**NAWO Young Woman’s Alliance**

**July 2021**

The YWA meets every month by zoom and aims to create a space where young women can hear from experts on key issues that are important in their lives. Each session has breakout rooms to enable discussion in smaller groups and a long question and answer section so that everyone has a chance to give their opinions and ask for further information. As a result of the sessions, action groups can also be formed.

For more information on the Beijing Platform for Action please click here **NAWO & the Beijing Platform for Action**

So far, the YWA has been briefed on women in decision making, the environment, institutional mechanisms, the environment and education.

After the welcome and introduction of the YWA and the 12 critical areas of concern, Luci Chickowero shared information from her daughter Maka who at 16 has started a charity to keep girls in schools. **Here is her presentation.**

Chloe Brown and Hannah Thonpson from Northern Ireland shared their perspectives –

Here is what Chloe said:

Hello everyone, my name is Chloe Celine, and I am a 20-year-old from Derry/Londonderry Northern Ireland.

You may wonder why I used my middle name Celine. Well Celine is my middle name, and it was also the name of my grandmother. I never had the pleasure of meeting my grandmother growing up as she passed before I was born in 2001. However, she has made a dramatic impact upon my life choices and education ever since I can remember alongside my other grandmother Kathleen.

These women were never given an opportunity to receive a formal education during the troubles of Northern Ireland. Many of you have probably heard about the troubles in examples of international community conflict but for me, Hannah, and many other young women in NI we live through the aftermath of this conflict. We deal with the repercussions of the troubles over 20 years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

Both of my grandmothers grew up in poorer areas such as the Springtown camp, an old American Navy Base from the 2nd world war made of tin occupied by thousands long after the end of the war in the 1960’s and called it home. Education was not made a priority for many people in this area and is still one of the most socio-economically deprived areas throughout NI. Instead, many women were encouraged to make a living to support income for their families in shirt factories as many families could not afford to allow women to receive an education but instead work.

 Even though these two women never did go to the usual typical educational setting, they still encouraged every single one of my family on both sides to actively go and pursue education.

I may not have lived through the troubles but like many others we still feel the ripple effect within our local communities long after the height of the troubles. We have grown up learning from our parents to not trust certain areas or people just in case we would get shot. I grew up in fear of having a family member die at the hands of a parliamentary group just because they were at the wrong place at the wrong time just like the many others who were not fortunate enough.

Young people in Northern Ireland have borne the burden of the past. We suffer deep intergenerational trauma scars from our families and communities having to suffer at the hands of the troubles. We have grown up thinking it is considered normal to hear about someone getting shot or a petrol bomb went off in normal everyday conversations. I have grown up with being discriminated against not only because I am a woman but because of my cultural background.

However, I would like to say that the young people are the solution to solve these problems. As a young woman in NI, I believe it's extremely important for people to be educated in the history and legacy of the troubles. To allow young people like myself to be fully educated and understand the full extent of the troubles within our local communities. One place in which that enabled this learning is through my involvement in youth work organisations such as Park Youth.

This organisation enables individuals from a variety of communities within NI to be able to interact with one another in a safe environment. It allows us to fully understand our own experiences living as a young person within NI. Allowing people to learn about issues in an informal educational environment, it allows peoples secular perspectives on the world be actively challenged.

Despite being constantly told I can’t do certain things because I was a woman or because I did not have the ability within my schools, I did it anyway because I never choose to let other people define who I am and what I am capable of because of I am and where I come from as it does not define who I am it is simply apart of who I am as an individual. My granny Kathleen always said the world is your oyster if you have an education, you can do anything you want. And that is exactly what I did.

The women in my life, have instilled a love for education within me throughout my life and two years ago I was the first woman in over 30 years in my family to go to university as a full-time student studying psychology at Ulster University.

Education has been one of the most valuable aspects of my life and has changed my life. It has truly allowed me to open my eyes to the injustices and inequalities prevalent in the world around me. It has forced me to not only want to learn more about what I can do to help shape the world around me but inspires me to create change. I have received a higher understanding of education externally from the classroom through my own life experiences through being able to travel and participate in groups such as Park Youth where we encourage discussions about challenging topics.

 I know from my own experience, no one can be ever truly guaranteed to receive an education and to never take it for granted. Many people internationally are not as privileged as I am to receive a formal education because they are women. Many are actively denied a chance to get access to education based on who they are. It is something many struggles to get and more should be offered a chance to receive an education. In my eyes, we as humans are all students on Earth. Everyone learns every day and to deny someone that right is inhumane as through education we can change our world.

Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

Prof Geeta Kingdom, joining the zoom from India, shared her research on the importance of education for women – **link**

Dr Stephen Vickers, who as worked over the years in writing exam papers and in developing vocational qualificiations, shared his thoughts on the importance of education for girls.

**Here**

After the presentations, there were breakout rooms with varied discussions followed by a final Q&A.

**Here is the recording**

The next event is August 26 – on The Girl Child and September 30 – on women and the media with several women journalists from around the world.