



SOVEREIGN MILITARY HOSPITALLER ORDER
OF ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM OF RHODES AND OF MALTA

PERMANENT OBSERVER MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

STATEMENT
BY
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TO THE
THIRD COMMITTEE

[ITEM 28] ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

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(CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY)

MR. CHAIRMAN,
MEMBERS OF THE BUREAU,
ESTEEMED DELEGATES,

As this is my delegation's first time addressing the third committee this session, allow me to congratulate you and the other members of the bureau for your election to head and wisely guide our committee. The issue of advancement of women is one of utmost importance to the Order of Malta, as well as an integral component of the work of the Third Committee, and we are pleased to have the opportunity to take the floor.

MR. CHAIRMAN,

It is a an unfortunate fact that **rural women** continue to be economically and socially disadvantaged because of their limited access to economic resources and opportunities, their exclusion from planning and decision-making and their disproportionate burden of unpaid care work. It is a longstanding practice of the Order of Malta to concentrate much of its work towards these under-served rural populations. The Order of Malta knows that investing in women and girls has a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth.

Allow me to give a few examples that demonstrate this commitment:

The Aymara people living in the Bolivian Altiplano region are plagued by hunger and poverty; more than two-thirds do not receive adequate nutrition and families sleep in huts without running water, sanitary systems, electricity or chimneys. The inhospitable environment is at an average elevation of 4,000 meters with poor soil, fields on the slopes of steep hills and a climate that except for the rainy season is arid. The community is being weakened by urban migration as many of the Aymara people leave the poverty of the plains for the city. Most of this region's Aymara are subsistence farmers, often toiling the land with oxen and wooden ploughs.

The aim of the Order's project here is to improve quality of life through poverty and hunger reduction, and to lessen the socially destabilizing urban migration. Working in collaboration with the Canadian International Development Agency, the Order is helping 400 farming families to improve their cultivation methods for their crops. All measures taken in this project are developed in co-operation with the farmers and include indigenous and ecologically

sustainable methods such as crop rotation, fallow cycles and improvement of the genetic quality of the seeds used. These improvements substantially increase the quantity and quality of crops produced.

In parallel with this important project, the Canadian Association of the Order independently sponsors the education of young Aymara women, ranging in ages from 17 to 24, at a boarding school at the foot of the Altiplano. Women learn essential skills such as reading, writing, arithmetic, assisting with child birth and good agricultural practices, and are given basic training in Information Technology. This education helps them to assume leadership and decision-making roles in their families and communities, encourages sustainability of the learned methods, and help them to augment their families' income. It is an important contribution to the quality of life in the communities.

In the Ngu Hanh Son District in the Danang Province of Vietnam, the poverty rate of women is very high. Women are the main laborers of their family but have no stable job when the seasonal agricultural work is gone. The fortunate of these poor women manage to find day-to-day work in construction or fishing, but despite the high workload, the women are still unable to provide for their families basic needs.

The Order's project here has substantial goals: to provide all of these women with entrepreneurial skills and to bring the unstably employed women into small businesses of their own. These measures are expected to increase the income of these women by 70%.

MR. CHAIRMAN,

The Order of Malta supports the recommendation made by the Special Rapporteur on **violence against women** that says **we must recognize how the denigration of social, economic, and cultural rights restricts women from meaningfully exercising their civil and political rights**. To begin to reduce the discrimination and violence women are subjected to, it is imperative to put on equal footing these "social" rights, in public and private spaces.

In Afghanistan, only one in ten women are able to read or write; even among the men, only four out of ten are literate. Inadequate medical care and the low social acceptance of women are commonplace. The Taliban didn't allow girls or women to go to school and denied them any

kind of education. It was only in 2003, when the new constitution became effective, that women gained the right to education. However, in many places, Afghani girls and young women are still denied their right to formal education. There are barely any educational programs for adults. Weak reading, writing and math skills greatly diminish their chances of getting a job, while poor knowledge about hygiene and the prevention of diseases foster epidemics. The lack of general education entails grave consequences for Afghani women and children.

Afghanistan is in dire need of open sources of general knowledge that are widely available to the population. That's where the new educational television channel set up by the Order of Malta in Mazar-e-Sharif comes in. The channel's broadcasts concern issues of health, general education, psychology, literacy, professional training, foreign languages, and women's rights. The channel takes advantage of the highly educational character of television by specifically employing female TV presenters: this means not only that issues of female viewers are directly addressed, but also the presence of women on TV improves their social standing.

Within a span of two years, the channel will reach more than 300,000 people in the city of Mazar-i-Sharif and up to 250,000 people living in the hinterland, giving them access to educational TV programs. The programs target people of all ages, religions and social classes. Additionally, the Order and its partners are providing training for 30 staff members in technical and journalistic skills, thus enabling them to later carry on the TV channel independently and with little effort. This project has been replicated in Herat, western Afghanistan, with positive results, and will hopefully become reality once more in the North.

Since 1996, the Order has assisted in the restless regions of Ituri and South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo through the operation of around 300 health centers. These centers provide basic medical care for more than 2 million people, run vaccination campaigns and provide additional care and treatment to HIV/AIDS infected men and women. During the implementation of these programs, the Order's personnel in the field encountered a very high number of women and girls who had become victims of sexual aggression throughout the war.

This is why, in addition to basic medical care and food security, the Order and its local partners began a specific program in 28 of these centers to provide psycho-social assistance to the women and girls who were brutalized in the war. Many women are silent about their abuse because they fear discrimination. Skilled counselors search for victims in the villages, and

advise and encourage them to look for treatment. Many of the counselors have been victims themselves and use their own experience to help others. Tens of thousands of women have been assisted, with the neediest women being sent to the Order's special trauma centers to be treated by psychologists, psychiatrists and neurologists.

MR. CHAIRMAN,

Speaking specifically to the plight of vulnerable migrant women, the Order wishes to state its full support of measures to increase the protection of the rights of all women migrant workers. We join in the Report's call made upon states to facilitate effective action in law enforcement and prosecution, prevention, capacity-building, victim protection and support, exchange of information and good practices that combat violence and discrimination against women migrant workers.

THANK YOU.