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Statement submitted by Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Psychological Contributions to The Economic Empowerment and Sustainable Development of Women and Girls, Including African-Descendant Women and Girls

Both sexism and racism are continuing sources of inequalities, disadvantage and marginalization among people in all regions of the world. In the first year of the International Decade for People of African Descent, the Committee for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women urged Member States to take preventative and remedial steps to address disparities from the intersection of sexism and racism. The Committee found, however, that many States do not focus on underlying structural racism affecting women and girls. Thus, the increasing intersectionality-related discourse at the United Nations is not being followed in practice by application of intersectional approaches, including inclusive cross-tabulated disaggregated data, for the analysis and evaluation of policies, programmes and practices, including those affecting the economic empowerment of African-descendant and other women and girls.

Therefore, the primary sponsor of this statement, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, and co-sponsoring organizations affiliated with the Psychology Coalition of Accredited Non-Governmental Organizations at the United Nations and the NGO Committee for the Elimination of Racism, Afrophobia, and Colorism call upon all stakeholders to incorporate the following recommendations into their action plans for the economic empowerment and sustainable development of all women and girls, including African-descendant women and girls, in the changing world of work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We strongly urge Member States, United Nations entities, Non-Governmental Organizations and all other stakeholders to:

- I. Implement Intersectional Approaches to the Economic Empowerment of All Women and Girls, including African-descendant Women and Girls (Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 10)

Intersectionality is an approach, that focuses on interlocking systems of oppression and privilege in societal structures, and the interlocking categories of identity (e.g. gender, race, class, etc.) connected to them.

1. Incorporate approaches based upon the intersectionality of gender and race into policy, programme, research, and evaluation interventions for the economic empowerment of women and girls at all levels.
2. Provide training for all stakeholders on intersectional methodologies, including inclusive cross-tabulated disaggregated data, for analysing problems or evaluating progress.

II. Promote the Psychosocial Empowerment and Resilience of All Women and Girls (Sustainable Development Goals 3, 4, 5, and 8)

Empowerment is a multi-dimensional psychosocial process that involves individuals and groups gaining resilience and control over resources and decision-making about their lives.

1. Educate girls/women of all diversities about their human rights, and their strengths, skills, and resources against gender/racial discrimination.
2. Provide opportunities for girls/women to plan and operate economic projects to promote development of ownership, optimism, and efficacy/confidence in their ability to be successful.
3. Provide access to productive employment and decent work, which promotes psychosocial empowerment by treating women/girls with respect and dignity, providing earnings for an adequate standard of living.
4. Promote women-owned and women-led cooperatives that could prove to be an important strategy for enhancing their economic and social empowerment.
5. Reduce the physical and mental burden of paid and unpaid work women/girls do by providing access to simple tools and technologies (such as solar ovens, pump wells, reliable electricity, indoor plumbing, cell phones and the internet).
6. Provide access to quality mental health care within primary health care, including accessible multidisciplinary social and employment service centres and mobile vans to provide one-stop services. Include literacy, continuing education, life skills and entrepreneurial training in these centres.
7. Eradicate all violence against women/girls, in families, schools, and work places.

III. Promote the Educational Development, and Occupational and Professional Advancement of All Girls and Women (Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 10)

Higher rates of educational attainment have been found to account for 50% of a country's economic growth, half of which has been attributed to the education of girls.

1. Provide all girls and boys with free, public primary and secondary education, facilitating access to quality schools, qualified teachers, and basic educational resources.
2. Strengthen access to quality vocational and tertiary education for girls and women of all ages as important pathways to psychosocial empowerment and decent work and provide stipends and scholarships as necessary.
3. Promote gender equality through the use of gender-inclusive language in the curriculum, books, videos, websites, and other materials used to educate children, adolescents, and adults.
4. Change stereotypes in language usage and the narrative of what it means to be a girl/woman through men and boys working with women and girls in public educational campaigns.

5. Educate boys and girls about gender inequalities in occupational and professional education and employment and about how these inequalities impact young girls and women, as well as whole communities that would benefit economically from the advancement of girls and women.
6. Increase and strengthen opportunities for training women/girls about entrepreneurship and income-generating activities and provide training for the development, profitability, and sustainability of women-led independent businesses.
7. Promote the building of networks that encourage women running independent businesses to learn from and support each other and to do effective outreach to policymakers in their region.
8. Invest in and promote girls' and women's exploration of previously male-dominated fields like science, technology, medicine, engineering, and mathematics.

IV. Develop and Implement Policies and Practices to eliminate Economic and Work-related Discrimination Against All Women and Girls (Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 8)

There is an urgent need to dismantle discrimination based on gender and racial/ethnic identity because it significantly hinders women's/girls' ability to achieve decent work.

1. Review and replace laws, policies, programmes and practices at all levels of the economy and workforce that discriminate against women/girls in the basis of any of their social identities.
2. Develop and implement policies governing "Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value" and conduct annual salary/wage audits to check for and rectify gender- and race-related inequalities.
3. Develop policies setting a minimum percentage of diverse gender/racial categories of qualified women in leadership positions at the various levels of the organization.
4. Provide an institutional office for the filing and timely non-discriminatory resolution of complaints.
5. Establish clear and validated criteria for hiring and promotion and ensure that these criteria are applied consistently across applicants and candidates to reduce the possibility that gender and racial biases will influence decision-making.
6. Mandate annual evidence-based sexual and racial harassment training in the workplace to eliminate gender/racial barriers to women's/girls' equality, integration and productivity within the workplace.
7. Reduce gender stereotyping of work by educating men/boys that caring for the home and family members is family work to be shared by all.
8. Develop economic policies that call for employment practices to recruit diverse women into all sectors of the economy and workforce.

V. Develop and Implement Effective Workplace-Family Policies to Enhance the Economic Empowerment of all Women and Girls (Sustainable Development Goals 8, 10 and 16)

Countries at the top of the gender equity index who have implemented policies that address mandatory maternity and paternity leave tend to rank higher on the World Economic Forum Global Economic Competitive Index.

1. Evaluate current family-workplace policies of governments, institutions and organizations at all levels related to gender and racial equity.
2. Promote occupational and career advancement among all employees, representative of gender, race and other diversities.
3. Implement increased and improved family-workplace policies that support both mandatory maternity and paternity leave, with liveable wages for all female and male employees.
4. Study effective family-workplace policies, including work-life balance, of other Member States and agencies that have increasing gender and racial equality in the workplace.
5. Support research that evaluates the economic impacts of workplace-family policies, as well as the psychological impacts of these policies on female and male employees and their families.
6. Advocate for increased funding for policies and programs that promote equal care-giving responsibilities among males and females in the family.
7. Provide access to quality affordable infant day-care and early childhood programs that enable mothers and fathers to meet family and work responsibilities.

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