



The UN & You

BY DR. JIMMY WALTERS – SEPTEMBER 2023

From the NGO Desk

Earlier this month, my wife, Suzie, and I dropped off our girls, Shea (second grade) and Lily (nursery), for their first day of school. We packed their new backpacks, took photos at the ungodly hour of 6 a.m., and held in the tears as they turned away from us and into the care of loving and skilled teachers.

As I drove home, I couldn't ignore the reality that there were so many other children in our world who will never receive an education like my children. I continue to learn and accept my responsibility, not just to my girls, but to all our brothers and sisters, especially children, who are underserved and under-represented.

As you can probably imagine, the global data on education for children, especially girls, is troubling.

According to a [2022 report](#) from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), it will take at least another 54 years to reach universal primary school completion for girls. This report also shares the negative impact of discrimination based on race, ethnicity, religion, migratory status, and disabilities.

Pandemic-related disruptions to education have further deepened inequalities in learning for girls and young women. Worldwide, nearly 130 million girls are not enrolled in formal education, and more than half of them are in crisis-affected countries. [UNICEF reports](#) that of the 130 million, 32 million are of primary school age, 30 million are of lower-secondary school age, and 67 million are of upper-secondary school age.

In countries affected by conflict, girls are more than twice as likely to be out of school than girls living in non-affected countries. One example is



An image of the UN General Assembly this week (Associated Press photo)

in Afghanistan as girls are no longer even allowed to attend secondary school and higher learning.

As is often the case, justice issues often intersect. For example:

- Girls who have no education are three times as likely to marry by age 18.
- 80 percent of people displaced by climate emergencies are female.
- 60 million girls are sexually assaulted on their way to or at school every year.

So where do we go from here?

The path forward requires creating gender-equitable education systems for all. Our shared charism, history, and current ministries within the Sisters of Charity Federation is consistent with this focus. Many of you reading this spent many years of your lives working toward this goal.

Gender-equitable education systems offer many benefits:

- Systems that empower girls and boys and promote the development of life skills – like self-management, communication, and critical thinking – are what young people need to succeed.
- They close skills gaps that perpetuate pay gaps

and build prosperity for entire countries.

- They can contribute to reductions in school-related gender-based violence and harmful practices, including [child marriage](#) and [female genital mutilation](#).

Earlier this year, the Office of the High Commissioner of the UN Human Rights Department issued a [statement](#) calling upon all member states to take concrete steps to rectify gender and other disparities that prevent the enjoyment of the fundamental right to education for all. As the UN General Assembly meets this month and attempt to get the 2030 goals on track, the Sustainable Development Goals of education and gender equality will be a focus for member states.

We will continue to advocate for gender equity in education at the United Nations, especially related to our work on the NGO Commission for Social Development (CSocD) committee, the Climate Working Group, Migration Committee, NGO Committee to Stop Trafficking, and all the preparation for the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 68) next March that will focus on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.

May we all continue to respond to that Vincentian question, “What must be done?” by meeting those in need on our local level, and to fearlessly urge and demand that political leaders fulfill their promise to provide quality educational systems for all, especially girls.

Homelessness at the UN

During this month’s General Assembly, the Secretary General will present the first ever [report on homelessness](#). This is a monumental moment on the global stage as homelessness gains the critical attention that it deserves.

This report highlights the progress made and the challenges that remain to achieve a future in which every person experiences the dignity and human right of a safe habitable, affordable, secure home achieved through social protection, sensitive policies and programs to end homelessness.

In response to this report, the [NGO Working Group to End Homelessness](#), in which we are an active member, produced [this statement](#) to highlight the strengths of the report while raising awareness to its shortcomings. For example, under the categorization of homelessness, the following cohorts are not mentioned:

- Female-headed households
- Children
- People who identify as LGBTQIA+
- People who live with mental or physical disabilities
- Children leaving foster care
- People leaving institutions like hospitals and the carceral systems.

It will be the work of this committee to continue to educate political leaders, local and global, of the many forms of homelessness and to work together to find solutions.

On Oct. 5, we are co-sponsoring a signature side event at the United Nations titled, “A Future We Want: A Home For All.” This will be a virtual and in-person event discussion to bring into focus the complexities of homelessness. Please join us (see flyer at the conclusion of this newsletter).

Justice Circle & Homelessness

The new Justice Circle (all are welcome) connecting the local and the global dedicated two recent meetings to the timely topic of homelessness. The first discussion reviewed how homelessness is being addressed at the UN, with a special focus on assessing how governments collect data. The most recent discussion was an opportunity to hear about the ministries and efforts serving those with insecure housing from sisters and associates in Cincinnati, Ohio; Washington, DC; Durham, North Carolina; and New Orleans, Louisiana.

Future meetings will explore other justice topics. All sisters and associates are invited. If interested, please contact Mackenzie Doyle, justice coordinator for the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati, at mackenzie.doyle@srcharitycinti.org.

UN at Vincentian Family North American Gathering

At the upcoming gathering in Chicago, Illinois, we will present on our collaborative efforts at the UN. Along with Lydia Stazen, executive director of the Ruff Institute of Global Homelessness at DePaul University, we will speak to our advocacy work. I will share specifically about how I represent the Sisters of Charity Federation and advocate for human rights, especially related to homelessness, climate change, rights of women and girls, finance for development, among many other areas.

There is still time to [register](#). Please consider joining us in a few weeks.





**NGO WORKING
GROUP TO END
HOMELESSNESS**



**SDG SUMMIT
2023**



A FUTURE WE WANT: A HOME FOR ALL

JOIN US FOR A DISCUSSION WITH PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS,
CIVIL SOCIETY REPRESENTATIVES, MEMBER STATES, AND OTHER EXPERTS
AS WE IDENTIFY THE PROGRESS THAT HAS BEEN MADE AND THE
CHALLENGES THAT REMAIN AS THE UN BRINGS INTO FOCUS THE COMPLEX
ISSUE OF HOMELESSNESS.

*Moving towards a future in which every person experiences the dignity and human right of a safe, habitable, affordable, and secure home requires solidarity and collaboration from all society. Following the 2022 General Assembly Resolution 76/133 and the first-ever Secretary General's report on Homelessness A/78/236, **join us in accelerating the progress on SDG11!***

OCTOBER 5TH, 2023

10 AM to 11:30 AM

Eastern Time (US & Canada)

***Everyone MUST register*
(In-Person & Virtual)**

CHURCH CENTER
777 UN Plaza, New York

Refreshments will be served

**Register
Here!**



SPEAKERS:

**H.E. AMBASSADOR
KRZYSZTOF
SZCZERSKI**

*Permanent Representative of
the Mission of the Republic of
Poland to the United Nations*

**DORIS
AGYAPOMAA**

*Lived
Experiences of
Homelessness,
Ghana*

**MILDRED
MORALES**

*Lived
Experiences of
Homelessness,
Guatemala*

**NATALIE
MONTEZA**

*13 Houses Campaign
Coordinator,
Famvin Homeless
Alliance (FHA)*

**FRANCESCA
LIONETTI**

*Associate Expert
Housing Rights,
Diversity and Inclusion,
UN Habitat Human
Settlements Program*

**LEILANI
FARHA**

*Global Director,
The Shift,
Former UN Special
Rapporteur on the
Right to Housing*

**MODERATOR: MARYANN DANTUONO, JD, INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHARITIES, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF
WORKING GROUP TO END HOMELESSNESS**

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