



## Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
15 December 2024

English only

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### Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-ninth session

10–21 March 2025

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and  
to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly  
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and  
peace for the twenty-first century”**

### **Statement submitted by Tearfund, 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Tearfund is an international Christian charity and development organisation working with faith communities in over 50 countries to tackle the complex challenges of poverty and injustice. We welcome the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and respond with hopes and appeal for action. Peace and security championed by faith actors including women are already transforming age long crises and structural inequalities, but as the world witnesses the most unprecedented violence of our time, these women face more risk of religious, social, economic, political, and cultural inequalities and subsequent violence, including because of their religion or belief. Greater and more urgent commitment is needed to address injustice and inequality which disproportionately impacts women and girls, especially those marginalised because of their religion or belief. It is important to mobilise the capacity and ingenuity of faith actors and leaders including women in advancing gender equality. These actors can help to challenge harmful norms, and practices that contribute to the inequalities that fuel violence and discrimination.

We have more evidence than ever before, that the meaningful inclusion of women and girls in decision making spaces are crucial not only to the advancement of political stability but also to the attainment of economic progress and religious freedom. In Nigeria, for example, through the work of Tearfund and our local partners, we have been running a highly impactful programme called the Joint Initiative for Strategic Religious Action (JISRA) which means bridge in Arabic. Building bridges across faith divides and seeking in particular to address gender inequality, we pay special attention to the role of women and youth in peacebuilding and advancing freedom of religion or belief (FoRB). Through Rurcon, a local non-governmental organisation that Tearfund partners with, we provided a space for both Christian and Muslim women to establish and strengthen friendships, working together to advocate on the issue of women's inclusion in local governance. The women believe that interfaith dialogue are essential to the realisation of peace, and women's inclusion and decided to approach their leaders and advocate for women's inclusion and participation in traditional council meetings.

After decades of exclusion, women are being appointed for the first time into traditional councils where they are now ensuring issues that were not being addressed previously are being heard, including women's right to inheritance. These traditional councils hold a large amount of power and influence particularly on human rights issues. Tearfund have recorded several other transformational stories in Ethiopia, Mali and Iraq. Communities where women have long been a face of discrimination are transforming to societies with increased engagement of women in peace processes and advancing women's rights.

As well as addressing female representation in decision making, advocacy training has also been a powerful interfaith initiative in bridging divides between faith communities, and encouraging people to work together on common goals. Recognizing the significant impact of religious freedom on the sustainable development goals, including peace, gender equality, and partnerships, it becomes imperative to mobilise the capacity of women faith actors in advancing peacebuilding and localising the national action plans. In the words of one of the first female traditional council members, "one tree alone cannot make a forest, so we need to advocate further for women's participation in governance across all levels".

**Recommendations**

Tearfund recommends that:

- State and multilateral organisations partner with faith actors to provide sustainable programmes that interconnectedly promote gender equality, freedom of religion or belief, and peacebuilding. Faith communities are key strategic partners for sustainable peace and localising multilateral commitments to promote understanding of diversity among and within religious communities.
  - States and multilateral organisations actively engage faith actors including women and girls in the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goal 16, the women, peace, and security agenda and the national action plans. They have been particularly impactful in building bridges between communities and fostering lasting relationships and intergenerational dialogue.
  - States and multilateral organisations ensure that the voices of faith actors, including those of women and minorities are heard at all levels and all matters that concern them.
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