



Commission on Social Development – CsocD 59



“A Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and the well-being of all” was the theme of the 2021 meeting of the **United Nations Commission for Social Development** held 8 – 17th February. Although the theme was chosen in February 2020, it could not have been more relevant, given the context of the global COVID pandemic a year later. All sessions except the opening and closing were held virtually. As was highlighted many times during the Commission, in a world where 3 billion people are not yet online, digital inclusion needs to be named and recognized as a human right. The digital cooperation

roadmap launched by the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in 2020 called for action to *CONNECT, RESPECT, and PROTECT all people in the digital age and highlighted the goal of universal connectivity by 2030, by which time everyone should have safe and affordable access to the internet.* The call to bridge the digital divide was recognized in the resolution approved by consensus at the end of the Commission meeting.



➔ [Read the Civil Society Declaration](#)

Accompanying the official sessions and integral to CSocD59 was the **Civil Society Forum** organized by the **NGO Committee on Social Development**. Three thematic sessions explored the importance of digital inclusion 1) in education, and social protection, 2) financing for development that promotes equality and 3) the importance of good governance in protecting human rights, respecting privacy and preventing abuse.

➔ [Read more....](#) ➔ [Watch the video](#)

Serving across the Digital Divide



On 15th February, the **Justice Coalition of Religious** – our advocacy coalition representing Religious NGOs at the UN - organized a virtual parallel event during **CSocD59**. The event

highlighted the role of religious globally in bridging the technology gap and addressing the need for digital inclusion in remote and underserved areas. By means of virtual presentations, power-points and short video clips, the ministry of women religious in *Nigeria, Zambia, Colombia, Ecuador and the Philippines* was explored, highlighting the positive impact of digital technology and the challenges associated with it. From solar-powered water systems and internet access to digital schooling and education of parents, the important role of religious was highlighted in contexts where many young people are all too easily ‘left behind’.



We were delighted that **Sr. Coltrida Mooya RSHM** gave a presentation about the experience of **St Mulumba Special School in Choma, Zambia**. The school caters to the needs of children with sight, hearing, mental or other physical disabilities.

We were grateful to be joined at this virtual session by many **RSHM** from around the world. As Sr. Frances

Gussenhoven RSHM wrote to JCoR, *“The work your team is doing would have seemed impossible to me, had I not seen some of this presentation. I am amazed at what has been done, even for those with handicaps, for their parents: - Braille machines, creation of water systems, teaching and creation of teams to extend the projects into the future, Hurray! Congratulations and thank you!”*

➔ [Learn about St. Mulumba’s, Choma](#)

“America is back”...

On February 19th, the **USA officially re-joined the Paris Climate Agreement**. The **United Nations Association of the USA** celebrated the event as part of their Global Engagement Summit. Speaking at the event, **Secretary General Antonio Guterres** highlighted the urgency of the current moment, noting that the US has a decisive role to play in addressing the climate crisis during this pivotal year. He highlighted **three important aspects**: a) the need for a truly global coalition for reaching net zero emissions by 2050; b) the importance of major emitters strengthening their concrete commitments and c) the need to build green economies that are more equitable and sustainable when “building back better” from COVID. He cited the need to close the finance gap and align investments with the Paris Agreement. Calling for a greater sense of urgency by all in efforts to reduce emissions, the **US Special Presidential Envoy for climate, John Kerry**, noted that the US re-joins the international climate effort with *“humility and ambition”*, having been absent from the table for 4 years. ➔ [Watch the short video](#)



Marking the US Re-entry Into the Paris Agreement
A Conversation with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John F. Kerry
19 February 3 PM EST

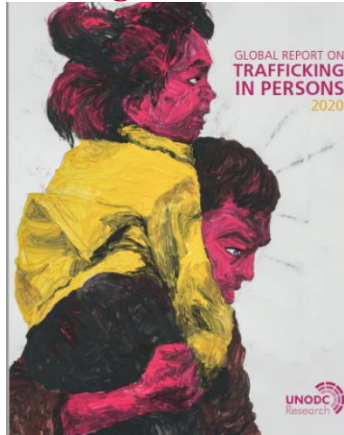


On 25th February, the newly confirmed **Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield**, presented her credentials to the UN Secretary General. She echoed words spoken by **President Joe Biden** in his address to other Western leaders at the Virtual Special session of the Munich Security Conference on the theme *Renewing Transatlantic Cooperation, Meeting Global Challenges*. **“Multilateralism is back, America is back...”**

➡ [Watch the short video](#)

UNODC – Global Report on Trafficking in Persons

The 2020 UNODC **Global Report on Trafficking in Persons** was launched on 2 February – the latest biennial report in a series mandated by the UN General Assembly through the 2010 UN **Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons**. It provides an overview of patterns and flows of trafficking at global, regional and national level based on actual cases detected by **148 member states**. Four thematic chapters explore the recruiting and exploitation of victims, patterns of child trafficking, trafficking for forced labor and emerging patterns in traffickers’ use of internet technology. The report reveals that traffickers have become ever more adept at using the internet for their trafficking operations. **Court case summaries** reveal that **“hunting”** (active pursuit of a victim on social media) and **“fishing”** (use of attractive job advertisements to lure potential clients) are two strategies increasingly used for recruitment and exploitation of victims. Traffickers trade their victims as commodities with the monetary value traffickers assigned to victims ranging from a couple of hundred dollars, (equivalent to a few grams of methamphetamine) to as much as \$25,000. ➡ [Read more....](#)



Fast facts about Human Trafficking – UNODC report.

- **Globally, one third** of the overall victims of human trafficking detected are children, **19% being girls and 15% boys**. In low-income countries, children made up half of the trafficking victims detected.
- In addition to sexual exploitation (72 % of girl victims) and forced labour (66 % of boys), children are exploited for begging and forced criminal activities such as drug trafficking.
- **Migrants make up 65 %** of detected victims in Western and Southern Europe, 60% in the Middle East.
- When **organized criminal groups** are involved in human trafficking cases, many more victims are trafficked, often for longer periods, across wider distances and with more violence.
- **Countries of origin** are more likely to convict their **own citizens (95 %)**, while **countries of destination** tend to convict more **foreigners (52 %)**.
- **The number of people convicted for trafficking in persons per 100,000 population has almost tripled since 2003**

RSHM NEWS BRIEFS

Advocacy forms an important part of the collaborative NGO engagement at the UN, despite having to “go virtual” during the COVID pandemic. Over the last few months, **Veronica RSHM has represented RSHM NGO** in several virtual “visits” to Embassies of UN Member states, meeting with Senior staff of the **Permanent Missions of Colombia, France, the Holy See and Portugal**. Particular concerns have been raised, such as the negative impacts of Mining in indigenous communities in the Amazon in the time of COVID and areas for collaboration identified. We are happy that **Portugal** has a strong focus on youth and that the country has accepted to serve as **Vice Chair of the Bureau of the Commission on Social Development** for 2021/22.



- Our **RSHM NGO** has also been able to jointly submit two written statements and an oral statement during the **Commission on Social Development**, highlighting particular cases of digital exclusion and making recommendations to address the issue.

Distribution

Institute Leadership Team; Area Leaders, JPIC Animators;
Global Network of RSHM Schools; UN Interest Group
Translation by **Maria Luisa Pinho, RSCM**

- RSHM in **St. Joseph’s Secondary School, Chivuna, Zambia**, organised a short video recording addressing the problems facing rural Zambia in terms of digital access and affordability. We were delighted that this video clip featuring a teacher at St. Joseph’s Secondary School, was included in the combined video of global voices and shown during the first thematic session of the Civil Society Forum. ➡ [Watch the short video clip](#)
- On **February 27th** Veronica RSHM made a presentation at the **Institute Foundation Day** celebration held by the **Western American Area** on the theme **“The UN Sustainable Development Goals through the lens of the RSHM 2019 General Chapter: revealing the tenderness of God, responding to the cries of the Earth and of those on the margins”**.



➡ Please follow us on **Twitter @RSHMNGO** and like us on **Facebook RSHMNGO**.