



# Economic and Social Council

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## Commission for Social Development

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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 the International Relations Students' Association of McGill 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## **Statement**

As young people, we will inherit the consequences of current decisions made by global leaders. These decisions will not impact us uniformly, as youth facing marginalization will have existing issues of exclusion compounded by COVID-19. Despite recent efforts to include youth in spaces of international governance and decision-making, youth facing marginalization on the basis of race, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability and class face continued exclusion from decisions that have a direct impact on their livelihoods.

As an entirely youth-led organization, the International Relations Students' Association of McGill University, calls upon governments to adopt an intersectional framework in the review of the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth. The adoption of this intersectional framework is essential to ensuring the needs of all youth are addressed in a socially just transition towards sustainable development. We highlight seven priority areas with limited progress for marginalized youth and provide corresponding calls to action.

### Tackling Gender Based Violence as a Priority Area

#### **Domestic Violence during COVID-19**

Domestic violence against women and girls has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic due to economic stress, increased exposure to exploitative relationships in lockdown, and state decisions to reduce funding for victim resources.

Therefore, we call upon the state and central governments to prioritize support for victims by continuing to fund shelters and helplines and increasing access to these services when feasible. This includes increasing affordable housing options, providing access to financial support for victims of domestic abuse, and creating awareness throughout local communities on support groups, therapy centres, and telephone call centres which can help prevent domestic violence and assist survivors after an attack.

### COVID-19 Economic Recovery as a Priority Area

#### **Young Women's Unemployment during COVID-19**

The Global Survey on Youth and COVID-19 has found that youth and women and young women have suffered deep disproportionate effects in terms of unemployment since the beginning of the pandemic. Women lost 5.4 million jobs throughout the global recession, nearly 1 million more than men. Additionally, women of colour have been disproportionately affected as Black, Hispanic and Asian people accounted for all job losses in December 2020 in the U.S. and 154,000 Black women entirely dropped out of the labour force.

To overcome these issues, we call on governments to ensure robust and efficient care infrastructures for women by expanding childcare assistance, increasing educational support programs and returnship programs for women to re-enter the workforce. Accessibility to training and education of young women is necessary for workplace integration and equal opportunity.

#### **Equal Participation in the Post-COVID Workforce**

According to McKinsey & Company, Women's workforce participation has decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic has also demonstrated the feasibility of virtual/hybrid workforce participation. With this

comes great opportunities for gender-equal participation and pay, since remote work can allow mothers to balance work and home life.

To capitalize on these opportunities, we call on governments and international organizations to invest in universal internet access, which is key to eradicating global poverty by 2030 and in ensuring women receive equitable career opportunities. Governments must ensure young women receive equal access to education and training in sectors that are likely to move more online, such as healthcare, customer service representation, financial services and more.

### **Women Led Climate Sustainable Farming Models**

As previously recognized in UN policy post-COVID, the pandemic has increased global food insecurity and resulted in disproportionate job losses for women. According to the UN Women's Report, evidence from women-led sustainable farming models has shown annual savings of 497 USD per family, a 25% increase in crop yield, and an improvement of 300 water sources in 50 villages. According to this same report, Niger is currently estimated to have a 17-million-dollar financial gain per year (enough to lift 25,000 Nigerians out of poverty) through implementing this program. This is a multilevel process that focuses on the employment and empowerment of women through enhancing food and income security. The four pillars of the program include reforms for women's greater access and control of land, training to improve female farmers' productivity, promoting women's access to financing, and women's upward mobility in the agricultural chain.

Thus, we also call upon both municipal and provincial governments to implement women-led climate sustainable farming models to keep the momentum of development and prioritize youth involvement in shaping the entrepreneurial skills, confidence, and sustainability of our future female leaders.

### Inclusive Health Systems as a Priority Area

#### **Binary Sex Essentialism in Health Data; Forgotten Trans\* Experiences**

According to Harvard's Research Collaboratives: compared to their cisgender counterparts, Trans\* and gender-diverse people face more structural and social barriers to accessing care, they are more likely to be homeless or suffer from substance abuse and partake in sex work because of a lack of alternative occupations. They similarly affirm that family rejection, threats of violence, and social ostracization make LGBTQ+ youth 120% more likely to end up homeless than their cisgender, heterosexual counterparts. Making visible the inequalities of health outcomes and the social, economic, and historical inequalities that drive these health disparities is the crucial first step toward an effective and sustainable COVID-19 response.

Therefore, we call upon non-governmental and governmental actors to collaborate and engage in gender-inclusive data collection. Collecting data on how Trans\* and gender-diverse people experience the pandemic, and how these experiences intersect with racial/ethnic health disparities, will provide the foundation for targeted public health interventions that mitigate the impact of the pandemic in these communities and in the nation at large.

#### **Psychological Effects of COVID-19**

According to a report by the International Labour Organization, half of mental health illnesses start by the age of 14 and explain that the disruption of work, education and isolation put youth particularly at risk in the present crisis. According

to a study published in *Frontiers in Global Women's Health*, the pandemic has disproportionately affected women's mental health.

To address this issue, we call upon governments to acknowledge mental health challenges and address them by creating digital spaces for women to express themselves. This could involve investing in creating increasing accessibility to services and awareness about the consequences of the pandemic on both genders.

Ultimately, we emphasize the need for sustainability to be at the forefront of all priority areas. The rapid and fatal consequences of the climate crisis and the pandemic are destroying the livelihoods of youth, where already vulnerable groups are the most adversely impacted. Moving forward, in carrying out the World Programme of Action for Youth, we call on governments to adopt an intersectional framework to strengthen the execution of all priority areas, especially as it relates to the climate crisis.

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