



Human Rights Office

International Institute Maria Ausiliatrice - IIMA

NGO in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

REPORT OF ACTIVITIES 2023

Introduction

In 2023, IIMA carried out various activities in accordance with the following Pillars of Action: Advocacy, Training and Capacity Building, and Communication.

Pillars of Action

1 – **Advocacy**: we provide UN experts and Member States representatives with relevant and reliable information on how human rights are being implemented at the local level, including denunciation of violations. IIMA Human Rights Office carries out this action in close collaboration with local members. Moreover, we provide local human rights defenders, including educators and youth, with the possibility to participate in relevant UN meetings and to advocate for their own rights.

2 – **Training and Capacity Building**: we organize training courses, in Geneva and at the local level, to make Human Rights Defenders aware of the UN international mechanisms and procedures intended to protect and promote human rights.

3 – **Communication**: we disseminate information in order to raise awareness of human rights at the national level.

Within the above-mentioned pillars of action, we work in synergy with other NGOs and Institutions in order to bring major issues to the attention of the international community and to identify top priorities for the human rights agenda.

The pillars of action are further defined below, and include their relationship to the strategic objectives of the organization.



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2023 Activities

| Pillar of Action | 2023 Activities |
|---|---|
| <p>➤ Objective 1: IIMA enables local actors, including children and young people, to express their views on the implementation of their human rights and share best practices throughout the world in order to support Governments in complying with their international human rights obligations.</p> | |
| Advocacy | <p>Universal Periodic Review (UPR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Produced reports for human rights defenders in the field on the UPR sessions of Benin, France, Gabon, Guatemala, Ghana and Peru.• Run consultations with human rights defenders in Canada, Colombia, Congo, Nigeria, Mexico and Uruguay in order to prepare <i>ad hoc</i> training and/or submit UPR submissions for these countries in 2023.• Issued joint submissions at the UPR of Canada, Colombia, Congo, Nigeria, Mexico and Uruguay.¹• Participated in the UPR pre-sessions of Canada and Colombia and prepared the UPR Session Reports for the local members in the countries examined.• Advocated before the UPR Session through the preparation of the Executive Summaries of the UPR Submissions on Argentina, Benin, and Zambia. These were disseminated among: 63 States for Argentina; 87 States for Benin; 82 States for Zambia.• Preparation of the Advocacy Assessment Tables for India, Brazil, Philippines, Ecuador, Argentina, Benin, and Zambia in order to assess the impact of advocacy actions undertaken on the UPR recommendations addressed to the countries concerned.• Delivered and co-sponsored oral statements on Item 6: UPR Outcomes during the 52nd and 53rd sessions of the Human Rights Council (HRC) pertaining to the UPR of Brazil, Ecuador, |

¹ The submissions and the following advocacy actions on Canada, Colombia, and Uruguay were the result of an extensive capacity building initiative addressed to local human rights defenders. All submissions are available at: <http://iimageneva.org/reports/>



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India, Philippines, Argentina, Benin, and Zambia. The Office also co-sponsored two additional statements on the adoption of UPR outcomes for India and the Philippines.²

Treaty Bodies

- Participated in the Treaty Bodies sessions for the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), producing reports local human rights defenders in Ireland, Bolivia, France, Spain, and Venezuela.

Human Rights Council (HRC)

- Produced and/or co-sponsored **eighteen additional oral statements** at the 52nd, 53rd, and 54th sessions of the Human Rights Council on various themes, including the right to education, the rights of indigenous people, the right to development, the rights of children, youth, and women, international solidarity, cyberbullying against children, the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, and human rights education.³
- Co-sponsored the **side events**: '*Embedding Youth Leadership and Participation into Climate Action and Decision-making within and beyond the Caritas Network*', and '*Advancing youth rights across UN human rights mechanisms*' in conjunction with the 54th session of the HRC.⁴
- Participated in HRC special session on the "Human rights impact of the ongoing conflict in the Sudan" (11 May 2023).

Other Advocacy activities

- In the framework of the 'International Day of the Girl (IDG) Summit (Working group on Girls)- 11 Days of Action 2023!', IIMA promoted the IDG Sponsorship Day October 7 on '**Investing in Girls' Leadership and Power**'.⁵
- In the framework of "**Human Rights 75 Pledges** and Vision on the Future of Human Rights", promoted by the OHCHR, IIMA together with VIDES presented a Pledge focusing on '**Youth**

² All statements are available at: <http://iimageneva.org/statements/>

³ *Ibidem*.

⁴ See: <https://iimageneva.org/iima-and-vides-participation-in-the-54th-session-of-the-human-rights-council/>

⁵ See: <https://dayofthegirlsummit.org/october-day/october-7th-2/>



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Empowerment through Human Rights: A Call for Youth Meaningful Participation and Systematic Mainstreaming'.⁶

- In conjunction with the UN High-level event for the 75th anniversary of the UNDHR, IIMA co-sponsored the side event 'The Universality of Human Rights and Responsibility to Care' and co-signed a **Joint Press Release** 'Reaffirming our commitment to engage with the UN system to voice the concerns of the most vulnerable populations'.⁷

Research-based reports

- **Contributed to the OHCHR Consultation in preparation for the HRC Panel Discussion on Youth and human rights**, to be held at the 54th HRC session, focusing on "youth engagement with climate change and global environmental decision-making processes."
- **Contributed to two calls for inputs on "Youth participation and engagement in intergovernmental forums: challenges and opportunities", and on "We are not just the future: challenges faced by child and youth human rights defenders"**, issued by the Independent Expert on International Order and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, respectively. Inputs from IIMA members in Brazil, India, Philippines, and the United States of America were included.

- **Objective 2:** IIMA reinforces the use of the defense mechanisms for the rights of children and youth among both IIMA educators and society at large.

Training and Capacity Building

- **Provided training sessions in Geneva for 5 youth activists who collaborated with the IIMA Human Rights Office.**
- **Provided Targeted Online trainings to 39 local human rights defenders, from Brazil, Canada, Ecuador, India, Philippines, and Uruguay** to engage with the UPR of their respective countries (drafting of UPR submissions, Monitoring and Follow up).
- **Contributed to the formation of 86 educators** from Switzerland and Italy.

⁶ See: <https://iimageneva.org/human-rights-day-2023/> and <http://iimageneva.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/IIMA-and-VIDES-pledge-UDHR-75-2023.pdf>

⁷ See: <https://ccig-iccg.org/ccig-joint-press-release/>



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- **Contributed to Online Workshops for 72 IIMA local coordinators from India, Philippines, Kenya, Ethiopia, Colombia, Spain, Argentina, Mexico, Dominican Republic, Uruguay, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Benin, Brazil, Japan, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Korea, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Vietnam** focusing on the right to education as cultural right and care for the environment.
- In the framework of the EU Project 'Youth to Reshape the World', conducted a **Webinar on Youth engagement in advocacy at UN level** to inform 30 youth activists about the recent achievements and upcoming opportunities for youth rights advocacy within the UN Human Rights Council.⁸
- In the framework of the Project 'A Multi-Congregational Observatory to advance girls' rights in 6 countries in the post-pandemic: A joint effort to close the digital divide and guarantee girls' mental health', **conducted two online Training sessions** addressed to **20 girls and young women (14 – 21 years old) as well as local project coordinators from Ecuador, Kenya, India, Nepal, Peru and South Sudan** to effectively engage with UN system for the protection of Human rights, by developing oral statements and reporting to the Universal Periodic Review.⁹

- **Objective 3:** IIMA shares advocacy tools as well as other human rights-based materials with local human rights defenders and international organizations.

Communication and information

- **Update and development of IIMA website in English and Italian.**
- **Disseminated information** through the IIMA website (www.iimageneva.org) in order to raise awareness of human rights at the national and international levels. In 2023, the following materials were published on IIMA website: twenty-two (22) articles,¹⁰ in English and Italian; six (6) UPR Submissions; fourteen (14) oral statements.

⁸ See: <https://iimageneva.org/youth-to-reshape-the-world-youth-as-advocates-and-agents-of-transformative-actions-in-social-inclusion-and-environment-protection/>

⁹ See: <https://iimageneva.org/a-multi-congregational-observatory-to-advance-girls-rights-in-6-countries-in-the-post-pandemic-a-joint-effort-to-close-the-digital-divide-and-guarantee-girls-mental-health/>

¹⁰ All web-articles are available at: <http://iimageneva.org/blog/>



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- Contributed several articles on the website ¹¹ and the specialized magazine of the Salesian Sisters.¹²

Networking: IIMA **work in synergy** with other NGOs and Institutions in order to bring attention of the international community to the major issues and identify top priorities for the human rights agenda.

Networking and Fundraising

- **IIMA participated in various NGO working groups and platforms** such as: the Geneva Catholic NGO Forum, and its Platforms on the Right to Education, the Right to Development and International Solidarity, the Working Group on Human Rights Education and Learning (WGHREL), the International Catholic Center of Geneva (CCIG), and the International Catholic NGO Forum (Rome based).
- IIMA continues to launch the **Project Network of Youth Defenders of Human Rights and the Common Good** among Institutions of Higher Studies¹³ based in the different regions of the world.
- **IIMA works closely with VIDES International** in delivering oral statements and submitting the UPR Submissions of some Countries where its members are present.
- IIMA partners with VIDES International in various advocacy activities for the **EU Project 'Youth to Reshape the World'**. In particular, two coordination meetings were held with the participation of European youth and educators.¹⁴
- IIMA partners with VIDES International in various advocacy activities for the **Project 'A Multi-Congregational Observatory to advance girls' rights in 6 countries in the post-pandemic: A joint effort to close the digital divide and guarantee girls' mental health'**. A team of **10 girls and young women from Ecuador, Kenya, India, Nepal, Peru and South Sudan** was selected as participants, informants, co-designers, and advocates to speak up about the identified issues, the innovative programs they are engaged in, and acquire the

¹¹ www.cgfmanet.org

¹² Rivista delle FMA DMA (Da Mihi Anima) n°1 and 4, 2023.

¹³ ISS-FMA, *Istituzioni di Studi Superiori*.

¹⁴ Project "Youth to reshape the World –First Steps: 2023 Action Plan for Youth as Advocates and Agents of Transformative Actions in Social Inclusion and Environment Protection". See: <https://iimageneva.org/youth-to-reshape-the-world-youth-as-advocates-and-agents-of-transformative-actions-in-social-inclusion-and-environment-protection/>



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ability to converse with other girls, NGO's and Member State Representatives.¹⁵

- IIMA partners with VIDES International in various advocacy activities for the **Project 'KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER – How to move from institutionalization towards family-based solutions in child care in India and Kenya'**. IIMA intervened in the online event "*How to move from institutionalization towards family-based solutions in child care, in India and Kenya*".¹⁶
- **3 funding applications** were submitted to relevant donors.
- **Submitted to donor the final report of the project 'The 4th UPR Cycle: an opportunity for improving human rights in Brazil, Ecuador, India and the Philippines'** (Beneficiaries: 42 persons).
- **Annual narrative and financial reporting.**

¹⁵ See: <https://iimageneva.org/a-multi-congregational-observatory-to-advance-girls-rights-in-6-countries-in-the-post-pandemic-a-joint-effort-to-close-the-digital-divide-and-guarantee-girls-mental-health/>

¹⁶ See: <https://iimageneva.org/keeping-families-together-how-to-move-from-institutionalization-towards-family-based-solutions-in-child-care-in-india-and-kenya/>