OMEP’S WORK AT THE UNITED NATIONS IN 2016

Maria Pia Belloni & Judith Wagner

I. OMEP’S 2016 REPRESENTATIVES TO UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK

OMEP has Special Consultative Status with the UN. Each year OMEP is entitled to designate representatives to the UN. OMEP’s 2016 designees to the UN New York headquarters were

**Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Representatives**

Maria Pia Belloni Mignatti, Main Representative
Judith Wagner, Chief Administrative Officer, Deputy World President

*Alternate Representatives:*

Gigliana Melzi
Gaby Fujimoto
Donna-Akilah Wright

**Department of Public Information (DPI) Representatives**

Maggie Koong
Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson
Brenda Anita Boyd-Bell

**Youth Representatives:**

Amber Eriksson
Si Chen

The New York Team includes these designees and other OMEP members who attend meetings and events at the UN on behalf of OMEP.

II. NEW YORK TEAM GOALS FOR 2016 AND PROGRESS TOWARD ACHIEVING THEM

1. Strengthen the New York Team by engaging more local (and nearby) members of OMEP in the work (e.g., attending committee meetings and other events that do not require ground passes), with a focus on increasing participation by young adults and early career professionals.

   **Progress:** We held two meetings of the New York Team in 2016. We attempted to recruit new members at an early childhood conference in New York in November and at side events and NGO committee meetings. As a result, the team has welcomed several new active members, representing several universities and groups where we hope to build even stronger connections.

   Ana Cana (Columbia University); Sowmya Singh Thakur-Kshetriya (Columbia University); Charlotte Mildenberger (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America?); Chelsea Cornwall (University of Connecticut); Kaitlin I Drape (New York University); Leslie Black Currie (New York University); Lu Dai; (New York University); Rashmi Jaipal (NGO Committee on Migration), and Saundra Norton (Sarah Lawrence University), and Rima Salah, Chair, Early Childhood Peace Consortium.

2. Complete Responsibilities and Expectations document to assist with recruitment, orientation, and monitoring UN representatives.

   **Completed:** The document was completed and approved by the World Executive Committee. It has been used in orientation meetings for new representatives and team members.

3. Improve documentation of UN representatives’ activities.
Progress: We created a monthly activity reporting form for all UN representatives and NY team members. It has been used with limited success.

4. Ensure that representatives for the following year are appointed in a timely fashion.
   Completed: The 2017 representatives were appointed in a timely fashion and received authorizations for ground passes in January 2017.

5. Increase communication and coordination between World ExCO, OMEP’s UN representatives, and other members of the New York Team.
   Progress: Numerous emails were sent to members of World ExCO to update them on OMEP’s work at the UN. We created a list serve for UN representatives and the New York Team to promote information sharing and communication.

   Progress: We continue to work on this.

7. Complete the WASH from the START small-scale funded project with UNICEF.
   Progress: The timeline for the project was extended until June 30, 2017 due to changes in leadership in the WASH unit and delays in reports on WASH best practices from UNICEF. Six drafts of the text have been presented to UNICEF. We hope that the publication will be launched in fall 2017 at the WASH meeting at the University of North Carolina.

8. Complete a proposal to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees for a pilot project to provide socio-emotional support to young children in refugee camps.
   The Committee on Migration and OMEP participated in the development of a pilot project proposal entitled, Health, Education and Protection Parenting Project (HELP-R), submitted by Dr. Ghassn Issa, Director of the Arab Resource Collective, Beirut, Lebanon. The project aims to benefit refugee children (0 – 5) from Syria, including Palestinians, their parents, and the local population by addressing health, education and protection for children; focussing on the parents’ wellbeing; reducing risks factors within the family; and promoting deeper and more sustainable community cohesion. The UN’s Country Based Pooled Funds (CBPF) Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Global Management Systems Platform is now evaluating the funding request for the project.

III. INCREASING OMEP’S VISIBILITY AND CREDIBILITY 2016: Increasing our organization’s visibility and credibility as a leading voice for young children is an on-going goal for our UN representatives and the New York Team. In 2016 we

(1) organized and presented in several UN Side Events and other meetings;

(2) participated in NGO committees, including
   Committee on Migration and its Subcommittee on Migrant and Refugee Children’s Issues
   Committee on Education, Learning and Literacy
   Committee for the Elimination of Racism, Afrophobia and Colorism;

(3) strengthened collaborations with the UN High Commission on Refugees and UNICEF’s WASH in Schools unit

(4) collaborated with other organizations, including the Red Cross, Federation of American Women’s Clubs Overseas (FAWCO), UNANIMA International, Poverty Elimination and Community Education (PEACE) Foundation, Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues (SPSSI),

Other notable accomplishments included

OMEP became a founding member of the NGO Committee for the Elimination of Racism, Afrophobia and Colorism. Donna-Akilah Wright is OMEP’s representative to the committee.

Donna Wright was elected treasurer of the NGO Committee on Education, Learning and Literacy.

IV. ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

Representation at the UN in New York: Maria Pia Belloni Mignatti represented OMEP at the United Nations on a near-daily basis.

OMEP’s Annual Declarations: The 2015 World Assembly in Washington, DC, OMEP unanimously adopted a position statement entitled Education for Sustainability in Early Childhood. The 2016 World Assembly in Seoul Korea unanimously adopted a declaration entitled, Urgent Call to Address the Rights and Needs of the Youngest Displaced, Migrant, Refugee, and Asylum-seeking Children. These documents provided the foundation for OMEP’s contributions to numerous proposals, position papers and presentations throughout 2016, especially our participation in meetings at the UN in preparation for the High-level Plenary meeting of the General Assembly on September 19, 2016 to address the growing movement of refugees and migrants. The result of our advocacy was the inclusion of paragraph 82 in the final Declaration, where the Member States declared their commitment to support early childhood education for refugee children. (A/71/L1. 13 September 2016)

Side Events and Presentations (partial listing)

OMEP organized and/or participated in the following side events and other important events:


Importance of Early Childhood Development in Alleviating Childhood Trauma, Stress, and Deprivation. Children and Youth’s Mental Health for the Realization of the Sustainable Development Goals NGO Committee on Mental Health, 5/18/16

Promoting Human Rights Around the World, Fordham University, 10/23/16

European Union Migrant Crisis: Dreams Down into the Sea, New York Institute of Technology, 10/28/16

Children on the Move: Their Dreams, Our Commitment, International Migration Day, 12/18/16

Position Papers (partial listing):

Positive Effects of Innovative Early Childhood Development Programs on Refugee Youth Resilience UNHCR, Annual Consultation with NGOs, Geneva, 14-17 June 2016


Projects:
Early Childhood Emotional Support Kit, Pilot project, American Red Cross (ARC) and OMEP (ongoing)

Health, Education and Protection Parenting Project (HELP-R) with Arab Resource Collective, Beirut, Lebanon

WASH from the Start: OMEP’s UN representatives continued to work closely with the WASH unit at UNICEF to promote greater attention to water, sanitation, and hygiene education before school-start age. An OMEP UN representative made two presentations for the WASH network in 2016. A Small Scale Funding Agreement (SSFA) was signed in March 2016 to support a collaboration between OMEP and three units at UNICEF (WASH, ECD, and Education) to produce an early childhood version of WASH in Schools’ publication, Raising Even More Clean Hands. The project is ongoing.

Mentoring Interns: In 2016 we had several interns from NYU, Columbia, and Fordham working on the sub-committee on migrant and refugee children. Their focus was the protection of migrant and refugee children and their right to early childhood development and education.

Connections with Institutions of Higher Education: The New York Team strengthened connections with Fordham University, Columbia University, New York University, Sarah Lawrence University and Whittier College.

V. 2017 REPRESENTATIVES TO UN HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK

ECOSOC
Maria Pia Belloni Mignatti, Main Representative
Judith Wagner, Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) and Deputy World President

Alternate Representatives
Donna-Akilah Wright
Saundra Norton
Brenda Anita Boyd-Bell

DPI
Eunhye Park, President, World OMEP
Maggie Koong
Ingrid Pramling Samuelsson

Youth Representatives
Amber Eriksson
Ana María Cañas

Temporary Representative
Kaitlin Drape

VI: NEW YORK TEAM GOALS FOR 2017

1. Continue to strengthen OMEP’s visibility and credibility as a leading voice for the world’s youngest children.

2. Continue to strengthen the New York Team, with improved documentation of their activities

3. Co-sponsor at least one Side Event.

5. Complete the WASH from the START small-scale funded project with UNICEF.

6. Continue working with other OMEP members around the world, NGOs, universities and individuals to ensure that children are well represented in implementation of the SDGs.
   - Research the effects of poverty on migrant and refugee children
   - Develop specific indicators to guide appropriate interventions to build resilience and improve outcomes for migrant and refugee children, especially through ECD and ECE
   - Advocate for national level “whole child” strategies in both education policy and emergency response.

7. Select and orient the 2018 representatives in a timely fashion with a view toward continuity.