



***Building Social Resilience and Solidarity: Community-Led Approaches to Addressing Global Crises***

**February 11, 2025 (4:45 pm – 6:00 pm EST)**  
(in Conference Room 9, UNHQ and live-streamed at UN Web TV)

A side event in the margins of the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of UN Commission for Social Development

**Organized by International Presentation Association, Sikh Human Rights Group, Soroptimist International, and Bahá'í International Community,**

and

**Co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the NGO Committee on Social Development**



**Buan-Ionad na hÉireann  
chun na Náisiún Aontaithe**  
Permanent Mission of Ireland  
to the United Nations



**United Nations**

Department of  
Economic and  
Social Affairs



The acceleration of crises in today's societies highlights the urgent need to promote social resilience and solidarity as essential elements to overcome these challenges. Together, they play a pivotal role in advancing the commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration, the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Social solidarity often leads to the establishment of universal social protection systems, ensuring the provision of basic needs and reducing poverty and inequalities. If they are well funded, they cushion the impact of adversities during crises. Simultaneously, social resilience equips societies to adapt to and recover from socio-economic challenges, such as poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. Resilient communities actively engage diverse stakeholders in the development process, fostering grassroots ownership and driving sustainable progress, as envisioned in the Copenhagen Declaration.

This event will examine the following initiatives in detail and discuss the possibility of extending similar practices in other cultural and religious settings.

- **Langar<sup>1</sup> and Gurdwaras as models of social inclusion and social resilience and support examples (SHRG):** showcase the Sikh tradition of Langar and the role of Gurdwaras as practical, community-based models for addressing food security, fostering inclusivity, and building social cohesion.

Given that the Langar and the Gurdwara are funded exclusively by the Gurdwaras' attendees that voluntarily give away the amount they consider, Langar supposes a perfect example of a community-created solution fosters social solidarity. As a tradition shared by all members of society regardless of their religion or social status, Langar acts as a means to promote both social solidarity and social inclusion.

- **Community-led programme on girls' well-being, sports and environment (SI project):**

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<sup>1</sup> The tradition of Langar is a communal meal provided by the congregational spaces of the Sikh community, the Gurdwaras. Gurdwaras serve as places of congregation for the Sikh community, where dialogue and mutual respect are encouraged among the diverse communities that form our societies.

This programme was initiated with a Soroptimist International grant and was devised to educate and empower girls from urban, rural and indigenous communities living in the rain forest at the Mbaracayú Educational Centre in Paraguay through their participation in sports and education, in order to break their rural isolation and integrate them to the surrounding regions. It started with the construction of a fully equipped sports centre within the Mbaracayú Natural Forest Reserve (Moises Bertoni Foundation). Impressed by the results, the parents and the whole community raised funds for continued support. The programme focuses on enhancing the physical and mental well-being, self-esteem and leadership skills of teenage girls in the Reserve's boarding school, thus promoting community solidarity, enhancing resilience and gender equality, and further integrating them to the national space. Through workshops on topics such as domestic violence, nutrition, self-care, and environmental preservation, this project has helped bridge the gap in opportunities, promoting healthy lifestyles and catalysing a new generation of environmental youth leaders in the Biosphere Reserve.

- **Community-led Justice projects and Catholic Social Teaching (IPA):**

The International Presentation Association (IPA) works with women, men and children, communities, civil society, partner organizations, institutions and other networks, at the local and international levels, to overcome the structural causes and consequences of poverty and injustice. IPA's commitment to transformative justice shapes the policy and mission for a society in which the dignity of all people is recognized, and the human rights of the vulnerable are respected. In Queensland, Australia the IPA justice projects, informed by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, are focused on charity and service provision, as well as advocacy and partnerships, in the areas of gender-based violence, homelessness and forced migration aiming to build social solidarity and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

- **Empowering community-led initiatives to foster grass roots ownership of their own development (BIC):** how participatory approaches rooted in the Bahá'í principles of consultation, justice, and the oneness of humanity empower communities to take control of their development, fostering resilience and solidarity. (Speaker TBC)
- **Community-Led Food Security and Resource Redistribution (City Harvest):** City Harvest is a New York based food rescue organization, collecting high-quality, nutritious food that would otherwise go to waste to help provide free food for millions of New Yorkers experiencing food insecurity. Since their founding in 1982, they have rescued more than one billion pounds of fresh, nutritious food and delivered it—free of charge—to hundreds of food pantries, soup kitchens, community partners, and their own Mobile Markets® across the five boroughs. By redirecting that food to families, they also prevent million kilograms of CO<sub>2</sub> from entering the atmosphere. Named one of America's Top 100 Charities by *Forbes*, City Harvest also works alongside community partners to build their capacity, expand nutrition education, and advocate for systems change through effective public policy.

Speakers:

Opening remarks: **Dr. Despoina Afroditi Milaki**, UN Representative, International Presentation Association

- **H.E. Mr. Fergal Mythen**, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Ireland
- **Ms. Wenyan Yang**, Chief, Global Dialogue for Development Branch, Division for Inclusive Social Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)
- **Mr. Richard Rogusz**, Justice Contact, Queensland, Australia, International Presentation Association (video)

Bahá'í  
International  
Community



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- **Dr. Balbinder Bhogal**, Professor of Religion, Hofstra University
- **Ms. Sonia Sanabria**, School Principal and Coordinator - **Ms. Alicia Rivarola**, Director of Programs and Innovation, Paraguay, Soroptimist International (video)
- **Mr. Carlos Rodriguez**, Chief Policy and Operations Officer, City Harvest
- **Ms. Neda Badiee Soto**, Bahá'í International Community

Closing remarks: **Queen Mother Dr. Delois Blakely**, Ambassador of Goodwill to Africa and the Community Mayor of Harlem

Moderators: **Maria Fornella-Oehninger**, UN Representative, Soroptimist International - **Iván Lorenci de Francisco**, UN Representative, Sikh Human Rights Group