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peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, 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

Psychological contributions to the fulfillment of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

The non-governmental organization co-sponsors of this statement welcome the opportunity to join the commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Reviews of the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action indicate that achievements have been made in adopting laws to promote gender equality, increasing the education of girls, and enhancing women's political and economic participation. However, progress has been very slow and uneven, and significant inequalities between women and men and among diverse women and girls persist.

This statement contributes psychological perspectives on five challenges which inhibit structural gender equality at all levels of society:

1. promoting gender equality at the intersection of diverse women's and girls' experiences
2. consistently promoting and implementing human rights standards against gender inequality and discrimination
3. eliminating multidimensional violence against women and girls
4. increasing the empowerment and resilience of women and girls
5. monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action's effectiveness on promoting gender equality.

Recommendations

Promote gender equality at the intersection of diverse women's and girls' experiences

Gender discrimination at the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination presents threats to the enjoyment of human rights by different identity subgroups of women and girls. Racial/ethnic, indigenous, rural, disabled, less educated, sexual minority, migrant/refugee women and girls, and older women experience inequality in education, training, employment, physical and mental health care, and social, economic and political participation. These inequalities affect the survival, safety, development, and psychosocial well-being of women and girls, with multigenerational and intergenerational psychosocial consequences that contribute to the persistence of poverty.

Therefore, we recommend that Member States, United Nations agencies, civil society and humanitarian groups:

- Always assess how the diversity among women and girls, especially the most vulnerable, affects their development in each critical area of concern of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- Use diversity analysis to determine the unique vulnerabilities of women and girls associated with the intersections of their social identities and experiences.
- Mainstream the diversity of women and girls in all public policies and programs to enhance progress in gender equality.

- Review and replace laws, policies, programs, and practices at all levels of society that discriminate against women and girls based on diversities among them.

Consistently promote and implement human rights standards against gender inequality and discrimination

Put human rights, including gender equality, at the center of national development. Discrimination against women and girls is psychologically damaging, lowers their self-efficacy, and degrades their physical and mental health. These effects compound and have multigenerational and intergenerational psychosocial consequences that contribute to the persistence of poverty in families and communities.

Therefore, we recommend that Member States, United Nations agencies, civil society, and humanitarian groups:

- Develop laws, policies, programs, and practices at all levels of society that promote gender equality among women and girls and men and boys.
- Eliminate educational, social, economic, and health disparities that violate the human rights of women and girls to survival, protection, development, and social participation.
- Provide public education to eliminate stereotypes and discrimination against women and girls, as barriers to their social integration within society.
- Provide ongoing human rights learning for all members of society, especially rural women and girls living in poverty.
- Reduce gender stereotyping of work by educating men and boys and women and girls that caring for children, the elderly, and the sick is family work to be shared by all.
- Develop community support services for child and elder care through local government agencies, service organizations, and faith-based organizations.
- Ensure that all services and interventions are implemented according to ethical principles and with respect for the human rights and dignity of all individuals, including women and girls.

Eliminate the pandemic of multidimensional violence against women and girls

Violence against women and girls persists worldwide and includes domestic violence, rape, forced sexual and labor exploitation in trafficking, genital mutilation/cutting, and sexual harassment in work settings (The World Health Organization, 2012). Intersecting forms of discrimination exacerbate the violence women and girls experience (Manjoo, 2012).

Violence originates in structural and institutional inequalities between girls and boys and women and men. It is perpetuated through gender norms, stereotypes, and discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. Gender-based violence has cumulative effects that increase the risk of subsequent violence and restrict girls' and women's survival, physical and mental health, development, and participation (White and Frabutt, 2005; von Lanel, & Koenen, 2019). Intersections of gender with other categories of social experience need to be explicitly considered to ensure that violence against women and girls with multiple discriminations is effectively addressed.

Therefore, we recommend that Member States, United Nations agencies, civil society, and humanitarian groups:

- Establish laws against all forms of violence against women and girls and institutionalize processes for apprehending and penalizing violators of these laws.
- Educate society about gender-based violence, including their social, cultural, and psychological causes and consequences at all levels of education.
- Provide training for health, social service, and law enforcement personnel on observance of human rights law against discrimination against women and girls, racial discrimination, and the rights of the children.
- Provide human resources, policies, services, and facilities to promote the mental health and psychosocial recovery and well-being of women and girls who have experienced violence, including services by qualified psychologists or other trained mental health providers, so that they are less vulnerable and better equipped to cope with future violence.
- Establish programs to mobilize men and boys as partners in the elimination of violence against women and girls.
- Promote access to best practices and effective responses by psychologists and mental health workers by facilitating global communication through cell phones and other technologies.

Increase the empowerment and resilience of women and girls

Empowerment is a process by which disenfranchised persons gain access and control over resources that improve their life circumstances (World Health Organization, 2010). Psychological empowerment occurs when people are enabled to participate in and control decisions affecting their life choices (Zimmerman, 2000). Psychological and other social science research generally recognize that empowerment is essential to individual and societal progress and sustainability. Effective empowerment efforts targeting women and girls must be culturally and demographically congruent with their diverse identities and communities.

Women and girls play a critical role in family food security and survival. Enhancing their resilience provides a psychological buffer helpful to avoiding and recovering from adversity.

Therefore, we recommend that all Member States, United Nations Agencies, civil society, and humanitarian groups:

- Educate women and girls about their human rights, strengths, skills, and resources that foster psychosocial resilience as a protective factor.
- Provide access to social participation, productive employment, and decent work, which promotes psychosocial empowerment and personal efficacy.
- Increase and strengthen opportunities for training about entrepreneurship, income generating activities, life skills, and a psychological sense of control.
- Provide and strengthen access to quality primary, secondary, and higher education for girls and women of all ages, as important pathways to psychosocial empowerment, decent work, and the alleviation of poverty.
- Provide opportunities for expanding and strengthening capacity-building community networks through which women and girls can share and use information about development opportunities and build collective psychosocial empowerment.
- Reduce the physical and mental burden of paid and unpaid work by women and girls, including those in rural areas, by enhancing access to tools and

technologies (e.g., solar ovens, pump wells, electricity, indoor plumbing, cell phones, and the Internet).

- Provide access to quality and accessible social services. For example, use mobile vans to provide one-stop services to physical and mental health care, literacy and continuing education, and entrepreneurial training.
- Collect systematic information and data to evaluate the effectiveness of approaches to achieving progress on each of the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action so databases are available to assess the effectiveness of the diversity of girl- and women-oriented programs.

Co-signers:

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