



NGO Committee on Mental Health

November 2008 CONGO Report

The NGO Committee on Mental Health continued to be an active organization at the United Nations in 2008. Our monthly programs and ongoing advocacy efforts are designed to effectively address attitudes and policies towards positive change. Our panels are diverse, representing various professions, civil society expertise and the United Nations. The Committee often collaborates with the World Health Organization and with NGOs such as the Committee on Ageing, the Committee on the Family, the Committee on the Status of Women, Department of Public Information, and others. Resolutions are always co-sponsored by a range of organizations, as are side events at UN conferences.

Our 2008 Calendar included the following monthly programs:

**2008**

- January** *Psychological Trauma in Disasters and Conflict; Integrating Psychosocial Interventions into Humanitarian Assistance Programs* (sponsored by Trauma and Mental Health)
- February** *Mental Health at Risk on Two Fronts: The Global Workplace & the Iraqi Refugee Crisis* (with the participation of WHO)
- March** *Investing in Women’s Mental Health: Reaping the Benefits – Commission on the Status of Women* (sponsored by Gender Issues and Mental Health)
- April** *Global Well-Being and the Media* (co-sponsored by Media/Information, ICT and Mental Health and the Communications Coordination Committee of the United Nations)

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May      *Reflections on Education for Human Rights and Mental Health* (co-sponsored by the Working Groups on Racism, Related Intolerances & Mental Health; Children, Youth and Mental Health; and Refugees, Immigrants and Mental Health)

June      *Looking Back – Moving Forward – Annual Review & Planning*  
(Working Groups Appreciation Reception)

September 3-5      *DPI/NGO (UN Department of Public Information) Conference - UNESCO - Paris, France*

*Side Event: International Community Mental Health Education: Human Rights Based Grassroots and Professional Models. Primary Sponsor: International Association of Schools of Social Work*

September *Mental Health Event in New York - Nominations for Executive Committee; Paris Reprise*

October *World Mental Health Day Briefing with the Department of Public Information: Making Mental Health a Global Priority through Advocacy and Action*

November *The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Report: Implications on policy*

*regarding forced psychiatric interventions. Sponsored by the Working Group on Mental Health and Disabilities.*

December *Universal Declaration of Human Rights Omnibus*

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All working groups will discuss their the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* relative to their area of mental health concern

2009 Working Group Commitments to Programs

January *Trauma & Mental Health*

February *Racism, Related Intolerances and Mental Health (in collaboration with the NGO Committee on Ageing)*

March *Gender Perspectives & Mental Health – Commission on the Status of Women (2009 Theme: Equal Sharing of Responsibilities re Caregiving and HIV-AIDS)*

[Co-sponsored World Federation of Mental Health event pending]

April *Media, ICT & Mental Health*

May *Refugees, Immigrants & Mental Health*

June *Looking Back – Moving Forward – Annual Review & Planning  
Recognition of Working Groups*

Statements and Endorsements:

The NGO Committee on Mental Health has written collaboratively and co-sponsored official statements that were presented in three languages at two major conferences at the UN in New York: the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Commission on Social Development (CSD). The CSW Statement is consistent with the priority theme for the

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conference. Both underscore on the importance of mental health and well-being in the context of the issue addressed.

The Executive Committee of the NGO Committee on Mental Health is:

Chairperson: JANICE WOOD WETZEL, PhD

[International Association of Schools of Social Work](#)

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International Psychoanalytical Association

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Treasurer: LORRAINE M. WALLA, DTCM, RPA-C

World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation

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Corresponding Secretary: MARCIA WALLACE, LMSW

International Federation of Social Workers

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Member-at-Large: GARY S. BELKIN, MD, PhD

[World Federation for Mental Health](#)

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Member-at-Large: JUDY KURIANSKY, PhD  
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The current committee will serve through December 2008 with elections slated for January 2009.

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### **Working Groups:**

The NGO Committee on Mental Health is strongly committed to raising public consciousness regarding the importance of mental health as a priority issue; advocating for all individuals to have the right to realize their full potential for optimal functioning, both physically and mentally; and publicly addressing societal stigma about mental health and mental disorders.

Under the auspices of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organization (CONGO) in Consultative relationship with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Committee on Mental Health engages in activities that promote, educate, facilitate and support actions in the international arena and within the scope of the United Nations interests and responsibilities. The following Mental Health Working Groups meet regularly to implement this mission:

#### Children, Youth and Mental Health

The Working Group on Children, Youth and Mental Health is committed to promoting the development and emotional well-being of young people by educating UN agencies, governments, NGOs and civil society about social and economic issues relevant to children, and advocating for the inclusion of children in decisions regarding their lives.

Co-Convenor: Dick Donahue Tel: 914-669-5209; E-mail: [tdonahue1@worldnet.att.net](mailto:tdonahue1@worldnet.att.net)

Co-Convenor: Linda Conte Tel: 914-271-5324; E-Mail: [Linda@Conte.org](mailto:Linda@Conte.org)

#### Gender Perspectives and Mental Health

The Working Group on Gender Perspectives and Mental Health injects a gender perspective in mental health advocacy at the United Nations. We encourage the development and implementation of gender-sensitive mental health policies and programs. We also educate about the importance of improving the overall social status of women since women's well-being and mental health are affected by social inequalities and vulnerability to economic dependence, violence, and oppression.

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Co-Convenor: Ricki Kantrowitz Tel: 413-586-3970; E-mail: [rkantrowitz@wsc.ma.edu](mailto:rkantrowitz@wsc.ma.edu)

Co-Convenor: Karen Siegel Tel: 516-487-9834; E-mail: [drklsphd@optonline.net](mailto:drklsphd@optonline.net)

### Human Rights and Mental Health

The Working Group on Human Rights and Mental Health advocates for mental health and well-being in policy and planning at the UN. We promote attention to self-determination and self-representation of people suffering from discrimination due to psychiatric and/or emotional disabilities in every part of the world.

Convenor: Celia Brown Tel: 718-881-0770; E-mail: [Cksean@aol.com](mailto:Cksean@aol.com)

### Media/Information, Communication Technologies (ICT) and Mental Health

The Working Group on Media/Information, Communication Technologies and Mental Health is committed to promoting access and utilization to both traditional media and newer information and communication technologies (ICT) globally, for the purpose of fostering mental health and psychological resilience, and advocating for the prevention and treatment of mental illness.

Convenor: Elizabeth Carll Tel: 631-754-2424; E-mail: [ecarll@optonline.net](mailto:ecarll@optonline.net)

### Racism, Related Intolerances and Mental Health

The Working Group on Racism, Related Intolerances and Mental Health focuses on promoting the integration of mental health perspectives into the implementation of the Durban Programme of Action (the outcome report of the World Conference Against Racism), the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and related human rights instruments. The group's activities call attention to the impact of racism, discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances upon mental health within varying local, regional and international social contexts. Members of the group have diverse interests, including advocacy, practice, and the delivery of mental health services, research, education and policy.

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Co-Convenor: Cecilia Blewer Tel: 212-866-4256; E-mail: [cblewer@msn.com](mailto:cblewer@msn.com)  
Co-Convenor: Judy Gordon Tel: 203-288-7815; E-mail: [gordonjz@aol.com](mailto:gordonjz@aol.com)

#### Refugees, Immigrants and Mental Health

The Working Group on Refugees, Immigrants and Mental Health addresses the psychological, social and economic impact on people who have been internally or externally displaced from their homelands as a result of war, rebellion, poverty and oppression. Attention is given to the experiences that caused them to flee from their countries of origin, conditions in settlement camps and interim locations, as well as stresses related to adjustment to lands foreign to them.

Convenor: Margrit Rustow Tel: 212-787-2313; E-mail: [margrust1@aol.com](mailto:margrust1@aol.com)

#### Trauma and Mental Health

The Working Group on Trauma and Mental Health is committed to addressing the concerns of people who have experienced traumatic events, including man-made or natural disasters. Attention is given to advocating with UN constituencies concerning the psychological distress caused by such events and the necessity of providing appropriate interventions and promoting reconciliation.

Co-Convenor: Nancy Wallace Tel: 917-842-4733; E-mail: [newallace@earthlink.net](mailto:newallace@earthlink.net)

Co-Convenor: Inka Weissbecker Tel: 502-767-0524; E-mail: [inka.weissbecker@gmail.com](mailto:inka.weissbecker@gmail.com)

For more information about the NGO Committee on Mental Health, go to their website: [www.mentalhealthngo.org](http://www.mentalhealthngo.org)

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