

A Breath of Fresh Air: Reflection of the WFWPI CSW63 Parallel Event

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As anyone who has been to a Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) can attest, with such an overwhelming number of events happening over the course of two weeks, it can be quite a challenge to pick the ones you want to attend.

To give our readers a rough idea, according to [UN Women](#) more than 280 side events and 400 parallel events were organized at CSW63 from March 11 to 22. The parallel events are hosted by civil society organizations such as WFP International, and with such a large number of organizers the result is honestly a mixed bag. Sometimes you go to an event because the title intrigued you – and often, the title is all the information you have to go by – only to discover that the topic is not what you expected at all!



Knowing this, I walked into the main hall of 4W 43rd Street that Wednesday afternoon to attend the WFWPI-hosted parallel event, doing my best to have no preconceptions about what I was about to witness. The title alone, "The Family and Social Protection", certainly was broad enough to offer plenty of wiggle room. But once I took my seat in the crowded room among the 135 people in attendance, I was immediately drawn in.

First of all, I was struck by the high calibre of the speakers and the professionalism with which the event was organized, and I must give credit to the incredible team of the WFWPI International office for that.

Two of the speakers were involved in matters of family and social affairs at the United Nations, and one was an influential media figure from Nepal. Their arguments for the need to support families, who are the first social protection provider of any individual, raised important family-oriented policy issues that concern the UN.

The speaker that impacted me most deeply and on a personal level, however, was the last one: Ms. Jeanne Carroll, a senior UN representative of WFWPI. She shared how her 96-year-old mother still talks about

the things that her own mother taught her when she was 8; the family is such a fundamental part of our upbringing that it's possible to remember things we learned almost 90 years ago! Just thinking about having that kind of lasting impact on someone else really stayed with me.

Ms. Carroll also pointed out that the family is usually the first to notice when an individual needs support and plays a crucial role in making sure that individual has access to the social protection programs available, such as those related to sickness, disability and old age. Moreover, when families are supported and protected, this reduces the risk of women and girls in particular being catapulted into precarious situations like abuse, unwanted pregnancies and poverty. Listening to these words, I realized that the far-reaching positive impact that family-oriented policies can have on society as a whole needs to be promoted more on platforms like this!

Attending this parallel event was like a breath of fresh air and it certainly brought a lot of added value to my CSW experience as a whole. And if you decide to attend CSW64 next year, be sure to leave room on your busy, complex calendar for whatever WFWPI has in store. You won't regret it!