

# BRIDGING BORDERS



Farmers prepare meals in Padilla, a small town in the Chuquisaca Department, Bolivia.

Elizabeth Fernandez –  
Pedagoga de Fundación ACLU

## TOWARDS A **FAIR** AND **EQUAL** SOCIETY: **WOMEN** TAKE THE LEAD

Roxana Dulón Gonzáles PhD is the Regional Director of Fundación Acción Cultural Loyola.

**T**wenty years into the new millennium, we still face the challenge of creating a just and equal society and of narrowing the inequality gaps. There are policies, practices and mindsets that we must overcome in order to build a just

world. Among these are patriarchy, misogyny and disregard for the opinions of youth and Indigenous people. We continue to look at the world as if it were homogeneous. We analyze data considering averages, overlooking the extreme

differences which reveal the injustices and inequalities.

In 2015, the United Nations Development Summit adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a 15-year plan

# A WORD FROM **JENNY CAFISO** | CJI DIRECTOR



These are times of great change, but we are not all living them in the same way. As many have said, we are all in the same storm, but not in the same boat. The pandemic and current global crisis have shown the cracks that already exist in society and further deepened them. The most marginalized and vulnerable sectors of society have been impacted more

severely: migrants and refugees, the elderly, people working in the informal economy, people in the Global South. Women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic in each of these sectors.

COVID-19 has further exacerbated the longstanding marginalization of women and pre-existing gender-based inequalities. In rich and poor countries, despite significant advances, women continue to be poorer, they are paid less, have less access to education, they are victims of violence, and they are the first to lose their jobs in a pandemic.

On the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Social Justice and Ecology Secretariat held in Rome in November 2019, Fr General Arturo Sosa SJ called us to review with courage those structures, culture and relationships that perpetuate gender inequality in the Society of Jesus, both internally and in its service to the community, as well as in the Church and in society.

At CJI we invited women who are engaged with Jesuit projects to write about the reality of women in their countries and how they are responding with courage and resilience to the current crisis. They make clear that a plan for a just recovery for all from the pandemic has to include gender justice at all levels of society and institutions. Women are not only victims of a system that marginalizes them, but they are also agents of change. They work with creativity to defend life and create a better future.

Speaking of changes, the CJI newsletter has a new name and new design, along with a new logo. Our hope is that these better reflect our mission today and the Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus.

BRIDGING BORDERS is what we are called to do at this time of great divisions – to work for equality in our structures and in all that we do, to heal our fragmented society, and to ensure that the recovery from the pandemic is based on justice for all.

We can take our inspiration from the women whose voices we hear in these pages - women who are “forged in resistance... but whose hearts remain tender and open.”

## The **vision & mission** of CJI

The **vision** of Canadian Jesuits International is a world of peace, justice and integrity of creation, transformed through active commitment and finding God in all things.

The **mission** of CJI is to love and to serve by working with people struggling for social justice and dignity in the world. Together with Jesuit and other partners, CJI responds in solidarity, through awareness-raising and advocacy in Canada and supporting partnerships in the Global South.

To learn more about Canadian Jesuits International or to make a donation, please contact us at:

70 Saint Mary Street  
Toronto, ON M5S 1J3

Tel: 416.944.8727  
(while working remotely)

Toll Free (within Canada & USA)  
1.800.448.2148

Email: [cji@jesuits.ca](mailto:cji@jesuits.ca)

**JENNY CAFISO**  
*Director*

**VICTOR REYES**  
*Editor*

**STEFANO MAERO**  
*Design*

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## ➔ Towards a fair and...

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with 17 goals. Goal #5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. The inclusion of gender equality as part of the 2030 Agenda shows that in spite of all the progress that women have made in attaining legal rights, access to education, decreased maternal mortality, increased political participation, greater engagement in the workplace and better access to credit, the position of many women in society has not changed significantly! Women still get paid less than their male counterparts; they are still less likely to be in positions of leadership; they provide caregiving three times more often than men; they continue to suffer physical, sexual and psychological violence; and countless still die at the hands of their current or former partners.

Over the last year, a group of women who work with the various apostolates of the Jesuit Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean (CPAL), have come together to share their experience and to elaborate concrete proposals from a gender justice perspective that reflect the courageous and valiant role of women within the Society of Jesus and in society in general.

Women are central to the social, pastoral, and educational work of the Society of Jesus in Latin America. Jesuit apostolates work with rural, Indigenous and migrant women as well as those involved in the urban popular movement. These women face discrimination based on class, ethnicity, race and poverty in addition to gender bias. Inspired by Ignatian Spirituality, women lead projects and take action. Jesuit apostolates support

their initiatives; conduct research; give voice to their testimony and experience; and question society's attitude towards gender inequality.

In the city of Sucre, Bolivia, *Fundación Acción Cultural Loyola*, a Jesuit institution inspired by Ignatian Spirituality and the struggle for social justice, has set out to analyze and raise awareness of how COVID-19 has affected women in Latin America, particularly in Brazil, Chile and Peru, where the pandemic has hit hard. Our research shows that COVID-19 has exposed and exacerbated pre-existing gender based inequalities despite global, regional and local recommendations that give priority to the care of life and make the care economy (i.e. looking after children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities; education; health care; and recreation services) central to public policy.

In Bolivia, as in many countries, women are at the forefront of the care economy and defense of life. They bring knowledge and creativity as well as give time and effort on the frontlines:

- in healthcare: as doctors, nurses, nursing assistants and cleaning staff;
- in the food supply chain: from food production to selling at markets or managing stores;
- in community solidarity initiatives: preparing meals in community kitchens; collecting

- and delivering basic items;
- on the streets, reinventing the informal economy and creating new opportunities: making protective equipment and supplies;
- in homes, where domestic activities have grown; some homes have even become small schools.

Countless women's faces and stories are at the centre of the fight against the pandemic, poverty, hunger and unemployment; yet, their names, rights and dreams are seldom seen or heard. Furthermore, many women face situations of uncertainty. The violation of their rights and the recommendation #stayAtHome is, for many, synonymous with #shutUpAtHome<sup>1</sup>.

To advance towards a just and equal society, it is necessary for men and women to be catalysts of change. Women who are heads of households, as well as those in positions of leadership in groups, collectives or unions, and especially leaders of governments, public and private organizations, academic institutions and religious organizations, need to commit themselves to social justice. May their actions benefit not only powerful women but also women who empower others!

<sup>1</sup> In 2019, 3,750 women in 18 Latin American countries were killed in domestic violence incidents. Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL).

## WOMEN OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN SOWING SEEDS OF EQUALITY

To read Dr González's article on the transformational work of women who work with CPAL, please scan this QR code using your phone or visit:

➔ <https://bit.ly/3b5AW50>



# YIP CO'TANTIC-THE **STRENGTH** IN OUR **HEART**

Marisela García Reyes is the General Coordinator of the AC Indigenous Rights Centre (CEDIAC) in Chiapas, Mexico.

## IDENTITY IN RESISTANCE

*“We must find new ways to fight racism against our community and within ourselves.”* These are the heartfelt words of Pascuala Vásquez, Councilor of the Indigenous Community Government of Chilón, Mexico, one of many communities seeking a new way of governance, based on their right to self-determination. Pascuala echoes the hope of many women of the Tzeltal Maya while shedding light on their struggle against racism.

Racism is internalized through cultural cringe: the devaluing of one’s own culture. Indigenous women are often forced to accept foreign customs and traditions as superior to their own. This sense of inferiority is exacerbated by the sexist behaviour of men in their own communities. Sebastiana del Carmen, Coordinator for CEDIAC, explains:

*Indigenous people have the right to translation services in public offices. This is essential for women from these communities as they are often illiterate and do not speak Spanish, unlike the men. However, translation services are often unavailable. Rather than endure violence in the form of discrimination by a system that is rigged against them, women stay at home. They fear their concerns will be ignored or judgments will favour men simply because they do not speak Spanish. This reinforces cultural cringe; many women feign ignorance of their native language; they pretend*

*not to be Indigenous and discriminate against other Indigenous women to feel superior.*

To counter this, there are Tzeltal Judges. These are women involved in the reconciliation process, who have set up “Care Centres” to help women whose rights have been violated and who need accompaniment or training. As defenders of Indigenous and women’s rights, the Tzeltal Judges approach conflict resolution from the perspective of their own culture and justice system and do not seek punitive justice. This is contrary to the government system which aims to mete out fines and punishment, a system prone to corruption.

Fighting for their rights and addressing the violence these women have experienced has not been easy. The Judges or Councilors are often ridiculed. Authorities and even their own communities tell them: *“Your place is in the home, taking care of your husbands, not resolving conflicts.”*


The government opposes the official recognition of the Indigenous Community Government. However, the Councilors continue to forge ahead. They hope that opening the eyes

of their community to violence against women will prevent its normalization; that patriarchy and internalized racism will not be embedded in their own culture; and people will come together to take action.

**EACH STRUGGLE IS NOT ISOLATED, IT IS SYSTEMIC.**

The Councilors’ fight against discrimination and racism goes beyond their community. They have participated at the negotiating table with State authorities who continually question their right to govern themselves according to Indigenous law. They have had to show they can maintain viable institutions; that their laws are rational; and their customs and traditions are not relics of the past.

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 Pascuala at a press conference in Tuxtla Gutiérrez (Chiapas, Mexico), August 2019.



# EASTERN AFRICA: COUNTERING THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Diana Karua is Programs Officer of the Jesuits of Eastern Africa Province.


The first case of COVID-19 in Africa was recorded in Egypt in February. The spread of the virus was slow at first, but the numbers soon grew exponentially. By August 31, the World Health Organization (WHO) had confirmed over 1 million cases and close to 22,000 related deaths. COVID-19 has unleashed socio-economic devastation: businesses and churches have closed and more households forced into poverty.

COVID-19 has also put a strain on existing gender inequalities. The average wages of women are already lower than that of men; now, more women who work in education, health, hospitality and small enterprises are forced out of their jobs. School closures have increased the need for childcare; exposed boys and girls to the likelihood of drug and alcohol abuse; and increased girls' risks for early pregnancy. The pandemic has resulted in increased violence against women, broken homes, and more women-led households that need support.

The Jesuits of Eastern Africa Province (AOR) supports local communities in adapting to these new conditions. The Province, comprised of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Sudan, South Sudan and Ethiopia, works with local and international partners, including CJI, to ensure that those affected are empowered and have the resources to protect themselves. AOR

values supporting women and children during this critical time through proper access to healthcare. The Province gave a major boost to medical staff and expectant and new mothers by providing Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) as well as medication to St Joseph the Worker Catholic Dispensary in Kenya and Cardinal Rugambwa Hospital in Tanzania.

The Province also provided PPEs and installed hand washing stations in all its schools across its countries of operation. Radio Kwizera in Tanzania carries out Information, Education and Communication activities by engaging women on the importance of personal protection and social distancing. The Jesuit apostolates in South Sudan distribute food and hand sanitizers. A lot more needs to be done.

 Radio Kwizera journalist, Ms Saum Juma, visits grade 5 students in Ngara District, Kagera Region, Tanzania.



The parishes of St Charles Lwanga and St Joseph the Worker in Kenya provide food, sanitization items and rent subsidies. Requests for support continue to rise, especially from women. Women and girls often bear the brunt of poverty and will search for any means to support their families.

Over 1,500 families have benefitted from the emergency response provided by the AOR, especially women, children, people living with HIV/AIDS and the elderly. Efforts include psychosocial support for those exposed to gender-based violence and discrimination.

Despite all the interventions across Africa, gender inequality, not COVID-19, remains the greatest threat to Africa's future. Longstanding traditions, political systems and stereotypes of women continue to widen the gap. More initiatives should be implemented to empower women. Central to these are education, employment and health. By addressing the gender gap, both women and men will have equal access to decision-making and leadership opportunities, enhancing Africa's chances of better development, economic growth and weathering the COVID-19 crisis.

We are grateful for how far we have come. Thank you to our partners, friends and well-wishers for your support, which has benefitted the communities we work with. ASANTE SANA!

## RACIAL JUSTICE CONVERSATIONS

The recent deaths of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) across the United States and Canada have sparked an unprecedented response around the world. There is a call for monumental shifts in addressing racial justice and systemic oppression. Different sectors of society are being asked to review and reflect upon attitudes and norms that perpetuate racial bias, white privilege and systemic racism. This is both personal and societal work, and for many, an eye-opening experience.

At CJI, the work of undoing oppression is important within the organization and in our relationships with our international partners. We have a lot to do at various levels. As a small step, we have invited a small group of students who attended our advocacy symposium last February to engage in ongoing conversations on racial justice. Fr Mario Serrano SJ, one of our partners from the Dominican Republic, joined us last July 27 to offer his reflections on this issue. Donovan Martin, a student from St. Paul's High School in Winnipeg, said that racism is not only overt but covert, which is "harder to eliminate." He goes on to say, "as a result, preconceived biases and notions are passed down with ease." Our continuing conversations show us it is essential to nurture dialogue and get more people talking. Together we need to dismantle both overt and covert racism for equality in Canada and around the world.

## GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND LEADERSHIP COURSE

CJI is launching a course on global citizenship and leadership rooted in Ignatian spiritual reflection, analysis, solidarity, collaboration, and action. The course will equip participants with tools for transformative leadership and will explore:

1. discernment and self-awareness for critical consciousness;
2. understanding composition of place and valuing our global

community; 3. developing an appreciation for Catholic Social Teaching and humanitarian principles; 4. engaging in advocacy for environmental justice, human rights or sustainable economics. The first cohort is scheduled to begin in January 2021.

For more information, please contact Pieter Niemeyer at [pniemeyer@jesuits.org](mailto:pniemeyer@jesuits.org).

## WEBINARS ON THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

Last June 25, CJI presented *A cry from the Amazon: Indigenous communities threatened by COVID-19*, a webinar with Fr Alfredo Ferro SJ, Coordinator for the Jesuit Service for the Pan-Amazon Region (SJPAM) and Anitalia Pijachi, Uitota Indigenous community leader. Fr Alfredo and Anitalia talked about their experiences with marginalized communities in the Amazon who have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Another webinar was held last September 2 with Fr Pascal Xalxo SJ, Director of Human Life

Development and Research Centre (HLDRC) and Babita Biswakarma, Program Coordinator of Hayden Hall. Their presentations showed how COVID-19 has exposed systemic inequalities in India.

Both webinars demonstrated that overcoming the pandemic and inequality requires raising awareness and working for justice at all levels of society. We would like to thank all the presenters for sharing their knowledge, wisdom and experiences with CJI supporters.

Recordings of all our webinars can be found on our website:

 [canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/webinars](https://canadianjesuitsinternational.ca/webinars)

 Women in Kolkata, India wait in line for food rations during the lockdown.



Jesuit Conference of South Asia

## ↗ Yip Co'tantic-The **strength** in our **heart**

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During these negotiations, the women Councilors proudly wore their traditional Tseltal dress and spoke Spanish, a language that is not their own. As a consequence, they were subjected to racist and sexist taunts. They were accused of hindering progress for defending their right to self-determination. They held their head high and said:

*"We do not want another government, but a different way of governing."*

These are women forged in resistance; women who fight fear by leading and organizing; who embrace and celebrate their culture through multi-colored clothing. They continue to fight against discrimination. They get

discouraged or tired when faced with sexist and abusive behaviour from men and when forced to question the value of their culture. However, they believe, hope, and trust in themselves and in their community. They are women who have struggled hard but whose hearts remain tender and open. Strong and courageous; women with names: Pascuala, Sebastiana, María; Yip Co'tantic women, women with strength in their hearts.

## **CJI** AND PARTNERS RESPOND TO **COVID-19**

**C**JJI is responding to the needs of our partners and the communities they serve who have been hit hardest by COVID-19: marginalized communities, migrants, Indigenous people, the sick and the elderly. We understand the best way to support their COVID-19 response and ongoing work is recognizing the need for flexibility. We remain committed to existing programs while acknowledging many projects need to adapt to changing conditions; some activities must be put on hold.

In South Sudan, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is still dealing with Ebola at the refugee camp in Yambio but made responding to COVID-19 a priority. They provide food and educational materials to school aged children, despite schools being closed. JRS has also distributed recreational materials to help children cope and has installed handwashing facilities to prepare schools for safe reopening. In March, migrant workers in India were left unemployed and homeless due to the lockdown. Millions were forced to walk hundreds of kilometres to reach their home

provinces. CJI responded by providing immediate financial support to our Jesuit partners to provide food and basic hygiene items to migrant workers.

In Brazil, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela and Liberia, our partners provide food baskets and hygiene kits and promote proper hygiene as part of their efforts to support marginalized communities and to stop the spread of COVID-19. A COMPARTE seminar, for people from across Latin America, was cancelled. The participants have

instead met online to continue learning from each other.

The August 4 explosion in Lebanon has made access to food and essential items, proper hygiene and shelter more critical. The Jesuits and JRS teams have scaled up their ongoing COVID-19 relief operations to address both crises.

Thank you for making our partners' work possible. Please continue to support our COVID-19 Emergency Appeal by visiting: [canadianjesuitsinternational.ca](https://canadianjesuitsinternational.ca)



**WE CANNOT SUCCEED WHEN HALF OF US ARE HELD BACK**



Hayden Hall

**B**abita Biswakarma is the Program Coordinator of Hayden Hall in Darjeeling, India. She writes about Hayden Hall's work with marginalized and abused women, and how COVID-19 has affected them. To read more, please use your phone and scan the QR code above or visit:

<https://bit.ly/2EZziWx>

Julie Rai weaves a bag at Hayden Hall.


## OUR **DONORS** SPEAK: LET'S **DREAM** TOGETHER

When I was an undergraduate student at Campion College, I began to really connect with Ignatian spirituality and with the Jesuits themselves. I saw in them a community of people for whom intellect and imagination were fully integrated into an understanding of faith. I saw men who were dreamers, but also people with purpose, and I wanted to be a part of it.

I am never going to be a Jesuit, because I am a woman, but also because it's not my calling. But through organizations like CJI, I can still be part of the global mission of the Society of Jesus.

In July 2018, I joined a group of educators on the Caribbean Solidarity Tour, a trip organized by CJI to visit the Dominican Republic and Haiti. We went to reflect on our place in the work for justice. During a visit to a school in Haiti, our host, Father Pérard Monestime SJ, talked about how ambitious projects come to fruition. He said, "Jesuits, we dream. And we say, let's dream together. And then make dreams reality."



 Sarah Greenwood in Dajabon, Dominican Republic during the CJI Solidarity Trip.

"Let's dream together" is an acknowledgement that it takes community action to create a just world. It can't be done by Jesuits alone – and it shouldn't be! The world we want to build needs the dreams of workers, parents, young people, children, and, yes, donors. And when we see ourselves being on the mission together, the dreams start to become reality.

*Sarah Greenwood is the Academic Enrichment Coordinator at Campion College in Regina, Saskatchewan. Her writing about Jesuits includes an ethnography of Jesuits in Canada, and a blog on Ignatian prayer.*

## THANK YOU **BR PAUL**, WELCOME **FR ANDREW!**

The words "thank you" are not enough to express our gratitude for the nearly 50 years of service Br Paul Desmarais SJ devoted to Zambia and the Kasisi Agriculture Training Centre (KATC). Through his vision and leadership, KATC has helped hundreds of farmers attain sustainable livelihoods through organic farming. We wish Br Paul the best as he moves on to

his next adventure. We also extend a warm welcome to Fr Andrew Simpasa SJ, the incoming director of KATC.

To learn more about Br Paul and Fr Andrew, please scan this QR code using your phone or visit:

 <https://bit.ly/31uMIH5>



## **COVID-19** EMERGENCY APPEAL

Our Jesuit partners have not wavered in their support of people affected by this pandemic. We ask that you do not waver in yours.

Please **give generously** by making a one-time donation or a regular monthly donation.

Tax receipts will be issued for gifts of \$20 or more. All personal information is held in accordance with Canadian Government Privacy Policy.

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