



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
17 November 2021

English only

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## 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 [Casa Generalizia della Società del Sacro Cuore; Company of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul; Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd; Congregation of the Mission; Congregations of St. Joseph; Curia Generalizia Agostiniana; Dominican Leadership Conference; Edmund Rice International, LLC; Fondazione Proclade Internazionale-Onlus; Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary-Loreto Generalate; International Presentation Association; Loretto Community (Sisters of Loretto); Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers; Passionists International; Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary; Salesian Missions Inc.; School Sisters of Notre Dame; Sisters of Charity Federation; Sisters of Mercy of the Americas; Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur; Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries; UNANIMA International; 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

As members and partners of the Justice Coalition of Religious, we represent communities of Catholic Sisters, Brothers, priests, and partners in mission with a long-standing presence in some of the most impoverished communities across the globe. Our congregations have seen first-hand the way pre-existing poverty and hunger were inflamed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

While everyone suffered from the pandemic, our members witnessed—from Nepal to Cameroon to Australia to Guatemala to Zimbabwe to Spain to India to Canada—the usual layers of social discrimination pile additional burdens on:

- girls, who disproportionately lost access to education and were increasingly forced into child or early marriage under the pandemic's economic strain;
- women, who picked up additional work and care responsibilities, which they were often expected to perform simultaneously, and who were forced to remain in unhealthy domestic relationships to maintain housing;
- migrants and internally displaced persons, whose lack of local social safety nets and whose employment in informal labour or small-business ownership made them more vulnerable to loss of income and whose exclusion from many social protection schemes left them with little or no means to obtain essential resources;
- those experiencing homelessness or living in informal settlements in urban settings, where sharply rising commodity prices combined with the evaporation of daily wage-earning opportunities and no possibility of subsistence farming made hunger inevitable;
- persons with disabilities and immune deficiencies that prohibited them from continuing to work without excessive health risks

Low-income and migrant communities, especially those in nations and localities without universal social protection schemes, were among the most devastated by poverty and hunger. They were left completely cut off from essential resources and services the moment the pandemic forced the closure of many of their usual places of employment. Because low-income and migrant communities are also over-represented in the segment of the essential workforce that receive low wages and no paid sick leave, those who did not immediately lose their jobs shouldered a double burden of being the most exposed to COVID-19 and being forced to stop working and lose their income in the event of illness. This double-burdening exposed plainly the unsustainable, exploitative foundation of our global food system and other industries that continued to serve and minimize the COVID-19 exposure of wealthier communities at the expense of largely low-income and migrant communities.

Our congregations and partners undertook extensive efforts to respond to these circumstances of injustice we saw deepening all around us throughout the pandemic. Among these actions are:

- The Congregation of Jesus' initiatives in Bihar, India to provide prepared food and dry goods to those experiencing hunger in the community—primarily widows, older persons, and tribal communities—by offering their own resources, organizing members of the local community to share what they could, and enlisting the local government to distribute food items and rations through their public distribution system and by providing livelihood opportunities in farming, goat rearing, shop keeping, and tailoring to about 400 families

- The Missionary Sisters of the Holy Spirit's economic empowerment programmes in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia, which distribute vegetable seeds to farmer groups and yarn to weaving groups with the agreement that one share of the products be kept for their personal use and two shares be sold to provide starter seeds and yarn for the following group
- The Society of the Sacred Heart's support for the BaoBat intercultural association of immigrants in Portugalete, Spain, which has served migrants throughout the pandemic by distributing food to satisfy immediate hunger while guiding migrants through applications to the City Council for emergency aid and offering training and guidance to support their search for employment
- Comboni Missionaries' efforts in Gulu, Uganda to empower local farmers to be direct sellers of their produce in service of local food needs rather than losing profits to middlemen who direct local foodstuffs to distant consumers and international markets
- Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries' service to the Daya Dharma Institution in Jakarta, Indonesia through which they collaborated with several non-governmental organisations and individual donors to raise funds for food supplies, medicines and vitamins, personal protective equipment, and oxygen and with the Serviam Service Center to facilitate free vaccinations and medical checkups for older persons, persons with disabilities, and others in need

In these settings and beyond, our members have commended the efforts of government at various levels to respond to hunger and poverty through public distribution programmes for food, health, and hygiene supplies; moratoria on evictions; utilities subsidies; free COVID-19 testing and vaccination; and direct cash transfers and grants for the unemployed and employers straining to remain in business. Still, we note that, in practically all instances, these programmes fell short of reaching all the communities with the greatest needs, particularly those outside large urban centers and migrants with irregular status. Furthermore, given the centrality of the health of the natural environment to our capacity to ensure food security for all, we welcome the universalisation of the human right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment ([HRC Resolution 48/13](#)). We also decry the investment of USD 297 billion in new public financing commitments for fossil fuel-consuming and –producing activities by States in the Group of Twenty since the start of the pandemic. ([2021 Production Gap Report](#), UNEP et al)

Based on insights gained from life and service in communities struggling with poverty and hunger, we call on the Member States of the United Nations to undertake the following actions in recognition of the human dignity of the poor and hungry:

- Implement pandemic recovery aid programmes with an intersectional approach to resource allocation by distributing financial aid and social services in proportion to individuals' compounding layers of hardship emerging from marginalization on the basis of their gender identity, migratory status, ethnicity, language, and other locally relevant factors
- Undertake a process of recovery-monitoring consultations among the most remote and marginalized communities—including the input of women and girls, school-age children and youth, indigenous and tribal peoples, migrants of any status, persons with disabilities, gender and other minority groups, and leaders from non-governmental organizations already addressing the needs of these groups—to ensure State-led recovery measures are having an equitable impact and to enable procedural adjustments as needed

- Subsidize infrastructure for nation-wide phone and digital access to enable internet affordability and access for essential service provision in situations of crisis
- Direct public recovery funds to existing women's microfinance groups and banks, job training programmes providing locally demanded skill sets to women, and feeding programmes at all primary and secondary institutions
- Strengthen government oversight and transparency protocols and their enforcement to combat corruption and mismanagement of public funds
- Focus economic stimulus policies on supporting local economies; small-scale businesses; and employment of youth, women, and minority groups
- Implement national legislation guaranteeing to all essential workers a living wage and paid leave in the event of illness or injury incurred while working
- Establish government procurement procedures that protect small-scale farmers and facilitate governmental food purchases directly from local farmers
- Provide policy support for the establishment of small- to medium-scale factories in rural communities to enable local processing of, and value addition to, small-scale farmers' products
- Employ more trained social workers in State-sponsored social service delivery and provide scholarships to support their training
- Address homelessness and domestic violence through provision of quality supportive housing with holistic, trauma-informed care
- Establish national-level social protection programmes that guarantee universal basic income, housing, safe drinking water, nutritious food, healthcare, and education
- End fossil fuel subsidies in favor of a just, complete transition to renewable energy with all due haste
- Designate space in national and local Environmental Impact Assessment processes for meaningful input of subsistence farmers and indigenous and tribal peoples with historic ecosystem knowledge and stewardship roles in the ecosystem(s) under consideration
- Operationalize the human right to water and [HRC Resolution 48/13](#) through national legislation protecting air, water, and soil

In all the endeavors above, we offer our partnership, especially in gathering marginalised communities for inclusion in policy and programme decisions that will impact them to the greatest degree. Though the cost of just policies and procedures is great, it cannot compare to the human, environmental, and financial cost of inaction. As we undertake the business of recovery, we entreat our partners in governmental offices to stand with us in utter dissatisfaction with a return to 2019's poverty and hunger levels and in maintaining, undaunted, the brave ambitions of Agenda 2030: No poverty, no hunger, no exceptions.

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