

What I learned at the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development

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1. There's nothing like being here in person.

Reading the IBVM UN NGO Updates, one can get a sense of the activity at the UN but nothing compares to the frenetic pace of an actual UN meeting. The negotiating that takes place between Member States; the back and forth of civil society, Member States and UN representatives; and the strategizing amongst civil society members – all of this takes on new meaning when witnessed in person. I came away from the HLPF with a renewed appreciation of the UN and its attempts to include all in discussion and decision-making. I would invite all CJ/IBVM to come and experience the UN – it will change the way you think about the world!



Mary Mallany, ibvm, Veronica Ward, Sarah Rudolph, ibvm at an informal meet and greet with the Canadian government.

2. It takes people power to make this work.

The work of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a long-term effort. Spanning 15 years and 17 goals, there is a lot to be done. In order for the work to be done well, we need people committed to the process. I witnessed that commitment firsthand at our UN NGO where our Sisters work on issues of development each day but now I understand that it is equally important to be engaged and committed back home. I (and we as CJ/IBVM) are critical elements of moving this work forward in our home countries by helping to keep our governments accountable and on track to achieve the SDGs. All of the dialogue and debate at the HLPF will become meaningless if no action is taken when the meeting ends. As CJ/IBVM, we must commit ourselves to the follow up necessary to make the SDGs a reality.

3. It's better together.

Many voices are louder and wiser than a single voice. Working with a group of Canadian NGOs to write interventions made this real to me. I felt part of a team and not an isolated player in the UN system. But more importantly, there is a genius that occurs when people create

something together – the collective wisdom of the group emerges and something powerful and true is produced. Consequently, the interventions delivered during the Canadian Voluntary National Review reflected each of our voices and our desire to ensure that no one is left behind.



The launch of [Alliance2030](#) – a Canadian civil society partnership to achieve the SDGs.

4. The UN needs us.

As a CJ/IBVM network we have expertise that is invaluable - in many of the SDGs areas - poverty, education, health care, gender equality, ecology, peacebuilding, and many more. We minister to the most vulnerable groups in our countries and we know who is falling through the cracks of available services. The UN and Member States need to learn from our expertise and our experiences on the ground. It's therefore essential for us to be ready with evidence and advice when our countries are preparing their Voluntary National Reviews. Our voices and our expertise can help to effect real change in the world. This is our opportunity!

REMEMBER:

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- 2. It takes people power to make this work.**
- 3. It's better together**
- 4. The UN needs us.**