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**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:**

**Priority Theme: Inclusive and resilient recovery from
COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being, and dignity
for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and
dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda**

Statement submitted by International Presentation Association and UNANIMA 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

UNANIMA International and the International Presentation Association welcome the United Nations decision to choose the above Priority Theme for the 60th Session of the Commission for Social Development.

According to the *2021 Sustainable Development Goals Report*, between 119–124 million people were pushed back into poverty and chronic hunger, and 255 million full-time jobs were lost due to the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic tested the limits of social protections and healthcare systems across the globe. Among the most vulnerable to the threat of COVID-19 are women and children, particularly those experiencing violence and homelessness.

Moreover, women and children are more vulnerable to poverty. The U.S. Census Bureau data showed that, of the 38.1 million people living in poverty in 2018, 56% were women. Women in developing countries tend to work in the lowest paid sectors, have fewer stable incomes and have less access to job training and education. Millions of women have further lost their jobs and livelihoods amid the COVID-19 pandemic (UN Women, March 2021). Children make up 30% of the world's population but comprise 50% of the extreme poor (World Bank-UNICEF, October 2020).

We know that women and children living in poverty are more likely to suffer from health problems and are more vulnerable to gender-based violence. With limited or no access to income or other productive resources, many women have few options to avoid gender-based violence, such as to leave dependent abusive relationships. In some cases, women are forced to endure sexual violence in the workplace for fear of losing their only source of income. Poverty also drives women and children to exchange sex for money or school uniforms or to enter unsafe working environments, placing them at heightened risk of violence. In many cases, child marriage is seen as an effective way to reduce household poverty and relieve the financial burden girls place on their family of origin. Women and children who lose their homes due to conflict or natural disaster often have no money or resources, and are forced to submit to sex in return for food, shelter, and protection to survive.

At the same time, gender-based violence reduces a woman's ability to work and provide for her family. If a woman experiences any form of violence, there is a higher probability that she will become unemployed and that both she and her children will experience poor health. In addition to perpetuating household poverty, this lost income translates into a loss of productivity at the national level. Research also shows that girls who are exposed to or experience violence – including sexual assault, intimidation and abuse in school – are less likely to complete their education, and consequently have less economic opportunities. Many survivors of gender-based violence still live under a constant shadow of emotional or mental trauma, which reduces their capacity to work in the future.

International Presentation Association works, both locally and globally, on programmes to empower women economically and lift them out of poverty, as well as strengthen social services for gender-based violence survivors and increase awareness of their rights. Formal and informal education is a powerful tool not only in responding to and advocating against violence, but also in dismantling gender stereotypes, hence preventing violence from occurring before it even starts. We know that gender-based violence is one of the main causes of homelessness for women and families. This is even truer for poor women and children due to a lack of safe and affordable housing options and housing assistance, as well as discrimination against gender-based violence survivors.

Poverty is both a cause and a symptom of family homelessness. In UN-Habitat's *Harsh Realities Report* (2020), women are overrepresented in slums in 80% of countries where data were gathered. In the context of the pandemic, housing insecurity and doubling-up puts many families at heightened risk of contracting COVID-19. The connections between poverty and homelessness are painful and gendered.

Homelessness is Traumatic. People experiencing homelessness and poverty often live with a multitude of personal challenges that can be traumatic, such as the loss of home, mental health concerns, and other health issues. In *Social Exclusion, Compound Trauma and Recovery*, Peter Cockersell, PhD describes as "a situation in which a person experiences a sequence of traumatic events usually beginning in infancy or childhood" (2018, p. 17).

The impact of homelessness on women is profound. Many experiences anger, self-blame, sadness, fear, and hopelessness. The publication *Recognising the Link Between Trauma and Homelessness* (FEANTSA 2017) states that violence from an intimate male partner is considered one of the strongest contributors to women's homelessness. A study of homeless women with children found 80% had previously experienced domestic violence, and up to 57% of all homeless women report domestic violence as the immediate cause of their homelessness (Safe Housing Partnerships 2017). The intersections between women's homelessness and violence often result in compound traumas that are only worsened under pre-existing inequalities.

During a keynote address at an internal seminar on Housing First held in the Wisdom Centre at Sophia Housing, Dublin in June 2016, Sam Tsemberis, PhD of Housing First invited questions from social care practitioners supporting families with a lived experience of homelessness. One person asked him "what training would he [Tsemberis] prioritize for social care staff working with families?" Tsemberis responded by stating that "being competent in Trauma-informed care should be a requisite for people seeking to support people to successfully progress out of homelessness."

UNANIMA International promotes Trauma-Informed Care as a good practice specifically for service provided to populations who have a lived experience of homelessness. Trauma-informed services and spaces should not be limited to just health care or shelters, but rather present within public spaces in society, such as educational institutions and libraries.

Women and children are too often forgotten. The International Presentation Association and UNANIMA International encourage Member States to:

- Support government policies that address the root causes of poverty, such as effective living wage work force development, directing public funds to innovative poverty solutions;
- Provide access to quality and affordable lifelong education and healthcare services for all, especially for women and children survivors of gender-based violence and those experiencing homelessness;
- Increase economic opportunities and employment for women by providing them with job skills and training to reduce women's vulnerability to violence;
- Allocate additional resources for providing equal access to special emergency and support services (health care, shelters, legal aid, psycho-social care) for gender-based violence survivors to assist them with a faster recovery and reintegration into society;
- Ensure that survivors of gender-based violence are included in decision-making roles at the family, community, local, regional, national and international level;

- Address the nature of family homelessness i.e., specifically policies that meet the unique needs of women and children;
- Implement social protection policies and programs, and specifically ones that ensure access to housing and food assistance to enable women and children to break the cycle of poverty, and reduce inequalities;
- Adopt trauma-informed care services and approach, in all public services, including education, healthcare, and within governmental programs and spaces at all levels;

Endorsed by

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