



Contribution of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd

**“Protection of the Rights of the Child and
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”**

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*The submission can be posted on the website

1. This contribution is a submission by the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) with Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations since 1996 to bring to the UN the concerns of the most vulnerable people, especially women and girls. We are based in 73 countries around the world.

2. We submit information coming from some of the countries where the organization is present: Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Lebanon, Mexico, Myanmar, New Zealand, Paraguay, Taiwan, USA, and Venezuela.

In formulating our inputs we considered the following questions:

1. What key lessons learned from the experience of implementing the Millennium Development Goals should be taken into account to ensure that the rights of the child are protected in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

Targeting girl children in cultures that discriminate girls. Education of children, skill development to most affected girls.

Family strengthening programs, targeting children in situations of high risk or vulnerability and ensuring access to basic services such as day care, healthcare, adequate nutrition and housing. Make it a flexible and inclusive approach, englobing the whole family, especially the mothers. Avoiding maternal mortality through access to basic medical care.

Take action to end all forms of violence against children in public and private spheres, including all forms of trafficking, and other types of exploitation and eliminate nefast social practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilations.

2. What approaches to implementing the 2030 Agenda would ensure the protection of the rights of all children, and that no child is left behind? Please define your response in relation to the following areas:

a) Equality and non-discrimination

Sustainable development will be achieved only when needs and rights of all people, and most notably of children, are fulfilled in a qualitative manner. It is urgent to place priorities to end gender inequality with good public policies that exceed the assistance and paternalism. These should promote the values of participation, recognition, responsibility and enforceability of children's rights, empowering and providing them with opportunities to express their opinion. Children should not be considered just as passive subjects, but as agents of change.

Children living in rural areas and indigenous peoples still have to travel long distances to access good medical treatment, drinking water or better education, etc. Indigenous children experience significant inequality and discrimination resulting from inter-generational trauma created by colonisation and successive waves of government policy failure.

For example in Australia, Indigenous children's health outcomes are grossly unequal compared to non-Indigenous children: injury hospitalisation rate is 30% higher, pneumonia hospitalisation rate for 0–4 years is more than 3 times higher, and the mortality rate is more than double. The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* states that governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily, and that Indigenous children enjoy the same standards of nutrition, healthcare, education, and social services as non-Indigenous children. The gross inequalities affecting Indigenous children require major systemic changes in multiple sectors and at multiple levels of policy design.

Public policies have to bring to an end some cultural practices in some countries, such as domestic work for children, especially girls. For example children are given to wealthier families and they are usually exploited or live in situations of abuse and ill-treatment (there are many cases in Paraguay). Every child has to be respected irrespectively of the caste, class, religion, gender and age.

In order to enhance capacity building for children and young people as well as sensitise them to cultural change, they need an adjusted and comprehensive training.

To integrate children in volunteer programs so they acquire values such as solidarity and support to the most vulnerables, etc.

An education based on techniques of 'popular education', school reintegration campaigns, socialization and approach with children in a street situation. Ensure training on universal values through art and drama, which promote a culture of peace and well-being. Create violence-free spaces where mothers, relatives, children and social workers cooperate, with the objective to identify and serve victims of any type of violence.

In many countries early marriage for girls under 16 years old continues. With the involvement of dowry, early marriage has become a real 'business', and in many cases, marriage becomes a relief to the family who has one less mouth to feed while getting in more income at the same time. Early and child marriage is a human rights issue and a form of gender-based violence that discriminates against girls. It is a global problem evident in 'developed' as well as 'developing' countries, often, but not always, involving trafficking. Child marriage brings with it sexual abuse, deliberate isolation, and other forms of family violence.

b) Investing in children

Investing in children's development will break the traditional social exclusion suffered by the children at large. The investment in children will provide adequate standards of living but also help to use their full potential for a better society and nation. Investing in children's early education is a preventive measure. The efforts should be concentrated on children and the family in order to avoid social exclusion.

Free primary education is not a reality in all countries; some governments have been unwilling to create additional schools and primary education has become highly privatized, with teachers being underpaid.

To allow resources for social assistance of children at risk or in vulnerable situations such as poverty, drug addiction, alcoholism, human trafficking, violence, abandonment and migration. There are some initiatives from private sector or civil society actors to tackle these situations but there is no political will to help them improve public services.

Invest in education and nutrition of vulnerable children to prevent adult poverty.

c) Partnerships for implementation

Implementing targeted actions in public policies leading to a culture of peace in which equality between women, men and especially children prevails, and where human dignity is preserved regardless of race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, religion.

To enhance the collaboration between State institutions and civil society within the framework of the 2030 agenda in order to reach more auspicious results for children in early childhood. Partnerships need to promote strong institutions, working on behalf of children living in poverty through self-help groups, Children's parliament and tribal federation. These should work to improve child development through strengthening the family's livelihood, education, health and nutrition.

Partnerships for implementation should play the role of facilitators between institutions and community networks in remote and fragile regions which are subject to exploitation, trafficking and discrimination. This would enable them to start their journey towards sustainable development.

To create good policies at national level to address issues such as: lack of school support, family violence, poor care in rural areas and social inequality. Enhance supports for families living in poverty.

It is important to provide quality education: improving educational infrastructure and roads in rural areas, motivating teachers and developing regional plans with a gender and intercultural focus.

Healthcare systems should include provisions for rural specialized medical personnel and equipped centers.

State's requirements regarding institutions working with children have to be flexible; heavy requirements may restrain the creation of private infrastructures, and Governments may not provide the necessary and sufficient resources to fulfill them.

Empowering women so they become a player in social change, taking assertive decisions. Facilitate the formation of neighboring networks of support preventing violence against children and tackling insecurity.

d) Accountability and monitoring

Enhancing the existing legislation safeguarding the rights of children and adolescents must be considered as a priority by the Government and by society.

Civil society organizations should prioritize monitoring as a means to exert social control on Government actions and against those who violate the rights of children.

Approaches have to be developed to assess the material and psychological needs of children and applied accordingly. Create groups of watchdogs on the violation of the rights of children, who report to the authorities and to the public.

The State should adopt a life cycle approach "to define the five strategic axes to grow - child nutrition, child development, and development integrated childhood and adolescence, economic inclusion and protection of the elderly." It is important to take into account the safety of the family environment in order to prevent violence, breach of rights and exploitation within the child's social environment.

To remedy to the lack of preparation of various national institution's staff working in the field of human rights of and those who collaborate with them. This would avoid the weakening the monitoring, protection and accountability system.

There is a very low motivation in some countries to apply the International Convention on Rights of the Child.

e) Other relevant considerations

Ignorance and cultural isolation favorise child human trafficking in many countries. An intense and preventive approach is needed especially for girls in remote areas.

When we focus on child's rights and duties we need to consider other factors such as livelihood of the whole family, road and transport facilities, and gender equality. Social media may play a positive role in collecting data, especially in rural and most remote regions.

To offer families counselling services which enable them to address potential child abuse, neglect and trauma, and to provide concrete services to them which facilitate their ability to safely and appropriately raise their children.

Our NGO in the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** offers the State a structure that models effective Child Protection in a holistic/integrated way. This targets and involves the child, the family, the community on one hand, and the government, religious and private developers or entrepreneurs on the other; these are all key players in ensuring sustainable child protection. We propose this model to the local government that we partner with, who approved the model but has not adopted it yet, due to the amount of commitment it requires. If this was

operational in each province, the appalling rates of child abuse in the country could be improved significantly.

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, the lack of mechanisms for early birth registration remains a great challenge. Late registrations are very expensive and subject to lengthy legal and administrative proceedings.

Our NGO **in Lebanon** believes that education is a key element in bringing about hope and positive change, offering a way out of poverty, retrieving the dignity, social justice and peace, much needed in our society. This is achieved through quality unbiased education for marginalized children, especially those who have suffered from violence, discrimination, abuse, and poverty.

We have holistic programs of life-skills trainings, psychological and social support, shelter, education, health services, in the following locations: a women and children's shelter at Ain Saade, a girls' residential centre at Sehaile, a community Health Center at Roueisset, a school at Hammana, and family support centres at Deir al Ahmar, and Roueisset Jdeideh (These locations are spread between Mount Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley).

The beneficiaries are predominantly Lebanese, and more recently have included Iraqi and Syrian refugees as well as Egyptians and other nationalities.

Through our educational and social programs, we promote reconciliation by establishing a climate of tolerance and mutual respect among students. Through inter-academic and extracurricular activities such as drama-therapy, we work on healing the very deep wounds and memories that the war has inflicted on communities, and support the endeavors to improve social cohesion.

Conferences and meetings for parents: many psycho-social subjects are discussed, with topics revolving around children's rights, needs, and feelings as well as how to communicate with children, stop aggression and violence, deal with stress, sexuality, health, anger management, etc.