing in the US. Under current law, they pay in one way or another for their move, for whatever reason, to an overseas location like London or Abu Dhabi, whereas a move to Chicago or Houston would never be questioned. Regrettably, such moves are often perceived as “unpatriotic”, whereas most will agree they become “more American” when they leave their native country.

In his opening statement before the October Senate Finance Committee hearing, Chairman Grassley (R-IA) said that “residence-based taxation is an idea (the Committee) should continue to explore.” And yet when the House passed its tax reform bill on November 17, there was no mention of those 9.1 million overseas Americans.

It is any wonder then that following the trend of the last few years, we learn of record numbers of Americans renouncing their US citizenship? For 2017, that number already stands at 4,484, a 26% rise from 2016’s total which was itself a 26% jump from 2015. For an organization like FAWCO that has fought for years for citizenship rights, it is disquieting to see these numbers increase each year… and to read that the reason might be to “avoid paying taxes”.

The truth, from the overseas perspective, is that these renunciations are essentially due to the high cost of tax compliance and the increasing difficulty Americans abroad face accessing banks and financial services because of US regulations. There are currently only two ways Americans can achieve this, both of which are cumbersome and expensive... and neither ensures the tax status of an American abroad.

An important New Year’s resolution: register to vote in 2018!

In 2018, the entire US House of Representatives and a third of the Senate goes up for election. Every overseas American needs to add registering to vote to any list of 2018 New Year’s resolutions.

Remember that the law now says we must request a ballot every year – for every election in the year (in addition to primaries and general elections, a special or run-off election is always possible!), FAWCO members have fought hard over the years to obtain this most precious right, and in 2018, state, local and federal elections will have an impact on our future.

Backsong Women Empowering Project

Learn more: bit.ly/HopeBeyondDisplacement

Backsong Women Empowering Project

Learn more: bit.ly/BWFundraisingCampaign

Sign up for the monthly Target Bulletin: bit.ly/TargetBulletinSignup

Questions and comments can be directed to Tricia R. Saur, Target Chair at target@fawco.org.

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Migrants and refugees are major issues on the international agenda; large-scale movements of refugees and migrants affect all UN Member States and require a comprehensive global approach. The UN General Assembly adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in September 2016, as all 193 UN Member States committed to a “more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world’s refugees.” The UN High Commissioner for Refugees is leading a collaborative process to develop a Global Compact on Refugees to be considered by the General Assembly in 2018.

At the same time, the UN and the International Organization for Migration are working on a Global Compact for Migration to facilitate safe, orderly and regular migration. FAWCO UN Reps have participated in Thematic Discussions on both Global Compacts in New York, Geneva and Vienna.

FAWCO UN Rep Jane McCall Politi (AWC Rome), Vice Chair of the NGO Committee on Migration (CoM), keeps FAWCO current about the latest research and advocacy work for the millions of children displaced by conflict, natural disaster and climate change. Across the globe, nearly 50 million children have been uprooted and their needs neglected. FAWCO join other members of the NGO Committee on Migration calling for UN Member States to protect the human rights of all refugee children and migrant children.

FAWCO has endorsed CoM position papers including “Positive Effects of Innovative Early Childhood Development Programs on Refugee Youth Resilience”, “An Overlooked Emergency: The Poverty of Forced Migrant Children”, “Providing Education and Care for Syria’s Littlest Refugees” and “Migrant and Refugee Children as Protagonists of Development and Peace.” These papers highlight the challenges faced by children in forced displacement: the loss of one or both parents, family members, friends, home, childhood and normalcy. If they are not in school, they miss out on learning; they often lack a sense of cultural identity and social integration. Joining CoM, OMEP (World Organization for Early Childhood Education) and Care for Syria’s Littlest Refugees” and “Migrant and refugee children.

FAWCO’s advocacy for the rights of children, support for “Hope Beyond Displacement” through the Collateral Repair Project, and volunteer efforts in communities hosting refugees all contribute to improving the lives of refugee children and their families – through both policy development and hands-on assistance.

FAWCO Youth Local “Teams”. With this in mind, FAWCO Youth Team Rhineland was introduced as the pilot project in cooperation with AWC Cologne, FAWCO Youth, and FAWCO Education Team.

FAWCO’s largest delegation to date – 17 members – attended CSW59 (Beijing ±20)

The Federal Voting Assistance Program 2017. The ever-popular Cultural Volunteers Program took a year’s hiatus when no FAWCO Member Club volunteered to host the program. Fortunately for all of us, AWC Berlin has already volunteered to host the program in 2018 with the dates set for June 23-30, 2018.

At the FAWCO Conference in Mumbai last March, a new FAWCO Youth Program was introduced: FAWCO Youth Team Local, a joint concept created by FAWCO Youth and the FAWCO Education Team in order “…to bring the goals of the FAWCO Youth Program down to a more local/regional level and create a model program that can be duplicated by other FAWCO Youth Local ‘Teams’.” With this in mind, FAWCO Youth Team Rheinland was introduced as the pilot project in cooperation with AWC Düsseldorf, AWC Cologne, FAWCO Youth, and FAWCO Education Team.

In ICDL classes, Mr. Ivin’s encouragement and simple program illustrations provide refugee women with new-found confidence. Hanen lived a life of peace in Syria until the fighting threatened her family’s safety and the Syrian government incarcerated her older son. Amman became her refuge, but she still felt insecure. “As a beginner ICDL student, I often worried that Mr. Ivin would be upset if I performed tasks slowly. The one-hour slot for class seemed a short time to learn everything about computers,” says Hanen. However, Mr. Ivin changed her mind and Hanen has even paid her skills forward by teaching her children computer skills.

FAWCO-Funded ICDL Offers Hope for Refugee Women

Starting a new class can be scary for anyone, but especially for refugees. But there’s one universal: an uneasy student can feel a lot better because of a great teacher. Two students from the International Computer Driving License course, Hanen and Sana’, have been empowered by their class and teacher, Mr. Ivin.

To date, 20 teens have expressed interest in our group. Led by Carol-Lyn McKelvey and Rainier Siaff, the group has met several times for programs and fun. We have explored topics focusing on the UN’s SDGs and welcomed guest speakers like Laurie Richardson, FAWCO’s UN Liaison, and Rebecca Mazzu, Youth Ambassador from the Stahl Foundation, who shared her knowledge and experience on volunteering. In early November, a small group attended the Climate March in Bonn.

FAWCO Youth Team Rhineland continues to work in progress. We are exploring the potential gains of organizing a team-oriented mission-like trip. We are all looking forward to seeing the path that FAWCO Youth Team Rhineland charts for 2018! Many thanks to the stellar Team Rhineland Organizing Committee: Carol-Lyn McKelvey (AWC Cologne) Rainier Siaff (AWC Düsseldorf), Mary Dobrian (AWC Cologne), Arandegug Depug (AWC Cologne) and Barbara Bühling (AWC Düsseldorf).
AWG Paris Hosts Region 3 with a French Touch!

by Sandy Gogel, AWG Paris, FAWCO Rep

AWG Paris hosted October’s FAWCO Region 3 Meeting with the theme of “Women Inspiring Women”. The highlight of the weekend was the raffle of the beautiful quilt “Hugs and Kisses”, crafted and donated by AAWE Paris’ Nan de Laubadère.

The weekend started with an in-depth tour of the Cathedral of Notre Dame, led by Rebecca DeFrances and Mary Ellen Gogel, followed by a welcome dinner for 90 chez Sandy and Bob Gogel. The evening was topped off with a visit to the rooftop to see the Eiffel Tower lit up in all its splendor.

On Saturday morning, our Regional began with an inspiring presentation by Mme. Laurence Negroni, General Manager of Certevo, France who graciously hosted us at their HQ showroom. Mme. Negroni shared her story about a special woman who inspired her career. We then welcomed Kristina Kvien, Acting Deputy Chief of Mission and Minister Counselor for Economic Affairs at the US Embassy Paris who recounted her experiences as a career woman in the State Department, as well as the inspirational events which have occurred during her time in the role of Deputy Chief of Mission and Minister Counselor. She then welcomed Kristina Kvien, Acting Deputy Chief of Mission and Minister Counselor for Economic Affairs at the US Embassy Paris who recounted her experiences as a career woman in the State Department, as well as the inspirational events which have occurred during her time in the role of Deputy Chief of Mission and Minister Counselor.

Our FAWCO Region 4 Meeting got off to an impressive start with a visit to Payoke, an organization supporting victims of human trafficking in Antwerp. Klaus Vanhoutte, one of the directors, gave us an overview of the crime of THB/Traffic in Human Beings, Payoke recently celebrated its 30th anniversary and is internationally recognized as a leading expert in all aspects of human trafficking (http://www.payoke.be/en/functioning-of-payoke/).

Bright and early on Saturday, this Regional began in a sunny conference room in Antwerp’s Fluytt Hotel as a group of some 30 AWCA members, FAWCO Board members, representatives and special guests gathered for the day-long meeting structured around the theme “Kaleidoscope of Opportunities: Educating Women Worldwide”. We chose the kaleidoscope as a symbol for this Regional as it is made up of numerous facets: on its own, each individual facet has different colors, shapes and sizes, but the real magic happens when these facets come together.

The evening gala featured not only a performance by the Flanders Ballet School, an AWG Antwerp sponsored charity, but the presentation of a 10,000 Euro cheque to the Middelheim Foundation, an AWC Antwerp sponsored charity, but the presentation of a 10,000 Euro cheque to the Middelheim Foundation, Flanders Ballet School, an AWG Antwerp sponsored charity, but the presentation of a 10,000 Euro cheque to the Middelheim Foundation, Flanders Ballet School, an AWG Antwerp sponsored charity, but the presentation of a 10,000 Euro cheque to the Middelheim Foundation.

The program’s ice-breaker included a counting game which enabled us to identify ten first-time regional attendees - a great sign for our clubs! We also heard introductions and highlights from each Region 5 club, followed by the MIWC FAWCO Reps reciting a poem introducing Saturday’s raffle which raised over 1,000 Euros for the FAWCO Target Project.

Our final session on Sunday took place at the Münchner Künstlerhaus, an architectural and cultural gem in the heart of Munich. An enlightening panel discussion focused on taking steps towards personal health, followed by a speaker inspiring us with the health benefits of de-cluttering. Finally, engaging discussion concluded our meeting as we wrapped up with a final round of club concerns.
AWC Hamburg Fun Run/Walk by Lyn Herr and Teresa Perez Y Llandazuri, AWCW

On October 8th, members of the American Women’s Club of Hamburg (AWCH) gathered for a fun run/walk around the Alster to benefit FAWCO. Nearly 120 people participated in the event, raising over $2,000 for FAWCO. Organized by a handful of volunteers, the event is a great example of how a small team can make a big impact.

Teresa Perez Y Llandazuri and Lyn Herr, AWCW members, began organizing the event in June 2017, after attending a “Hello Mumbai Evening” fundraiser hosted by Carol Strametz, AWCW’s FAWCO Rep. The evening included music, dancing, food, wine and information on FAWCO’s global initiatives. That night, Teresa and Lyn decided they wanted to do more to support FAWCO.

As the logistics came together, the number of online registrations grew. By early October, more than 100 people had registered. “We were really happy with the numbers, but we also knew expectations were high”, said Lyn. Careful planning and teamwork would be key to making the event a success.

In the early morning hours on the event day, volunteers gathered in the dark to set up booths, assemble the sound system, hang balloons and post signs. Shortly before starting time, Consul General Richard Yoneoka gave a motivational speech, emphasizing the importance of the AWCW and FAWCO. Food played as runners and walkers gathered at the starting line. Participants snapped photos before beginning their treks around the Alster. After crossing the finish line, participants chatted, took more photos and enjoyed baked goods, bagels, and beverages as they awaited the results of a raffle drawing. The day’s activities closed with an announcement that the event had raised over $2,000 for FAWCO.

“The fun run was a success on multiple levels”, said Teresa. “Not only did it raise funds for FAWCO, it helped foster a feeling of community within the AWCW. “We made a difference and we feel proud.” said Lyn. An event video (donated by an AWCW spouse) and the many pictures posted on Facebook capture the laughter, smiles and positive energy of the day. AWCW plans to make the fun run/walk an annual event. With the right inspiration, a support network and team commitment, a small team can achieve outstanding results.

From L to R: Lyn Herr, Tracy Moede, Carol Strametz and Teresa Perez Y Llandazuri

Lyn and Teresa got thinking and the ideas started flowing. They concluded on a fun run/walk, and as Teresa says, “It seemed like a great way to bring people together to promote fitness, friendship and charitable giving”. Both Teresa and Lyn were new to Hamburg and weren’t sure how people would respond to this type of event. After some debate, they decided it would be worthwhile if they could get 30 people to sign up.

Although initially slow to respond to this type of event. After some debate, they decided it would be worthwhile if they could get 30 people to sign up. They also believed that holding the event near the Alster, one of Hamburg’s most picturesque locations, could help boost participation.

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FAUSA remains committed to providing a vehicle for former FAWCO members to remain connected to the FAWCO Network, as well as providing support and fellowship for all repatriating Americans. Join FAUSA by going to www.fausa.org or contacting the VP Membership at 2ndVP@fausa.org. Help us spread the word!
By Suzanne Wheeler (AAWE Paris), The FAWCO Foundation President

The FAWCO Foundation celebrated a significant birthday this year – 50 years of supporting FAWCO’s philanthropic goals, improving the lives of women and children worldwide. Over $1,750,000 has been disbursed over the past 50 years through the programs administered by the foundation - Development Grants and Education Awards, the Eleanor Roosevelt Girls Leadership Workshop, Kids Helping Kids, and NEEED scholarships for young women in Burkina Faso, to name a few. Our fundraising has shown the synergistic power of clubs banding together to make a difference.

The FAWCO Foundation Friendship Quilt:
Read our downloadable 50th Anniversary Book, (www.fawcofoundation.org), to see how small ideas like the Friendship Quilt can grow into major accomplishments. In 1995, Roberta Zöllner started the quilt fundraising concept, a community endeavor. Over the years, she has sewn together more than 1,000 quilt blocks donated from approximately 800 separate contributors resulting in over $71,000 raised. It has been a shining example of a small idea growing into a mainstay event, highlighting the power of women bonding together, be it through sewing squares or selling raffle tickets. Its theme of unity carries a strong yearly message for our members. This year’s “Butterfly Brigade” quilt is composed of 180 blocks from 43 contributors.

The Foundation is pleased to announce the following programs:

2018 FAWCO Foundation Education Awards - We are offering four awards for FAWCO and FAUSA members’ children in the areas of Science (1), Humanities (2) and Art (1). For FAWCO members’ children and grandchildren, we offer one award, the Dual Cultural Award. For FAWCO and FAUSA members, there are three awards this year. For more information on the Education Awards, contact the Education Awards Administrator at awards@fawcofoundation.org.

2018 FAWCO Foundation Development Grants - Our Development Grants are aligned with FAWCO and the UN’s four focus areas. This year, there are two grants focusing on Human Rights, two in the Health area and one for the Environment. We are also very fortunate this year to be able to offer three grants in the area of Education. For more information on the Development Grants program, contact the Development Grants Administrator at grants@fawcofoundation.org.

Backing Women (BW) Fundraising Campaign:
The Backing Women Campaign continues with the current Target Project “Hope Beyond Displacement”. Fundraising has been dynamic since the announcement of the project’s selection in Mumbai, with the added incentive of a Matching Grant Program offered by The de Groot Foundation. Clubs continue to demonstrate a commitment to the Target program through various Clubs in Action events. Our Backing Women Boutique is proving a great success with new items on offer, demonstrating our commitment not only in product selection (many of our items come from women’s collectives or cottage industries) as well as in the disbursement of the net profits to the Target Project. Our “stack of books” is growing daily as the donations from all aspects of the Backing Women Fundraising Campaign come in. Learn more about it on our website.

We could not have achieved this without the countless donations from Member Clubs and individuals, who through their generosity, have made our success possible. No matter how you donate - via direct donation, during regional meetings, or through participation in Foundation Night during the annual FAWCO conferences, The FAWCO Foundation extends its heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you for enabling us to sustain our roster of worthy programs.