



COVID 19 and Inequality



COVID 19 has served as the great ‘revealer’, making ever more visible the glaring inequalities that fracture our world and our societies. The **RSHM JPIC/NGO priority** identified in our **RSHM 2019 General Chapter** statement, includes the commitment to “*working to change unjust structures, involving others in advocacy at all levels, addressing issues of global inequality, migration and care of the Earth*”. During the month of October, we have struggled with the unique challenge of engaging in virtual advocacy during the pandemic. We have joined others virtually in writing, and signing on to many statements and declarations that propose concrete actions to address the structural inequalities that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. The calls include,

among others, a call for debt forgiveness for heavily burdened low-income countries, an urgent interfaith call to protect Biodiversity, strong support for the priority of a global vaccine initiative giving access to all peoples. We have been part of the “**Faith Call to Action**” statement launched by Religious at the UN on the occasion of the **UN’s 75th Anniversary** and we contributed RSHM experience on the ground in Zambia to the JCOR Statement on the implications of the global digital divide for girls’ education. ➡ [Watch the short video](#)

“The pandemic has exposed and aggravated social problems, above all that of inequality” (Pope Francis) Audience – 26 August 2020.

WFP awarded the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize

The **UN World Food Programme (WFP)** was awarded the **2020 Nobel Peace Prize** in October for its life saving role and “*for its efforts to combat hunger, for its contribution to bettering conditions for peace in conflict-affected areas and for acting as a driving force in efforts to prevent the use of hunger as a weapon of war and conflict.*” This marked the 12th time that a UN-related agency, programme or staff member was awarded the honor in the 75 years since its foundation.



As the **largest humanitarian agency in the world**, often working in extremely dangerous conditions with difficult access, the WFP delivered food aid to 97 million people in 88 countries in 2019; people who were devastated by conflict or suffered from disaster, famine and extreme poverty. With the global impact of COVID reaching across the world this year, the agency estimates that the pandemic could more than double the number of people facing “life-threatening levels of food insecurity”. In the first 6 months of 2020 alone, WFP relief reached 85 million people in 157 countries.

➡ Watch the [short video](#)

World Food Day

World Food Day - commemorated on **16th October 2020** - marked the **75th anniversary of the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization** – the first of the many UN agencies to be founded over the course of the succeeding decades. The theme for the 2020 Commemoration celebrated food heroes around the world; - those ordinary people who grow, nourish and sustain our food supply. A video mapping display on the FAO HQ building in Rome and the Colosseum celebrated food heroes and encouraged global solidarity efforts designed to transform food systems. In a video contribution to the Rome commemoration Pope Francis urged the diversion of some money from national military spending to create a Global Fund to be used to “definitely defeat hunger.” He called for fairer food distribution, reduction of food waste and spending less on weapons so as to reduce the number of people who go to bed hungry and malnourished, or feel forced to migrate in search of a life of dignity.



➡ Learn [more about FAO](#)
➡ Watch the [short video](#)

Did you know that...



- The United Nations estimates that over **130 million more people** may go hungry in 2020 due to the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic.
- A **quarter of the world’s population** does not have reliable access to safe and nutritious food. In **Africa, half of the population** faces shortages.
- Despite goals to achieve **zero hunger by 2030**, the United Nations estimates that the number of hungry people will rise to **840 million in five years** if current trends continue.
- **More than 80%** of people suffering from **food insecurity** live in countries that are characterized by land and ecosystem degradation and that are prone to natural shocks.
- **700 local and international organizations** were supported with WFP humanitarian services in 2018
- Each year, **about one third of the food produced** is lost or wasted, thereby costing the global economy nearly **\$1 trillion annually**.

Homelessness and "Urban October" at the UN



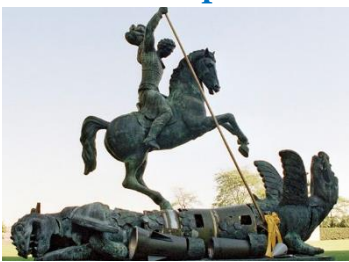
One month before the COVID pandemic started, the UN addressed the issue of **global homelessness** for the first time in its history. The selection of the theme for the 2020 **Commission on Social Development** followed the successful advocacy efforts by Civil Society in drawing attention to the problem, working with selected member states and DESA and giving voice to the people impacted by homelessness. A first-ever UN resolution on the theme was passed.

Over the last 9 months the **COVID-19 pandemic** has deepened the crisis of homelessness globally, posing growing risks to the homeless population. People living on the streets are particularly vulnerable to the risk of exposure to the coronavirus due to their inability to self-isolate, or to stay at home. Despite temporary measures adopted by some governments, many people who have lost their jobs or source of livelihood continue to face the prospect of homelessness with increasing fears of eviction orders. Although many local governments, churches and charities have struggled to provide food, shelter and outreach services on a temporary basis, the urgency of the long term problem remains. During the month of "**Urban October**", the **NGO Working Group to end Homelessness** gave visibility to the issue as well as channeling the voice of people impacted, by organizing several online panels and a symposium. **UNANIMA International** published the second in a series of publications focusing on **Family Homelessness**.

➔ [Read more.....](#)

➔ Watch the 9 min **RSHM You tube** video "["Recycling lives" Asmare](#)"

One small step towards the prohibition of nuclear weapons



The goal of achieving global nuclear disarmament was the subject of the very first resolution passed by the **UN General Assembly's in 1946**. Despite many ongoing diplomatic efforts by the UN, that remains a key objective 74 years later, as 13,400 nuclear weapons remain in existence. Speaking at the high level General Assembly meeting on October 2nd, the **International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons**, **UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres** noted that the world continues to live in the shadow of nuclear catastrophe and noted that "*the elimination of nuclear weapons is vital to the survival of life on this planet*". The meeting called for the resumption of dialogue and negotiations for the control of nuclear arms and the articulation of

a common path to nuclear disarmament. It highlighted the need for renewed engagement for building sustainable peace and security for all. ➔ [Read more.....](#)

Three weeks later, on **UN Day, October 24**, Honduras became the 50th member state of the United Nations to ratify the **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons**. This signifies that the treaty will enter into force on **Jan. 22, 2021**. Although member states with nuclear weapons have rejected the treaty, the ratification is seen to represent a meaningful commitment towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, which is the highest disarmament priority of the United Nations.



RSHM news briefs



On September 30th, **RSHM in Portugal** celebrated the **opening of the 150th Jubilee** year commemorating the arrival of the first RSHM in Portugal. The school in Fatima collaborated with **Earth**

Speakr. This is a creative electronic 'art work' designed to invite children to speak out and create messages, in the name of the planet, about the damage being done, thereby giving voice to the 'cry of the earth'. Adults are invited to listen! 10 students from our **RSHM school in Fatima** were invited to participate in the 'pre-launch' of the "app".



➔ [Learn more](#)

Distribution

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Seven students from **St. Joseph's Secondary School, Chivuna, Zambia** and one girl from the **Hospice Alternative Care in Choma, Zambia** responded to the invitation to send video contributions to the **Girls Speak Out**, - a commemoration of the **International Day of the**



Girl normally held in the ECOSOC Chamber of the UN but this year held online. The girls' contributions addressed the theme **#BeBold** in the struggle for **#EquityForGirls**. Although their contributions were not incorporated into the final video summary, they were appreciated and shared. Many thanks to the RSHM in Zambia who facilitated the girls' engagement in the Day of the Girl.



➔ [Read more.....](#)