Blog
Social Justice



Global Sisters Report's new collection on the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals contains about 200 articles and columns. More will be added to the collection as new articles and columns are published. (GSR screenshot)



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Catholic sisters are agents of change. As readers of Global Sisters Report know, the sisters' many and varied ministries strive to alleviate poverty and hunger, offer quality education, provide clean water and meet a variety of other human needs. Sisters do all of this to carry out the Gospel message to care "for the least of these."

Catholic women religious around the world have been working to improve the lives of others long before the United Nations adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (or SDGs) in 2015. Yet the goals provide a way to view the sisters' individual ministries on a larger scale, as contributing to a set of global benchmarks to create a better world.

Get in touch with us

If you or your congregation have been moved to start or expand a ministry because of an article or column in Global Sisters Report, we'd love to hear from you. Likewise, if there are past articles or columns about sisters' ministries that you think belong in this sustainable development goals collection, please let us know. If there are projects we should write about, we want to hear about those, too. Please send all correspondence to info@globalsistersreport.org.

Through a new collection on the sustainable development goals that contains about 200 articles and columns, GSR readers can now see how sisters' ministries contribute to the overall U.N. plan and the attainment of each goal. While not each article or column will specifically mention the sustainable development goals, the ministry relates to one or more of them. More articles and columns will be added as we find other content in our archives that should be included, and future pieces will be appropriately categorized.

"Catholic sisters are uniquely positioned to be recognized as among the most trusted and effective leaders in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals," the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation's Catholic Sisters Initiative states on its website. "By

2030, the Catholic Sisters Initiative aims to increase the capacity of sisters to meaningfully address poverty, and elevate their voice and influence as moral leaders of change in the global effort to relieve human suffering and restore human dignity." (The Hilton Foundation is also the major funder of Global Sisters Report.)

GSR's network of journalists and sister columnists has produced an extensive collection of stories and columns about sisters' ministries since its start in April 2014. Chris Herlinger, our international correspondent, has written extensively about the sisters' work at the United Nations and the sustainable development goals since he joined GSR in 2016.

"The sustainable development goals are targets, and like the goals we set in our personal and professional lives, are sometimes achievable and sometimes take time," Chris told me. "Some will say they are wildly optimistic. But the trends of global poverty over the last two decades overall improved."

The U.N. notes that global poverty rates have dropped by more than half since 2000.

"But those trends were slowing even before the global pandemic, and now, the global crisis threatens to slow them even more," Chris added. "Is that reason to give up on the SDGs? No. Not at all. What I've learned from covering the sisters at the U.N. is that it's important for advocates like the sisters to continue to pressure U.N. members, the nation-states, to live up to their commitments to the SDGs. Commitments are important; they make ideals concrete and possible."

In his more than more than 20 years of humanitarian journalism, Chris has also witnessed the many ways that sisters "on the ground" are involved in ministries that align with the Sustainable Development Goals.

"In an increasingly polarized and cynical world, these voices of advocacy, like the sisters', are persistent and necessary reminders of the need to do more. They are voices of responsibility, conscience and hope," Chris said.

As the editor of Global Sisters Report, I am mindful of a critique we received a few years ago that we were focused too much on sisters' ministries and work and not enough on religious life. We have been striving to address that observation with features such as The Life, a monthly global panel of sisters who reflect on various questions (we will introduce our newest and fourth panel Oct. 26), and by focusing more of our attention on various aspects of religious life and spirituality.

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Categorizing applicable GSR columns and stories by how they help achieve the sustainable development goals is not contrary to that effort, but rather, complements it. By viewing the sisters' individual and collective ministries through that prism, we can help raise the profile of Catholic sisters and amplify the good work they do. Sisters are motivated by the Gospel, not by running a nongovernmental organization, but if the result is an improvement in people's lives, their achievement also deserves recognition and to be seen in that larger context.

That can be a hard sell among many sisters, who by their nature are sometimes loath to talk about their ministries lest they seem boastful. But while I'm self-conscious of citing Gospel verse to sisters, Jesus also instructed us to not hide our light under a bushel, but to set it on a lamp stand "where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father" (Matthew 5:14-16).

Analyzing and categorizing GSR pieces about sisters' ministries is not just a look at what has been done, but also what could be. We are hopeful that ministries reflected in the stories and columns may provide inspiration and examples to other sisters and congregations — and for all of us, as Chris says, to recognize and respond to the need to "do more."

If you or your congregation have been moved to start or expand a ministry because of an article or column in Global Sisters Report, we'd love to hear from you. Likewise, if there are past articles or columns about sisters' ministries that you think belong in this sustainable development goals collection, please let us know. If there are projects we should write about, we want to hear about those, too. Please send all correspondence to info@globalsistersreport.org. We look forward to hearing from you and continuing to work toward the goal of elevating the good that sisters do.



Global Sisters Report's new collection on the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals sorts news stories and sister columns into the goal that best fits the ministry in the story or column. (GSR screenshot)

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