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Statement submitted by Casa Generalizia della Societa' del Sacro Cuore, Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, Congregation of the Mission, Congregations of St. Joseph, Dominican Leadership Conference, Edmund Rice International Limited, Fondazione Proclade Internazionale - Onlus, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Loreto Generalate, International Presentation Association, Loretto Community (Sisters of Loretto), Maryknoll Sisters of St. Dominic, Inc., Passionists International, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Salesian Missions, Inc., School Sisters of Notre Dame, Sisters of Charity Federation, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, UNANIMA International, and VIVAT International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

We, members of the Justice Coalition of Religious, represent congregations of Catholic Sisters, Brothers, priests, and their partners. We share a devotion to the promotion of gender equality as a reflection of the equal human dignity of all people regardless of gender, and we continuously examine and seek to transform the gender-justice hindrances that are perpetuated by patriarchal structures and attitudes within our own institutions and faith community. Drawing upon our experiences in service and solidarity with marginalized women and girls, we offer our insights with respect to global progress toward the aims of the Beijing Declaration.

Although they hail from six continents, our members' observations of the journey toward the realization of gender equity converge around a few themes:

- The most widespread and catastrophic obstacles to gender equality are the major barriers to girls' education: gender norms that falsely elevate the inherent value, contributions, or leadership capacity of boys/men over those of girls/women; failures of government to meet needs of girls' communities or families with respect to education costs, infrastructure, and qualified personnel; early marriage and/or pregnancy; and violent conflict and/or environmental degradation in girls' home communities.
- Despite strong policies regarding gender-based violence, incidences continues to rise across the globe due to lack of enforcement and access to justice for survivors.
- Gender-based discrimination and inequalities make women/girls more vulnerable to social, economic, and environmental shocks than their male counterparts. When such shocks force them to migrate, migrant-exclusionary social policies burden women/girls with an additional layer of vulnerability to violence and exploitation and additional barriers to essential services.
- While positive strides toward gender parity in leadership are being made in several settings, the social, economic, environmental, and governance work being done by women continues to significantly outweigh their power in decision-making bodies that govern their lives.

To address these challenges, our members engage in a wide variety of ministries, which we offer as good practices with the potential to be scaled up or adapted for other settings.

For example, in response to gender-based violence:

- Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries in India provide legal guidance and personal support/accompaniment for women and children who have survived sexual and domestic violence.
- Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit in Indonesia lead the Volunteer Team for Humanity on Flores (TRUK-F), which addresses gender-based violence through community sensitization campaigns/trainings; safe house, health/legal services, rehabilitation, reintegration, and repatriation for survivors; and advocacy campaigns that train and involve survivors and women's groups.

In service of women's/girls' education and leadership:

- Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in Nigeria offer a holistic curriculum at their school for girls, which debunks gender stereotypes and myths that elevate boys/men over girls/women.

- Comboni Missionary Sisters in Kariobangi, Kenya run a technical school for women/girls that incorporates income-generating activities and adult-literacy coursework.
- School Sisters of Notre Dame in Soma, Gambia sponsor a vocational-turned-lower-basic-and-Junior school in which girls participate in sewing and tie/die training and student leadership and provision of free sanitary pads has successfully reduced absenteeism.
- International Presentation Association in Perth, Australia offers a lunchtime co-curricular group (“Young Pressies”) at their secondary school. It guides 50–60 girls aged 12–18 in weekly acquisition of public-service knowledge and advocacy skills, which they apply to support the needs of local women and children who have been impacted by human trafficking, domestic violence, homelessness, poverty, and the cost-of-living crisis.

To address the health disparities and harmful practices that endanger women/girls:

- Sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Jicamarca, Peru lead the “Healthy Women and Children” project. It raises awareness of nutrition and anemia rates in 220 girls and boys while providing parents with tools and knowledge on this subject. Since February 2024, it has been providing 100 women with medical attention, training, and gynecological-obstetric support for the prevention and treatment of diseases such as breast cancer and cervical cancer.
- Sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Huaycán, Peru sponsor the “Unidas Nutrinos Mejor” project, which supplements soup kitchens’ offerings with vegetables, proteins and legumes; provides informative workshops and nutritional demonstrations to help women improve the nutrition of their dining room; and offers social-work workshops, in which the women acquire leadership and management skills that ensure the sustainability of the project and their dining rooms

In response to the economic vulnerabilities produced by gender-based discrimination:

- Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in the Democratic Republic of the Congo take an integrated approach to addressing gender inequality in rural communities by setting up girls’ schools; community health centers; and women’s empowerment centers that offer training and services to support women’s literacy, knowledge of their rights and how to claim or defend them, leadership skills, microfinance, agriculture, and entrepreneurship.
- Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit in Indonesia sponsor a Gender Equity Program that offers women-led livelihood training and support in the areas of agriculture and weaving, sensitization groups about women and Politics and gender-based violence, and environmental care.
- Congregation of Jesus in Bihar, India sponsors Chirag Education Culture and Health Awareness Centre, which offers tailoring and nursing training for girls and microfinance programming that serves more than 200 women.

Recognizing the disproportionate harm inflicted on women/girls in contexts of violent conflict and environmental disasters/degradation:

- School Sisters of Notre Dame in South Sudan address the root causes of violence by empowering women and children with practical conflict-resolution skills.

They break down social divisions and build trust by providing a platform for open dialogue and sharing of perspectives.

- Sisters of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Huaycán, Peru organize the women-led Niñez sin Miedo and Kusi Warma projects, which seek to reduce child violence through the training of more than 160 child-advocates for child rights. Their psycho-educational sessions teach students to recognize/manage their emotions, assert their rights, stop acts of violence around them, and educate other children on these subjects.
- Comboni Missionary Sisters in Kenya employ women in farming and solar-powered irrigation projects that provide an environmentally sustainable food source for families and communities as well as a livelihood for women.
- Franciscan Justice, Peace and Integrity Movement in Cochabamba, Bolivia leads a Cooperative Project of Garbage Collectors and Recyclers, which operates with gender parity in its membership.

Our global community calls upon UN Member States to collaborate with us by:

- Allocating public funding to meet women's/girls' needs for shelter, trauma-informed care, and legal recourse against perpetrators of gender-based violence with special attention to those in conflict settings and in migration.
- Training independent translators to enable gender-based violence survivors' communication with investigators.
- Modifying "cost-sharing" education policies (equal school-fee subsidies for all) to equitable subsidies tailored to individual needs.
- Investing in proper training/compensation of teachers with financial incentives to teach in rural areas.
- Lifting exclusions of pregnant or mothering students from free-education policies.
- Providing sanitary pads in schools.
- Prioritizing lived experience of gender-based discrimination as a key qualification for leadership of offices and projects aimed at gender equity and development.
- Offering women-only fora in which women can voice their needs, opinions, and ideas with governmental leaders.
- Removing legal barriers to Comprehensive Sexuality Education to enable destigmatization of menstruation and to safeguard children against sexual abuse, early marriage/pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases through empowering, lifesaving conversations about sexual and marital consent and health/educational/financial implications of sexual activity.
- Instituting national primary- and secondary-school curricula to address harmful gender stereotypes that limit possibilities for people of all genders and poison gender relations throughout the life cycle.
- Allocating appropriate funds for healthcare of women in labor and in rural areas.
- Involving people of all genders and tribal/cultural/faith leaders in community-based dialogue and conflict mediation techniques, particularly in conflict/post-conflict settings.
- Guaranteeing protection of non-violent gender-equality activists from violent or judicial retribution for their activism.

- Exercising transparency with public spending on girls'/women's education, health, and livelihood programs and on accompaniment/recovery for survivors of gender-based violence.
 - Establishing a coordination mechanism among governmental agencies addressing different aspects of work toward gender equality
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