



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
6 November 2023

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-eighth session

11–22 March 2024

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by Legion of Good Will, 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

Contributing to the 2024 theme of the 68th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, we, from the Legion of Good Will (LGW), share our experience of over seven decades, developed by a network of nearly 100 units in seven countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay, Portugal, the United States, and Uruguay). In 2023 alone, these units provided collectively more than 10 million services and benefits for the population in situations of vulnerability and social risk.

The 2022 Global Multidimensional Poverty Index, published by the United Nations Development Programme, shows that 1.2 billion people in 111 developing countries are living in acute multidimensional poverty. The data gathered predate the COVID-19 pandemic and did not capture the economic shocks that followed, which always affect women more intensely. The report considers three dimensions of poverty: health (nutrition and child mortality), education (years of schooling and school attendance), and standard of living (cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing, and assets).

From the wide range of proposals that the Organization brings forward to combat poverty, we recommend that countries intensify public policies that promote harmonious coexistence and strengthening of family and community bonds among vulnerable adults. While these networks often provide a consolidated social protection network for children, adolescents, and the elderly, it is imperative to extend social assistance across all stages of life. As an example of good practice, we present the continuous and uninterrupted “Solidary Coexistence” service, which is aimed at adults aged 30 to 59 and is predominantly composed of women.

The social reality of the public served is characterized by a lack of access to income and public services, social isolation, experiences of violence and/or neglect, educational gaps, institutional care, victimization, or involvement in programs combating violence and sexual exploitation, homelessness, or vulnerabilities resulting from disabilities.

In this and other services offered to the most vulnerable population, we go beyond the provision of material benefits; we ensure means for our users to strengthen their autonomy and family and community bonds, to exercise their rights (to education, health, work, social security, participation in public life, etc.), and to achieve full citizenship.

To this end, we conduct activities, discussions, and group experiences with participants of similar age to expand their informational, artistic, and cultural horizons, to provide knowledge about the world of work and public policies, to encourage the exchange of experiences, and to cultivate new relationships of affection and solidarity. These spaces favor the deconstruction of stereotypes and the development of potentials for new life projects that equip and empower them.

With our own resources, mainly sourced from individual donations, we organize regular meetings in fully equipped and accessible environments, providing food, socio-educational materials, and multidisciplinary teams (formed, as needed, by social workers, psychologists, educators, and social educators, in addition to support teams).

Our socio-educational proposals, which address the various dimensions of poverty (according to the demands of local users), are planned in socio-educational routes, holding conversations and thematic discussions, as well as cultural, artistic, and leisure activities that promote interactions and the strengthening of bonds among the participants themselves and the professionals in the units.

Our social workers and psychologists monitor each group in this service, ensuring that the objectives set with users are being achieved. They conduct individualized and, when necessary, family consultations (either at our facilities or through home visits), scheduling regular meetings with all families and facilitating users' access to various public policies and other resources in each territory.

In 2023 alone, hundreds of thousands of people directly and indirectly benefited from our work in the areas of social assistance and education. Regarding the decisive role that women have played in all our action fronts and decision-making positions, our president, the radio broadcaster, journalist, and writer José de Paiva Netto, stated:

“Women have been the true backbone of all nations when integrated into God or the noblest ideals that a human being can aspire to: Supreme Goodness, Fraternal Love, Highest Justice, Real Fraternity – even without professing a religious tradition. ...

“Our compliments on the triumphs achieved by means of the global development goals proposed by the UN since 2000. However, we know that there is still a lot to be done for our fellow beings. Hence the importance of the topics discussed by member states, international delegations, authorities, and other participants in the meetings convened every year by the United Nations during the Commission on the Status of Women.

“This is an opportune moment to assess what has been successful and make even greater efforts to secure the improvements that still have to take place. We must aim for solutions, for example, in the fields of education and health, in the fight against poverty and violence, including the repulsive sexual exploitation of women, adolescents, and girls. We can never falter in the struggle for the cause of human dignity and the eradication of social and gender inequality in the world.

“It is unacceptable that, according to estimates from the World Health Organization (WHO), one in three women on the planet experiences some form of violence (physical and sexual), sometimes at the hands of their own partners.

“It is essential that we also make progress towards putting an end to the gender wage gap, ensuring a more equitable access to managerial positions in the labor market, and a more equal share of household chores between men and women. In short, we must always guarantee the principles of citizenship and human rights.

“By the way, believing that one can have rights without duties is doing the greatest harm to the cause of freedom. It is important to clarify that when I point to the duties of the citizen over his or her own rights, under no circumstances am I defending a distorted view of labor, in which slavery is one of its most abominable facets. For that reason, we want all human beings to be truly equal in rights and opportunities. Their social, intellectual, cultural, and religious merits, however highly praised and recognized, must not be distanced apart from the rights and freedoms of other citizens. Therefore, Freedom without Ecumenical Fraternity is condemnation to chaos.

“Let us work for a society in which God and His Laws of Love and Justice inspire zeal for individual freedom, to ensure political and legal security for all, as prompted by the comprehensive meaning of the Everlasting Christmas of the Christ of God. I refer to the Supreme Creator, not the erroneous understanding that seeks to make Him, who is Love, an execrable instrument of fanaticism and tyranny, prejudice, and hatred. Consequently, I do not allude to the anthropomorphic, caricatured god, created in the image and likeness of imperfect human beings. ...

“The French writer and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) beautifully expressed the importance of solidarity and dedication towards our fellow

beings when she said: ‘One’s life has value so long as one attributes value to the life of others, by means of love, friendship, indignation, and compassion.’

“The true virtues will be those constituted by the actions of people themselves – who are, above all, Spirit – in the honest occupation of their days, in managing their goods, and in respecting what belongs to others, in the beautiful and exciting adventure of life. A nation that is made up of such elements will always be strong and inviolable.

“I wish that in the 21st century we can consolidate these noble ideals and expand them to all peoples of the Earth so that they can be fully experienced. And let us never repeat the previous centuries in what they have failed.”
