

## Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd Position on the Girl Child



1. In our time, across the world, children suffer severe violations of their human rights in unconscionable numbers. Throughout human history, the girl child has been subject to disproportionate discrimination and abuse. OLCGS has always been attentive to the social disadvantage of women and girls, while sharing concern for her family and boy siblings.

2. For many girls, fundamental rights are denied and violated from before her birth and continue across her life cycle as an adolescent, adult, and female elder. The exclusion of girl children and girl adolescents is rooted in systemic injustice, structural gender inequality, targeted gender violence, and dominant systems of patriarchal power. Across the globe, low value placed on the girl child subjects her to specific forms of violence: prenatal sex de-selection, infanticide, disregard for birth registration, denial of nutrition, genital mutilation (FGM), sexual harassment, denial of education, sexual abuse, use as objects in prostitution, forced and early marriage. Violations occur with impunity often accepted as cultural, religious, and/or traditional norms. Lack of maternal prenatal care, lack of social protections for families, lack of access to adequate health care and education, child labor, forced marriage and too early child bearing are some obstacles that impede development and deprive millions of girls of childhood. Girls in indigenous communities are particularly vulnerable. Global threats such as HIV/AIDS, environmental depletion, human trafficking, and war destroy the future of girls, increasingly and disproportionately. In situations of armed conflict, girls forced into combat become deliberate targets of systematic rape, abduction and murder. Migration heightens vulnerability for girls, especially unaccompanied or separated girls. In refugee camps where girls seek protection, they face sexual exploitation. When parents migrate, many children are left without adequate parental care. Likewise, girl children are the most adversely affected when their families and nations are immersed in poverty. Across the world, it is common that girls are subject to suicidal thoughts. Humanity suffers when societies deny girls the opportunity to grow into valued, productive and equal persons.

3. We recognize that every girl is born with dignity, possess the inherent rights of all humans, and ought to be assured the unique rights of childhood to enable them to reach their potential as individuals, as women, and as members of society. When the value of girls is recognized, when their needs are met, and their voices amplified, girls contribute to positive change in their families, local communities, nations, and the world.

4. Our first response to the girl child is to accept and cherish her, affirming her immeasurable worth as a human person. OLCGS develops, with participation of girls and their families, social service programs to empower the girl child, to support her resiliency, to educate her about her rights, to promote safety and protection both within her home and within social institutions such as schools. We support universal education for all children, knowing it to be the most effective avenue to realize individual capacity while being the surest path out of cyclical poverty. We develop enrichment programs for self-esteem, pride in culture, play, and expression of each girl's highest potential; we support social benefits for parents and support all forms of extended families that care for children. Our programs advocate for the above principles.

### **5. In responding to the needs of the girl child, it is critical to:**

- a. Develop supportive social programs that welcome and value each girl, respecting her spiritual, human, and child rights. Support girls' participation in defining needs and

shaping responses. Locate programs in a girl's home community as far as possible and include family integration. Ensure OLCGS programs, while prioritizing educational opportunities, are rich with social supports and social interaction

- b. Develop specialized gender sensitive responses for children who have suffered traumas related to abuse, deprivation, family loss, all forms of sexual exploitation, armed conflict, etc. Such programs will provide gender-sensitive, community-based reintegration, sensitive to each child's readiness. Each girl will participate in defining her goals.
- c. Ensure that every OLCGS program has a clear, detailed, and operative Child Protection Policy that promotes positive development and protects from abuse of any kind.
- d. Include families, boys, and men in program efforts that ensure the human rights of all.
- e. Participate in, and lead when possible, networks, campaigns, and public outreach activities for child rights' advocacy to ensure political visibility and voice for girls and all children. Promote community observance of October 11, the International Day of the Girl Child. Empowerment and education about human rights for girls are essential strategies.
- f. Build organizational capacity to know, analyze, and use gender-sensitive research to ensure high standards and good practices in child welfare, appropriate to local context and culture.
- g. Support gender-responsive budgeting in the political arena to allocate monies for girls' education and training as well as for physical, reproductive, and mental health. Support the development of programs seeking to end all forms of violence against girls.
- h. Support the strategic objectives of Section L of the Beijing Platform for Action (UN, 1995); educate girls and communities according to the principles of Section L.
- i. Promote the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with central awareness for SDG 5 while incorporating awareness of how each of the 17 SDGs has implications for the welfare of girls.



- j. Use UN human rights tools to advocate nationally and internationally. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with its Optional Protocols and the UN CEDAW ought to be a basis for regular reporting, using the OLCGS NGO Office in Geneva. Work for national legislation that incorporates the (Palermo) Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.



## Glossary of acronyms used in OLCGS Position Papers

*Alphabetically listed*

CEDAW	Conventions on the Eliminating of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GSIF	Good Shepherd International Foundation
GSIJPO	Good Shepherd International Justice Peace Office
GFMD	Global Forum on Migration and Development
GCM	Global Compact on Migration
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
IDP(s)	Internally displaced person(s)
ILO	International Labor Organization
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OLCGS	Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
PP(s)	Position Paper(s)
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
US	United States
UNFAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization

**Mission Development Process –**  
*a diagram for Implementation of OLCGS Position Papers*

The implementation of the OLCGS Positions in Mission and Ministry requires effective program development. The diagram below, based on the work of the GSIF and adapted by the GSIJPO, provides interrelated elements necessary for an integrated process of mission development. It can be adapted and enhanced for all levels of programs, communities, and formation. Groups can analyze their own strengths and needs by consideration of the total framework. Development can take any starting point along the schema and will necessarily move to interact with and include all elements, resulting in a dynamic process of ongoing learning, change, and development. Some elements will require technical help and professional training; many will challenge a sense of security or routine. All are critical to meet the mission demands of today.

