



Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary

NGO with special consultative status in the **Economic and Social Council** of the United Nations since **2013** and with the **Department of Public Information** since **2006**.

News from the UN # 105

RSHM at the UN

October 2019

Introduction

For two weeks during the month of October each year, the **Third Committee of the General Assembly** which is tasked with the area of Social Development, focuses its work on **Human Rights**. Independent experts appointed to serve as **Special Rapporteurs** on specific issues or **special representatives of the Secretary General**, are normally based in Geneva. But they come to the UN HQ in New York in October to present their reports for debate and action. These thematic and topical reports often serve as the basis for the resolutions which are drawn up and voted on in the 3rd Committee before being passed on to the **Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** and the **General Assembly**. These sessions provide us with a very important opportunity for dialogue and advocacy relating to the promotion of human rights globally.

Privatization and the Right to Water



The human right to water, so closely related to the right to life, is recognized and acknowledged in Agenda 2030 and SDG 6 and highlighted in Laudato Si (#30). Its inclusion was influenced by the strong engagement and advocacy of faith-based NGOs during

2014/2015. On October 21st, **Veronica RSHM** attended a consultation held with the **Special Rapporteur on the Right to Water, Mr. Leo Heller**, which was organized by **Franciscans International**. Over the last three decades, many countries have privatized the provision of water. The consultation in New York formed part of a global hearing to gather evidence from around the world on the risks and consequences of privatization of water services. When Governments hand over the provision of water to private companies they risk reneging on their human rights obligations, since companies are driven by a profit motive. *What can be done to minimize these risks and safeguard the rights of those who are most vulnerable and at risk of being left behind?* Results of the global consultation will serve as the basis of the report to be submitted by the Special Rapporteur next year.

➔ Watch the [short video](#)



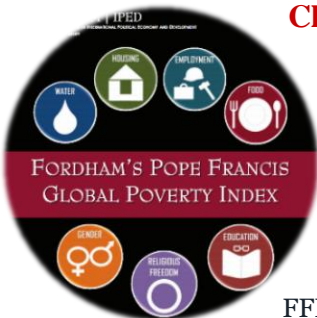
Ending Homelessness.

For more than a year the **NGO Working Group to end Homelessness** has been advocating for the issue of Homelessness to be addressed by the UN, something which has never happened in the 75 years of the United Nations. Now it has been selected as the priority theme for the **Commission on Social Development** to be held in **February 2020**. On October 17th, UNANIMA held a “Symposium on Women and Children/Girls Experiencing Homelessness/Displacement”. The **Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing as a Component of the right to an Adequate Standard of Living** participated, as did member state representatives and many Civil society organizations. Most importantly, participants



heard the voices of those who have been faced with Homelessness. Marginalized communities, **including women and children**, are especially vulnerable to Homelessness. **SDGs 1, 5, 11** and others require the eradication of Homelessness to truly meet their goals. This will require not only intense structural changes but also addressing global ideologies and discrimination toward those experiencing homelessness. ➔ Watch the [short video...](#)

Climate Change and Breadbasket Failures; The Pope Francis Poverty Index



Poverty is closely associated with lack of access to water resources, food, housing, employment and education as well as gender. **Fordham University** has recently put together a new Index which explores its correlation to another relevant factor; religious freedom. After asking the question “Do our current metrics identify the most marginalized?” and deciding they did not, Fordham created the **Pope Francis Global Poverty Index (The FFI)** which is based on Pope Francis’ 2015 address to the United Nations General Assembly. In that address Pope Francis outlined four basic human needs essential for minimal material well-being, namely water, food, housing, and employment. He also identified education, religious freedom, and gender equity as spiritual well-being indicators. The

FFI focuses on recognizing the deepest forms of poverty, building on research from a number of other studies and finding new correlations with certain indicators. For example, looking at the statistics on *the percentage of women who agree that a husband/partner is justified in beating his wife/partner under certain circumstances* as an indicator of the state of gender equality in surveyed nations. As noted, “[a] climate of violence against women can clearly marginalize and exclude women from their rights to life, dignity, and development”. ➔ [Read more...](#)

To enable these real men and women to escape from extreme poverty, we must allow them to be dignified agents of their own destiny. Pope Francis, Address to the UN 25 September 2015

Did you know that:

- In 2016 approximately **60% of the world's population** lived in countries that severely restrict religious freedom.
- According to the **WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme**, **Zambia** is the **fourth most deprived nation in the world** with respect to access to an improved **drinking water** source (60% of the population).
- **46.6% of the Zimbabwean population** are estimated to be undernourished
- **9 out of the 10 nations** with the lowest rates of adult literacy are in Africa.
- It is estimated that **1.95 billion people or 26.3% of the world's population lack adequate housing.**

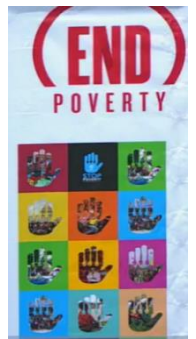
Human Rights Defenders

An event hosted by the **UN Secretary General for Human Rights** was held on the 15th of October discussing intimidation and reprisals for cooperation with the UN, and examining trends from 2016 to 2019. During the event panelists, including the **UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders** and the **UN Representative & Head of NY Office Amnesty International**, spoke of the worsening of reprisals by states toward individuals and Civil Society. There were also Human Rights defenders from around the world testifying to their experiences with reprisals and intimidation in their work. A special emphasis was placed on women human rights defenders as a special case for consideration, especially when it comes to providing protections. Both **OHCHR and Amnesty International** have put out reports to this effect. ➡ [Read more.....](#) ➡ [Watch the video....](#)



#EndPovertyNow

ATD 4th World hosted an important event at the UN for the **International Day for the Eradication of Poverty**. The theme was “*Acting Together to Empower Children, their Families and Communities to End Poverty*” in view of this year being the 30th anniversary of the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**. The Convention “*recognizes the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development*”. Activists, Member states, Civil Society representatives, artists, and most importantly, children all came together to mark the occasion(s) with testimonials, song, and dance. The overarching message was simple: children are entitled to be able to enjoy their basic rights, rights which are negated by poverty. Only in valuing each others' strengths, and including children in conversations which concern their future and therefore the future of the world, can we eradicate poverty. ➡ [Read more.....](#)



RSHM News Briefs



The **Synod of Bishops for the Amazon** took place in **Rome from 6th – 27th October**, focusing on the theme of “integral ecology”, protecting the rights of indigenous peoples of the region, and of the environment. In addition to addressing the religious and spiritual needs of the people, it touched on issues related to the economy, migration and human trafficking. Sr. Maria Aparecida (Paré) Moreira RSHM from Brazil was a member of the Commission that organized and prepared the “**Tenda Amazonia Casa Comun**” which hosted a series of parallel events, prayer and action near the Vatican and Srs Mary Genino and Joanne Safian from the US, volunteered in the “**Tent.**” ➡ [Watch the Video](#)

On October 6th, **Veronica RSHM** joined a **Franciscan International** representative from Geneva and a **Vivat International** representative in Indonesia on an online “Zoom” panel organized by VIVAT as part of the parallel events held at the “Tent”. The focus of the panel was the role of Religious in Advocacy relating to Indigenous Peoples and Care of our Common Home. We were honored to be able to share some thoughts and experiences.



On October 25th we were happy to welcome to the UN, **Dr. Janine DeWitt** and 3 faculty members from **Marymount University (MU) in Arlington, Virginia**, together with students from her class on “**Unity Through Diversity**” which forms part of the Discover program. The course is designed to introduce students at MU to

the heritage of the RSHM as the founding community. After a tour of the UN, we held a two-hour session with them in the Church Center at the UN. **Srs Kathleen Kanet and Virginia Dorgan RSHM** shared their ministry experience, including **Network for Peace through dialogue** and **Veronica RSHM** shared on the NGO Ministry at the UN with a focus on how these ministries express the RSHM heritage of promoting unity through diversity so that all may have life.



Distribution:

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