



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

#### Sixtieth session

14-24 March 2016

**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 Dianova International, 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**

Dianova International is a network operating in 11 countries in the Americas and Europe, where it is developing innovative programmes and projects in the areas of education, youth and addiction prevention and treatment, as well as in the area of social and community development. The topic of women is at the forefront of the policies of Dianova International, which is strongly committed to the empowerment of women, actively combating discrimination and promoting access to education, particularly in rural areas, so that women and girls can be the vehicle for cultural change and community development.

### **Women and addiction in relation to development**

On the occasion of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, to be held from 19 to 21 April 2016 in New York, Dianova International wishes to share some thoughts on the relationship between women, addiction and development. Women's rights and gender equality are rarely part of the discussions on the world drug problem.

Data provided by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) show that at the global level it is men who are most affected by drug use or trafficking, which means that the role of women as actors or victims is underestimated and not sufficiently researched, because they are not considered to play a predominant role. There is growing evidence that, in the more developed countries, a larger number of women are using drugs. In addition, the public health implications connected with drug abuse affect women as the more vulnerable population, for instance through unwanted pregnancies, difficult births and child abuse.

### **Empowerment of women through education and training**

Most of the female victims of drug trafficking come from low-income families with high levels of domestic violence, alcohol dependency, drug abuse and relatives' deaths from alcohol or drugs.

The evidence shows that, particularly in Latin America, most of the women involved in drug trafficking are victims of domestic violence and prostitution (UNODC). Access to education has been identified as the best way of affecting the underlying causes, interrupting the cycle of exploitation and poverty. For this reason, efforts to achieve basic education for women and girls should receive ongoing support. It is also necessary to provide basic education in public health issues, sexual and reproductive health, maternal health and programmes to prevent drug abuse and diseases caused by addiction such as hepatitis and HIV.

### **Elimination and prevention of violence against women**

Substance abuse is one of the main causes of violence against women. In Myanmar, empirical evidence shows that proximity to drugs makes women more vulnerable to physical and sexual violence, exploitation and psychological abuse. Approximately six out of every ten Mexican migrant women are victims of abuse or other forms of sexual violence when they come in contact with drug traffickers (UNODC).

Information, education and preventive measures at the local level and community support foster a culture change involving a vision of progress towards gender parity, appreciating the contribution of women to the family, the community and society.

**Key recommendations/recommendations of critical factors**

On this subject, Dianova International submits the following key recommendations for the sixtieth session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women:

- Promote research on the topic of women, addiction and development in order to have an updated picture of the implications and to tackle the growing challenges.
  - Focus on the public health issue of female drug abuse, particularly as regards unwanted pregnancies, consequences of drug abuse during pregnancy, neonatal health problems due to drug use during gestation, and the risks of abuse and violence against children.
  - Combat discrimination against women with a drug abuse problem and promote opportunities for treatment and social reinsertion.
  - Advocate gender equality in access to treatment, facilitating access to recovery programmes for women, and availability of treatment taking into consideration gender differences and the needs of women, including those with children.
  - Provide alternatives by promoting education and training for women in vulnerable situations, reducing the number of women involved in drug trafficking because they lack opportunities for work and education or are victims of abuse.
  - Offer treatments and education services in the case of drug-related crimes or to meet basic economic needs. It is essential to cease incarceration on the sole grounds of drug use.
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