Commission for Social Development
Sixtieth session
7–16 February 2022
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 Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual
University, a non-governmental organization 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

The Spiritual Vaccine: An Inside-Out Approach to COVID-19 Recovery and Addressing Poverty by Building Resilience and Restoring Human Dignity

In April of 2020, the United Nations issued a framework for the immediate socioeconomic response to COVID-19 and created the Secretary-General’s UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund to address the worldwide crisis. Before the pandemic, progress had been made in alleviating poverty in many countries; however, the World Bank has stated that the pandemic has led to 97 million more people living in poverty in 2020. As we look to recover and eradicate poverty, we must examine the key elements of our internal resources of resilience and dignity.

The devastating effects of COVID-19 have resulted in a secondary virus, one that is emotional and spiritual. During the pandemic, the entire world suffered varying degrees of the same traumatic event. Many lost their livelihoods, creating a wave of “new poor”; others have faced a shortage of products on which they depend. This virus is sadistic, forcing solitude upon the afflicted, rending families and leaving loved ones to recover—or die—alone. Isolation and worry have become the norm, resulting in a mental health crisis. The world has experienced profound psychological distress: stress, anxiety, depression, frustration, and uncertainty. For our recovery effort to be effective, we must alleviate this distress.

What is it that causes some to be overwhelmed by hardship and others to prevail? In order to address steps to recovery and restored well-being, we have to understand the capacity of the human spirit, what breaks it down, and how to build it back up again. We must look within and address the “poverty of the spirit.” Poverty of the spirit occurs when our true nature of goodness and strength is forgotten or suppressed, and the connection to the highest source of pure, positive energy is lost. This poverty is not the absence of shelter, good physical health, or basic resources; rather, it is the depletion of one’s inner ability to face day-to-day challenges. This type of deficiency in the spirit creates craving for love, peace, acceptance, happiness, and self-worth. A spiritually poor person lacks values, willpower, inner strength, and happiness. Instead of overcoming, they are overwhelmed. This poverty is a mindset that ravages the moral fabric of society, leaving everyone vulnerable. How do we make the human mind so powerful that it can recover from this state of spiritual depletion?

Our perception of reality starts with our awareness. When we change our inner world, we can effect positive change in our outer world. When we are filled with unlimited inner treasures, we can share them generously with others. We can cultivate loving and supportive relationships, upholding the dignity of others as we do our own. This change of awareness is an inside-out approach that builds resilience and restores human dignity. By creating this shift in consciousness and focusing on the health of the spirit we can create a spiritual vaccine that protects us from disheartenment, self-limiting beliefs, hopelessness, and blame. By connecting to the Universal Source, the spirit is injected with revitalizing love, thus empowering our innate wisdom and awakening the hidden resources that enable us to see with love and serve from the heart. This is a spiritual vaccine.

The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU) has been working for over 80 years to create inner wealth by cultivating innate strengths to overcome uncertainty and face challenges. By learning to tap their unlimited inner resources of peace, love, wisdom, happiness, and strength, they not only rise above challenges, but
do so calmly and recover quickly. They are spiritually self-sufficient, thus creating a spiritual vaccine to protect themselves from adversity and hopelessness.

During the pandemic, members of the BKWSU were able to remain resilient and cultivate a vision of love and compassion for others that promoted the well-being of their families, close contacts, and communities. They remained calm, followed guidelines, and supported those in need. Many have used their expertise to help their communities, mitigating their fear and making them feel safe. Their spiritual wealth keeps their lifestyle simple, allowing them to use available resources in a worthwhile way. They face adversity while remaining content and stable, and maintaining a rich outlook on life.

All over the world, BKWSU offers free classes, meditation, discussions, and radio programs, to provide solace and encouragement to their communities. During the pandemic, these resources have been made available online, making them further accessible. By focusing on the innate strengths and virtues in all of us, they have brought about a new understanding of the profound meaning and impact life can have beyond material possessions and status.

In India, the BKWSU generously gave of their time, resources, and hearts to help with the severe COVID-19 outbreak by:

- Donating some of the university’s infrastructure for the quarantine and recovery of affected patients.
- Opening an oxygen plant to help alleviate the severe oxygen shortage.
- Partnering with other NGOs for the distribution of resources.
- Opening several vaccination camps in BKWSU locations, distributing over 13,000 vaccines.
- Distributing food to approximately 3,000 people over 45 consecutive days in Surat, Gujarat. Food packets were also distributed to the police forces.
- Distributing masks and sanitizer.
- Setting up blood donation camps.
- Conducting activities to facilitate self-empowerment on social media platforms.

On October 2, 2021, the Brahma Kumaris center in Nepal received a Certificate of Commitment from the World Book of Records, London, for their relentless and dedicated commitment to promoting safety during the COVID-19 pandemic and pledging to serve society and reduce human suffering with honesty and sincerity, as well as offering guidance on the best way to prevent infection, as specified by the World Health Organization (WHO).

These contributions were made with the vision of each person as an important member of the global family, seeing the beauty that lies within each one, and by creating an atmosphere of inclusion. Strengths, talents, and good qualities surface by practicing altruism, compassion, and unconditional love for the self and others, and engaging in interactions that look beyond the physical body and current circumstances and into the spirit.

Centers all over the world offered Zoom and YouTube sessions as well as meditation to support their communities. A few experiences were shared by some who benefited from the sessions:

- They feel more peaceful and positive about their circumstances, have more inner power and self-worth, and get angry less often.
- Their capacity to care and be kind has increased, improving their relationships.
• They smile more!

• One person shared that their entire family was infected by the coronavirus, and received medical help and inspiration from a doctor practicing Raja Yoga meditation. The solace she provided helped the family understand that the world could be a better place, and brought them hope and peace.

To serve in this way requires creating a shift in consciousness from the physical to the spiritual. To see the strength and beauty in others, we must explore the same within ourselves. This allows us to act with compassion and empathy. Our dignity can be the antidote that rekindles and awakens our innate strength, resilience, and magnificence.

As the world looks for strategies to recover and restabilize, we must acknowledge spirituality’s role in restoring not just inner strength, happiness, and contentment, but economic stability. It is when we reignite spirituality that we can restore humankind’s well-being and dignity. Only then will supportive and nurturing relationships be fostered in our communities. Just as COVID-19 vaccines loosen the virus’s grip on humanity, this inside-out approach is the spiritual vaccine that will help eradicate poverty of the spirit, enabling all to flourish.