

Thank you madam chairperson for the opportunity to speak. My name is Joseph Morrow and I am speaking today on behalf of the International Presentation Association. Presentation Sisters in 23 countries have been instrumental in making education accessible to vulnerable women and girls.

The vulnerabilities facing these women and girls range from extreme poverty, both in rural and urban contexts, to the realities of forced internal and external migration, to the marginalisation of the indigenous and disabled.

An area of particular concern is the environmental threats of climate change which leads to the intersection of many of these vulnerabilities. Rising sea levels, floods, and droughts threaten food security, drinking water and causes displacement of indigenous communities. In many cases, indigenous persons with a disability and the elderly are left behind, leaving them more vulnerable and impoverished than ever.

To combat this, we work closely with women and children in refugee situations who require help to cope with their pain and suffering and deal with inner conflict. One of these programs is called the Healing of Memory and Reconciliation which operates in Ratchaburi Diocese in Thailand. Through raising foodstuffs and making materials such as soap, refugees are able to heal through productive work which provides essentials of daily life for themselves and for their families.

Another program assists women coming to urban areas who face difficulties with integration and naturalization and find barriers to education, employment, medical care and

housing. The Cork Migrants Workers' Centre assists disadvantaged women in finding new and creative ways to meet their social and educational needs. The result is stronger women, stronger families, and stronger communities.

In the United States, Presentation Partners in Housing assists women in establishing and maintaining a home so that their energies are not consumed with relocation, rent and utilities and they can focus on care of their children, education and jobs.

St. Bakhita Centre for the Sudanese Australian Community in suburban Sydney teaches immigrants oral, reading and writing skills and basic math so they can cope with the new culture in which they find themselves.

These programs have been successful in helping empower some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged women and girls and enabled them to pursue an education, to earn and save money, improve health and well-being, and influence decisions in their home and community. It is time now for governments to stand by their agreed international conventions and protocols.

It is imperative that we gather sound data and do statistical analysis regarding the effects of environmental degradation on women; causes and effects of migration; domestic violence; adolescent pregnancy and life span reproductive health; the socio-economic implications of changing gender roles, and supporting and critically evaluation outcomes of programs that address these issues. Further to this, compulsory education is a MUST, no girl child below the age of 14 should be out of school. Finally the implementation of universal social protection floors to ensure that no women or girl, particularly the most vulnerable, is left behind.