



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
5 December 2021

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-sixth session

14–25 March 2022

**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 World Youth Alliance, 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

The World Youth Alliance is a global coalition of young people dedicated to the promotion and protection of human dignity and the upholding of human rights. We are committed to respecting the dignity of the person and fostering a culture in which men and women live in genuine freedom and solidarity. Gender equality enables all persons to have equal access to education, healthcare, and advancement opportunities, and to have the ability to contribute to their respective communities and the environment.

Human persons are diverse, yet we all share an inherent equalizer: human dignity. The intrinsic dignity possessed by all human beings establishes the basis for human rights. The acknowledgement of this foundation and human worth prompts the creation of just policies and laws in which the dignity of the person is sustained by the respective governing institutions.

In the aftermath of natural disasters and crises related to climate change, the World Youth Alliance recognizes that women and girls are often displaced from work and school settings at a disproportionately higher rate than their male counterparts in order to care for their homes and obtain basic provisions. The earthquake and tropical storm in Haiti this past August demonstrate the challenges presented by natural disasters, especially when further exacerbated by social and political unrest. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, women in Haiti are at a particular disadvantage following the natural disaster due to heightened risk of gender-based violence as well as inadequate access to water, shelter, and food.

The lasting impact of environmental disasters inevitably threatens society and has the potential to upend progress towards other objectives such as poverty eradication and reduced unemployment. The effect of this is felt most strongly by women. Without establishing effective relief plans and disaster mitigation proposals, as well as investing in building individual and communal resilience, women and girls will be left behind. Gender disparities will increase the education gap between girls and boys and negatively impact the livelihood and economic security of future generations.

In order to build societies and empower women and girls that are prepared to face disasters and the effects of climate change, we need an integral approach to sustainable development. This approach must consider all aspects of the human person: the physical, spiritual, mental, and emotional considerations, with special attention to the particular vulnerabilities that women face. The unprecedented nature of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic has prompted states to create or revise their emergency management policies and disaster response programs, and the question always remains: where do women and girls fit in?

Women and girls have much to say and contribute and are able to do so more effectively when they are equal participants in education. In order to empower all children to leave a positive mark on the world, the World Youth Alliance offers the Human Dignity Curriculum, as a complement to standard instruction at schools. The Human Dignity Curriculum, for boys and girls ages 4 to 18, instils children with a context for personal identity and worldview. It is rooted in understanding our human dignity allows us to act in ways that respect and affirm it and that our freedom is an expression of acting in conformity with our human dignity.

The Human Dignity Curriculum inspires long-term goals, leads to excellent and healthy decision-making, and emphasizes that “action” follows “being.” Students cover topics such as human dignity, the hierarchy of living beings, intentional actions,

persons as subjects vs. objects, friendship and heroes, human freedom, and human excellence. They learn about racism, slavery, human rights, modern challenges and are introduced to different heroes who fought against historical human rights abuses. The Human Dignity Curriculum teaches children to use their freedom and creativity to initiate positive change in their own lives and in their communities.

An education that promotes mutual respect for one another's dignity simultaneously endorses responsible stewardship of our shared space. Our dependence on Earth's resources is similar to the reliance we have on one another to flourish. In other words, it is impossible to face the effects of climate change and natural disasters without awareness of common human goals and mutual respect for one another centered in human dignity. In addition to fostering solidarity in caring for our common home, the Human Dignity Curriculum and similar dignity education nurtures intergenerational solidarity to create communities that are capable of sustaining current and future generations.

Another important component of the Human Dignity Curriculum that empowers girls and boys to make healthy decisions is World Youth Alliance's sexuality education extension. It teaches age-appropriate, culturally sensitive, and biologically accurate information about reproductive health. It provides valuable instruction on the menstrual cycle and women's medical management care, and it encourages overall health through knowledge of the body. The curriculum features concepts such as self-understanding, respect for human dignity, and respecting the dignity of others while making informed decisions based on personal circumstances.

The World Youth Alliance unites with the international community in engaging in thoughtful discussions and efforts to achieve gender equality, and it does so through the lens of human dignity. As countries evaluate the gender gaps in their educational, social, economic, medical, and emergency programs, it is important to also recognize the dignity of women's unseen work at home – ranging from health support and childcare to cleaning and food preparation – which does not rise to the level of GDP yet is invaluable to local and family success, including educational attainment, family security, and health outcomes for all.

The World Youth Alliance believes that humanity, armed with creativity and individual awareness, is the world's greatest resource, prompting innovation and resilience. The pandemic prompted a breakthrough in organized international responses, including scientific and technological breakthroughs, that required wide-scale collaboration among scientists, medical professionals, educators, and legislators, many of these critical actors being women.

In order for transformative change to take effect, we call on all Member States to gather in solidarity to address disparities in gender equality and to empower women and girls. An important way this can be accomplished is by embracing holistic solutions like the Human Dignity Curriculum or other person-centered education programs, which impart girls with the confidence to lead as changemakers in their communities. Ultimately, this is a way to invest in humans, which are the most precious and resilient capital we have when facing climate change and natural disasters.