



Background Introduction:

“Women in time to come will do much.” Not only Mary Ward women will do much, but we are called to make every effort so that all women and girls can do much. With a special focus on women and girls we carry this vision of Mary Ward through our work advocating globally at the United Nations (UN) as your representatives.

Why are we at the UN (Our Mission)

We are present at the UN to promote a more humane, just and sustainable world for almost twenty



years. Working in collaboration with other civil society organizations (CSOs /NGOs), UN agencies and Member States, we challenge injustices and unjust structures by bringing the insights of the people, especially the most marginalized, to the UN. As a faith-based organization living and working with the people on the ground, we, strongly and

convincingly, bring their experiences and voices to the UN process. Catholic Church documents consistently recognise the “indispensable” role of the United Nations in the modern world. In continuity with his predecessors, Pope Francis recently reiterated the Holy See’s esteem and appreciation for the UN as an indispensable means of building an authentic family of peoples. The Holy See is a Permanent Observer State at the UN with the right to attend all UN sessions.

2015 was a landmark year for development and the future of humanity. In June, the Pope launched his encyclical “Laudato Si” calling for action on the greatest threats facing us: climate change, growing global inequality and the destruction of biodiversity. It was clearly aimed at influencing UN negotiations happening later that year. In 2015, the world leaders agreed on:

- Financing for Development in Addis Ababa (July): global framework for funding development especially of least developed countries
- Sustainable Development Goals (September): blueprint for a sustainable future
- Paris Climate Treaty (December): a legally binding international treaty on climate change

Cecilia O’Dwyer IBVM was the NGO Representative from 2013-April 2020. Cynthia Mathew CJ joined her in October 2017, the beginning of the collaboration with the Congregation of Jesus (CJ).

In May 2020, Janet Palafox IBVM started her term as NGO Representative while, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, working online from Sydney, Australia.. Cynthia was based in India waiting for her visa. Both are now in New York staying at the Passionist Thomas Berry Place. The office, shared with the Daughters of Charity, is now at the UN Church Centre opposite the UN Headquarters. It is in this context, together with the continuing pandemic and the war between Ukraine and Russia, that we write this report. It highlights the work and challenges of the UN NGO Ministry since the last General Congregations in 2011 (CJ) and 2014 (IBVM). We structured our report in the light of the five Calls that emerged at the IBVM GC.



Call 1: Reclaim the freshness of the Gospel, allowing Jesus to transform our lives.

“Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice and universal peace. . . . You cannot grow in holiness without committing yourself, body and soul, to giving your best to this endeavour.” Pope Francis in *Gaudete et Exsultate*

Our mission at the UN is a response to the Gospel and Jesus’ mission of bringing God’s kingdom into the world. Together with our networks’ ministries and actions on the ground, we aim to transform, not just our lives, but those of all peoples, especially the most marginalized. We do this through advocating for structural change at a global level while raising awareness at a local level. While the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a cohesive framework for our work, the Scriptures, Catholic Social Teaching and our core values of Justice, Verity, Freedom, Sincerity and Felicity, underpin all our work. Needless to say, the *Laudato Si* Action Plan provides a perfect spiritual and ethical guide to our

implementation of the more specific SDGs. Our focus is mainly on Women and Girls within the context of Social Development, Sustainable Development and Human Rights.

Our [Strategic Plans](#) (3 since 2014) are developed in consultation with our IBVM/CJ Province Contacts who provide relevant information from the ground. We reaffirmed our priorities for 2021-2024 to work towards: Gender equity; Elimination of gender violence; Eradication of poverty; Access to quality education and health; Elimination of trafficking of human persons; Care for the environment and Financing for development.

Call 2: Bring those forced to live in poverty to the centre of our life and ministry

We bring the experiences, expertise, concerns and voices of our network, including the people with whom we work and live, especially the most marginalized, to our advocacy and collaboration at the UN.

In 2015, we applied and were granted **Special Consultative Status** with the **UN ECOSOC**. Together with their Department of Global Communications (DGC) Associate Status this allows us to: participate in UN sessions, events and processes, advocate and influence negotiations through submissions of reports, provide written and oral interventions during UN sessions (Commission on the Social Development, Commission on the Status of Women, Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, etc) and host side events.

The centre of our advocacy work is the people and community whose voices are not often heard due to unjust and patriarchal social structures. We not only bring their concerns, but also provide them with opportunities to speak and advocate for themselves, underpinned by the Catholic Social Teaching of subsidiarity.

- ★ In the past 8 years, we hosted over **14 webinars** with Sisters, staff and interns as panelists sharing their work and experiences. We had from **30 to over 100 people**, including those outside our IBVM/CJ network, attend. We highlight a number of them:
 - ❖ 2015: Two webinars: “Transforming our World: The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda” with speakers from Canada, Italy, United States, Zambia, Australia, Mauritius, South Africa, Argentina, Morocco, Peru and Spain.
 - ❖ 2018: World Environment Day: “Is it Possible to Save the Future?” organized in collaboration with Daughters of Charity, International Presentation Association and Medical Mission Sisters.
 - ❖ 2020: In the lead up to the UN@75, our network held 6 virtual regional gatherings in Europe, Asia and the Pacific, South Asia, North America, Latin America and East Africa in June/July 2020. The gatherings had IBVM and CJ Sisters, staff, students and associates in a rich conversation on the situations in their own local communities and countries. The feedback from all participants was encouraging as they enjoyed the opportunity to meet and exchange



ideas with other IBVMs/CJs. We submitted a summary of our dialogues to the UN and individuals completed the UN online survey.

- ❖ 2021: “Youth-Led Conversations on Climate Justice” organized by youth interns with young people, Mike Kane (UK MP) and Beth Blissman (Loretto Sisters UN Representative)

- ❖ 2022: “Gender Justice and Girl’s Leadership in the Age of Climate Change” organized by youth interns with young women leaders

★ In collaboration with other NGOs we hosted over **12 side/parallel events** at UN Conferences with **20 to 200** participants for our virtual events. We highlight the following:

➤ In person:

- ❖ 2017: Commission on Social Development (CSocD): a workshop on “Education for Global Citizenship in Eradicating Poverty: A Crowdsourced Conversation”
- ❖ 2018: Commission on the Status of Women (CSW): Event at the Permanent Mission of Ireland, entitled “Poverty to Prosperity: Shared Stories from NGOs Working with Communities”
- ❖ 2018: High Level Political Forum: side event with NGO Major Group: an NGO Toolbox to Enhance Implementation of the 2030 Agenda Towards Sustainable and Resilient Communities.
- ❖ 2019: 68th UN Civil Society Conference: a workshop on “Shifting the Balance of Power to Build Sustainable and Inclusive Communities.” Cynthia was a panelist and shared on the situation of the Dalit Community in India

➤ Virtual events with UN Conferences:

- ❖ 2021: NGO CSW Parallel Event: Conversation Circle on Environmental Justice with Loretto Sisters and a past student from Loretto Normanhurst as a co-host.
- ❖ 2022: CSocD: Side Event: "Poverty, Hunger and Human Trafficking in Persons; Interventions and Good practices from Faith-based Organizations." Our panelists were from Mary Ward Loreto Albania and KMWSC with the keynote address given by Prof. Michel Veuthey, Ambassador of the Sovereign Order of Malta and a victim survivor from India.
- ❖ 2022: NGO CSW Parallel Event: “Custodians of our Common Home: The Voices of Women Countering Climate Disaster.” Panelists included a local woman leader from the Sundarbans and an ecological feminist theologian (IBVM network).
- ❖ 2022: High Level Political Forum: Side event “Quality Education and Gender Equality: Keys to Building Forward to Achieving the SDGs.” Keynote Speaker was Irish

Ambassador at UN Geraldine Nason Byrne, with panelists including Orla Treacy IBVM and a graduate of Loreto Rumbek.

- ★ We contributed to other events by submitting information from our grassroots:
 - ❖ Side Event: “Grass-Root Perspectives: Implementing the SDGs” based on the findings of a survey done in the countries presenting Voluntary National Reports, with Pat Hanvey on the panel.
 - ❖ Virtual Panel Discussion: Grassroots Community-based research findings; “Asks” to strengthen Social Protection, Digital and Financial inclusion and Climate Finance in a post COVID-19 era. Our members from Nepal and India took part in the survey and panel discussion.
 - ❖ Kolkata Mary Ward Social Centre’s work was featured at the opening of the Civil Society Forum (Video)

Call 3: Go where the need is greatest

IBVM/CJ network’s advocacy and engagement with UN processes is strengthened by engaging our **members to participate** in UN processes, Conferences, Commissions and related activities through attendance and provision of on the ground information.

- ★ Our network of Sisters, staff, associates, interns and students participated in various UN conferences and events. In the last 8 years **over 140** Sisters, staff, students, past students and associates, as our delegates, attended UN Conferences, Forums and Sessions. The move to virtual events enabled more of our members, often for the first time, to attend and experience participating in the process.
 - UN Department of Global Communications/NGO Conferences: 21 participants from Canada, India, Mauritius, Spain, South Korea, UK, Vietnam
 - Commission on Social Development (CSocD): 11 participants from Brazil, Canada, India, Nepal, Peru, Spain, Zimbabwe
 - Commission on the Status of Women (CSW): 52 participants from Brazil, Canada, India, Kenya, Mauritius, Nepal, Spain, UK
 - High Level Political Forum (HLPF): 10 participants from Canada, India, Ireland, Peru, USA
 - Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues: 4 from Nepal, Rome, UK
 - Human Rights Council Social Forum in Geneva: 4 participants from Australia, Ireland, Spain, UK
 - Climate Conference (COP25) in Madrid: 1 participant from Canada
 - Ocean Conference in Lisbon: 1 participant from UK
 - 10th Session of Conference of Parties for the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC): 3 delegates from Spain, UK, Rome

- 31st Session Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice 2022: sa taff from India (KMWSC) attended

Regional Events:

- 14th United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Nairobi, Kenya: 5 IBVM sisters from Kenya participated
- 2018 Regional Review for Latin America and the Caribbean States in Santiago, Chile: 4 participants from Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Peru
- 2018 Asian Level Conference on “Migrant Workers: An Asia-Pacific Experience” in Delhi, India: 17 IBVM/CJ members participated
- Busan Democracy Forum in South Korea: 3 CJ Sisters participated
- 4th UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi: a sister from Kenya participated
- Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development: 3 participants from South Africa and Zimbabwe

★ Our **members who** had immersion experiences at the UN:

- Mary Burkart IBVM - November 2015 – January 2016 (Ireland/Morocco)
- Libby Rogerson IBVM – March - June 2017 (Australia)
- Sarah Rudolph IBVM – March – June 2017 (Canada)
- Kathryn Keigher IBVM - March – September 2019 (UK)
- Janet Palafox IBVM – September 2019 – January 2020 (Australia)

“What surprised me most about the United Nations was that it rekindled a sense of hope in the potential for peace. Seeing, in the same chamber, walking the sharing halls, lunching in the same cafeterias, people representing diverse and often conflicting views. It must be one of the few places in the world where opposing ideologies engage each other, daily, in peace and they do so with the common courtesies that change interactions into engagements.”

Mary Burkhart ibvm (RIP) on her immersion experience in 2015-16

★ Our **youth networks** (students and past pupils) participated in UN processes and events. “Nothing about us without us.” We give our youth the opportunity to have a voice in global decisions and policies that affect them.

- Through **internships** with the UN NGO office:
 - Emma (Ireland) – Summer 2016
 - Aggie (Australia) - Summer 2017

6-month Internships began in 2018

- Greta (Australia) – October 2018 – March 2019
- Genevieve (Canada) – November 2018 – April 2019
- Isobel (Ireland) – April 2019 – September 2019

- Uyen (Australia) – April 2019 – June 2019
- Francesca (Australia) - November 2019 – June 2020

Virtual Internships began in 2020

- Evangeline (Australia) - December 2020 – March 2021
- Aislinn (Australia) - December 2020 – March 2021
- Eleanor (UK) - February 2021 – March 2021
- Charlotte (Australia) - March 2021 – July 2021
- Riya (India) – September 2021 - July 2022

2022 - New Model beginning with 2-3 months virtual then 2-3 months in person

- Carla (Australia) - August 2022
- Francesca (CJ - UK) - August 2022

- Our schools have celebrated the International Day of the Girl since it began in 2012 by holding local events and submitting video submissions for the Day of the Girl Summit to the WGG for the IDG Summit event. More schools were able to participate when in 2020 the [International Day of the Girl \(IDG Summit\)](#) event, co-organized through our membership with the Working Group on Girls (WGG) and co-sponsored by the Mission of Canada and UN Women, moved online.
 - 2020: We received over 70 submissions (videos and artwork) from both IBVM and CJ schools in India, Nepal, Mauritius, East Africa and Australia. Students also watched the event online.
 - In 2021 we received over [200 submissions](#) (videos and artwork) from both IBVM and CJ schools in India, Nepal and Australia. A student from St. Agnes Lucknow was one of the three moderators.
- Through virtual participation at the [2021](#) and [2022 Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW\)](#) workshops and events: [Local and Global Girls Conversation Circles](#), Girls Statement Writing and Girls Caucus when:
 - 16 students from our IBVM/CJ schools in Australia, Brazil, India, Mauritius, Nepal and UK were 2021 CSW youth delegates, 9 of whom were either facilitators or hosts of the events or workshops;
 - 15 students and 4 interns (past students) from our IBVM/CJ schools in Australia, Canada, India, Nepal and UK were 2022 youth delegates, 3 of whom were facilitators and one was a panelist at the events or workshops
- Through engagement with schools:
 - Invited annually to speak at the St. Agnes Model UN (IBVM/CJ South Asia schools)
 - Spoke at various school assemblies in Australia and India
 - Hosted schools in Australia, Canada and Germany who brought their students to the UN Headquarters in New York

Call 4: Live sustainably, discerning what is enough

★ Awareness raising activities and advocacy:

- Invited and supported schools to organize sessions on SDGs. The UN NGO office gave input to the teachers and students.
- Schools were engaged to advocate for Rights of the Girls, refugees and the environment. Their reports were included in advocacy statements issued by NGO groups.
- A Position Paper on the Right to Education was developed in collaboration with the delegates to the Human Rights Council Social Forum.

★ Training on advocacy and communications:

- Webinar on our work with the United Nations to welcome the collaboration between IBVM and CJ.
- Members attended regional workshops organized by the Justice Coalition of Religious(JCoR) on SDGs, HRs and other relevant topics.
- Members attended online workshops organized by Edmund Rice, in partnership with Misesan Cara.
- Orientation was provided to the Province UN reps on our work at the UN and the importance of linking their work with the SDGs.
- Training in social media to assist with their work of advocacy and awareness raising.

Call 5: Create the oneness that moves us across boundaries

To animate the IBVM/CJ network to promote and advocate for the SDGs and Human Rights the following **networks** were created and have regular quarterly meetings to share best practice, challenges and local information. It started with IBVMs and the first joint meeting with CJs began in 2018.

★ UN Province Representatives: critical link to Provinces/Regions - communications, awareness raising and critical local information on justice issues for advocacy at the UN. A number of our representatives have attended regional and global UN conferences as our delegates and others have come for immersion experiences. In partnership with the UN NGO Office, and recently with the Mary Ward JPIC office, they collaborated on the following:

- UN@70/SDG webinars; Beijing +25 webinars; UN@75 regional dialogues;
- Earth Day Infographic and a paper on our network's perspectives on climate action priorities; Global Prayer (Covid 19); International Women's Day Booklet; End Child Labour Pledge creating 6 Toolkits
- South Asia JPIC developed a United Nations Made Easy Booklet in collaboration with the UN NGO office to celebrate UN@75
- Providing input on the priority issues, communication and training needs included in UN NGO Strategic Plan 2021-2024

- ★ **Anti-Human Trafficking:** support group for people working on this issue in direct service, advocacy and/or awareness raising.
 - Collaborated with the International Women’s Day Booklet
 - Global Prayer for Victims on St. Bakhita’s Feast posted on social media
 - Created a video showcasing our work in supporting survivors, advocating and raising awareness on the issue
- ★ **Latin American Group:** IBVM and CJ UN Representatives from Peru, Chile, Argentina and Brazil
 - Collaborates on advocacy and awareness raising activities for their region
 - Online Dialogue with young people and the 2030 Agenda to commemorate “United Nations Day”
- ★ **Mary Ward Youth Network:** WhatsApp group of IBVM and CJ Young Sisters
 - Share information about their activities.
 - Participated in the TwitterStorm on gender-based violence
 - Share information from NGO office

We have developed and enhanced our **communication** about the work of the UN and the UNNGO Office.

- 2017 Survey of members: the interest in the work of the UN was very encouraging with a number of Sisters responding to the survey
- Developed a website in 2015 that was updated in 2021 providing our network with news updates on our work, participation at the UN and advocacy work of our network <https://www.ibvmunngo.org/>
- Developed a Newsletter: UN Update initially distributed six times per year on a PDF format. It is currently distributed quarterly electronically from our website.
- Emails with information on specific issues, UN Reports and opportunities to participate in UN processes, webinars and forums are sent to UN Representatives, Anti-Human Trafficking and Latin American networks regularly.
- We created accounts on Instagram, Twitter, FaceBook and LinkedIn where we regularly share information, raise awareness and advocate for change on issues affecting our network. Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/ibvmunngo> Twitter: [@ibvmnngo](https://twitter.com/ibvmnngo) FB: [@IBVMNGO](https://www.facebook.com/IBVMNGO)
- Encourage use of various communication platforms to share information, educate, raise awareness and advocate.
 - ➔ UN Representatives, Anti-Human Trafficking, Latin American and Mary Ward Youth network have a WhatsApp group to share videos and information about their activities.
 - ➔ We hosted a TwitterStorm for International Day of the Girl and invited our network’s engagement

The Advisory Committee. In 2012 an Advisory Committee was established to provide advice, guidance and oversight of the NGO's strategy and work plan. The UN Representatives report to the Advisory Committee quarterly. In 2018, CJ leadership appointed three CJ members to the committee.

Our direct involvement at the UN

- Very active membership of and collaboration with civil society organizations and NGO Committees in advocating at the UN on issues that are important to our network: education, poverty, homelessness, migration, anti-human trafficking. See: [Collaborations](#)
- Board and Executive Committee in NGO CSocD, Working Group on Girls and NGO FfD. Founding and Board member of [Justice Coalition of Religious](#).
- We submit Written and Oral Statements (interventions) during the Commissions with input from our network. Read them here: [Statements](#)

As a human organization, the UN is far from perfect. Sometimes the NGO representatives find an open door; other times the issues are too complex for quick answers, requiring, instead, a slow process of collaboration and perseverance. But the advocacy of NGOs like ours does influence the global policymakers and often transforms the national and local policies which address the social issues.



As we sense the reality around us, we hope to:

- ❖ Get involved during and after the “[Transforming Education Summit](#)” as education is one of the important ministries of our congregations. Given our history in education, become closely associated with the [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization](#) (UNESCO).
- ❖ Work towards [World Social Summit 2025](#).
- ❖ In light of the vulnerable situation of our planet and humanity, due to the climate crisis and the degradation of our planet, we can apply to be associated with the [United Nations Environment Programme](#) (UNEP) and [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC).
- ❖ Faith-based voices are achieving visibility at the UN, therefore, join networks such as [Faith for Earth Initiative](#), to advocate for people and the planet.
- ❖ Expand our advocacy training, immersion experience for our members and internship programme for young people at the UN.
- ❖ Implement the idea of having Province Youth Representatives who work with the youth within their Province and engage with the NGO Office. IBVM Spain already has a budding initiative for it.

Thank you for your support, encouragement and collaboration.

Janet Palafox IBVM and Cynthia Mathew CJ (UNNGO Office, New York)