

HOME PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

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THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

1. NO POVERTY
2. ZERO HUNGER
3. GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
4. QUALITY EDUCATION
5. GENDER EQUALITY
6. CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
7. AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
8. DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
9. INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
10. REDUCED INEQUALITIES
11. SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
12. RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION
13. CLIMATE ACTION
14. LIFE BELOW WATER
15. LIFE ON LAND
16. PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS
17. PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

NO ONE LEFT BEHIND

The UN 2030 Agenda commits to eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development worldwide by 2030, ensuring that NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND.

It is no easy task, is it? But as White Ribboners, we have tried to live up to this principle in our families, communities, societies and internationally, utilizing every possible way to influence the world around us. The agenda looks different across countries. A great difficulty in one country may not pose a problem everywhere, but each society has its challenges.

I have noticed that when an individual comes up with a good, intuitive solution to a problem, his or her idea often spreads quickly, bringing increased well-being to others near and far. Similarly, the WWCTU began as a vision given by God to a single person, and her work has been carried on by others around the world and thereby benefited a great number of people. Various local White Ribboners have come up with wonderful programs and ideas, constantly praying for guidance in terms of how to develop their methods and increase the yield of their traditional work. We should therefore listen attentively to all proposals and continue praying incessantly. The White Ribbon movement has many forms of work that must be carried on, but we must also be prepared to try new methods when appropriate. In order to learn something new and gain a wider perspective, I am always interested in hearing about ideas old and new that have been tried in various countries. Methods that work in one context may also be of utility in another, and your ideas and thoughts may well be of use to fellow White Ribboners around the world. The HOME PROTECTION DEPARTMENT has come up with many wonderful ideas of relevance to sustainable development, the home being the core unit of society that must be strengthened and protected.

HOME PROTECTION

DRUGS

When children and adults use illicit drugs, they tend to gradually lose control over their lives. The public perception towards drugs is getting increasingly tolerant. If the impact of drugs on society increases, it may interfere with the goals for sustainable development. Drugs have destroyed many families that should have been core units of society, and it is imperative that we take immediate action on the national and local level as well as in individual homes to combat the scourge of illicit drugs.

1. We can write in newspapers, providing readers with facts on the harmful effects of drugs whenever we encounter voices that favor their legalization. We should also utilize social media for these purposes.
2. When discussing drugs with our children we must possess both the right knowledge and the wisdom to convey it effectively. When writing about HOME PROTECTION, I tried to understand recent drug trends in Europe, the United States, Canada, and other parts of the world. Keeping up with the available information is time-consuming, and I therefore suggest that we occasionally have a short school-like moment during our local meeting to learn about recent developments together. It is important that we follow the news not only in our own countries but try to gain an international perspective on the challenges at hand. Let us stay updated!
3. If we have leaflets or White Ribbon magazines (containing articles on drugs) we can deliver them to the public in different ways. Here in Finland many adolescents want to learn English, so a beautifully designed leaflet in English might attract their attention. For example, I have considered taking some copies of Australian leaflets for distribution.
4. We can host events for parents that include lectures on drugs by experts in the field. We have tried this idea locally by inviting a physician and family therapist who has published excellent books on family dynamics. Her topics include, for example, how hidden secrets in the family may create a foundation for depression and constitute an obstacle to a child's development. Various psychological factors may be identified behind drug abuse. Addicts to a diverse range of drugs can often be found in the family. In our efforts to deepen the public understanding of these issues, novel ideas and suggestions are greatly appreciated.
5. One of our local members can draw beautifully. She has drawn a touching Christmas card that she was so happy with that she had it printed. A well-drawn postcard presenting a happy family free from drugs could for many recipients be a reminder of the importance of love, home and family. Children

in our communities are often eager to draw and paint. Receiving a postcard painted by a child would feel wonderful indeed! We must lift up the FAMILY as the important basic source for sustainable development. It could be argued that respect for the family decreases as a consequence of drug abuse. We must stand firm with healthy values and dare to state them clearly in opposition to the disruptive forces that seek to place our youth under the yoke of addiction.

6. Many of us enjoy acting and would be eager to be part of a creative drama as part of the kind of lectures described above. This adds creativity to the presentation and gives those wanting to express themselves through drama an opportunity to do so. Children are often eager to sing and perform, and this willingness should be put to good use.
7. If the schools where we live have the opportunity to invite guest lecturers, it is important that we utilize this way of reaching out to a great number of pupils from various backgrounds. The one selected for this task must be familiar with the issues facing young people today in order to address the issues of most interest to them and thereby gain their trust.
8. When meeting children and adolescents, take the opportunity to have a conversation with them and to show them how a responsible adult thinks and acts. If we fail to provide young people with role models in terms of loving and caring our message is unlikely to be appreciated. There are plenty of situations in our daily lives in which we can encourage a young person and show him or her that we truly care.
9. Parents should be aware of current developments in youth culture with regard to illicit drugs. Open communication between the generations is important. Situations may change rapidly, for example when the child befriends someone who uses drugs. As a parent one must be prepared for discussions that may ensue in this context.

ALCOHOL

The governments of many countries have stated that they urgently need to establish commissions or agencies charged specifically with increasing state control over the market for alcoholic beverages and implementing a strategy for reducing the consumption of alcohol and its adverse effects. The purpose of these efforts is to comply with the UN sustainable goals.

The White Ribbon is a temperance movement. We hold the view that helping families to abstain from drugs is an excellent way of contributing to sustainable development and the future prosperity of our communities. Even if we cannot always change the tide in public policy, we can make a difference at the grassroots level through our work for the benefit of individual homes.

1. We can support poor families struggling with addiction to alcohol and help them find professional help. We can be a friend to a child. **WE DO NOT LEAVE ANYONE BEHIND.** As an organization we also try to find ways to combat similar problems in developing countries. A long time ago one of our neighbors was an alcoholic. The daughter of the family used to visit us, and I hope that my family somehow contributed positively to her upbringing by offering a safe haven.
2. We can offer mocktails, that is non-alcoholic cocktails, at our meetings and during other events. We can invite someone to give a lecture on healthy mocktails and use local vegetables, berries and fruits as ingredients. Many families are nowadays interested in mocktails, and the White Ribbon already has a long tradition of making them. By continuing to develop new ideas for such non-alcoholic beverages we can utilize contemporary interest in them to raise interest in the temperance movement. Making mocktails is not only fashionable, it creates happy memories of mixing colorful and refreshing drinks at home with the family. While focusing on the ingredients, children can be taught about the beauty of pure nature, the importance of bees for plant life and the health benefits of vitamins and minerals. Effective and fun lessons on sustainable development can thus be held in the kitchen. In addition to mocktails, smoothies have become increasingly popular and can serve our purposes in the same way.
3. If we as parents have sober habits, our children have a good example to follow and can enjoy balanced family life. Children need to be provided with correct information concerning drugs, alcohol and smoking **EARLY** as they may be exposed to illicit drugs much earlier than their parents anticipate. It is important to stay alert given the experience of many parents: "Oh, I could not imagine that our child would begin using drugs at such a young age!"

CHILDREN

Children are precious and fragile. We must protect and defend them in every way. We hope to highlight the word CHILD in a special manner this year. I myself would be eager to attend a lecture with this simple word as a key part of the title, and I think many would agree.

1. We could invite a good speaker to give a lecture on topics such as THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS IN A CHILD'S LIFE THAT ENABLE HIM OR HER TO DEVELOP INTO A BALANCED ADULT. Many parents write and say that they need advice. Although many countries have skilled therapists, physicians and family services available, I am convinced that our movement will continue to play a role everywhere due to our legacy of faithful work at the grassroots level. We should observe International Children's Day with small or more large-scale actions depending on available resources. If we pray, even small ideas are blessed by God. Our local group can donate a sum of money for a charitable purpose. We can also write something in the newspaper or hand out pieces of chocolate, sweets or small gifts along with a beautiful card to children in our communities. The possibilities for such gestures are endless.

GIRLS AND EDUCATION

Many girls are denied education on the basis of poverty, cultural norms and practices, poor infrastructure, violence and a fragile political situation. Education for girls is, however, a strategic development priority and a key determinant of the future prosperity of many underdeveloped countries.

In Finland women are considered to enjoy a high degree of equality with men. Many women hold senior positions in the private, public and third sector. Women in many other countries have a considerably weaker position, and we must continue to support education for girls in those countries so as to improve the future of their female population. Although we lack the resources to help everyone, individual White Ribboners and their local associations have engaged in efforts to secure education for many girls. As it is helpful for us to know more about the girls we are helping, we occasionally invite missionaries who have spent longer periods of time in these countries to share their knowledge with us. We observe the International Day of the Girl Child. By elaborating on these issues, we hope to come up with ideas that could improve the position of women and girls in various countries.

WOMEN

Gender discrimination still confines many women to positions below their potential. Empowering women is essential to securing a better future for them. On International Women's Day last year, we invited a lecturer to tell us about the role

of women in Nepal. We also discussed the remaining challenges women face in Finland. The challenges can be very different across countries. The women who participated discussed these topics and were eager to ask questions. I believe that women need more opportunities to spend time together and discuss various matters while getting to know other women. Many women have a strong ability to feel empathy towards women in faraway countries. If possible, let us provide them with more opportunities to do so. A happy mother creates a happy family, so a happy mother must be considered a gift to her child.

A HAPPY FAMILY - TIME FOR EACH OTHER

Many parents feel that they manage to spend too little time with their children. It is, however, very important for parents to prioritize quality time with them.

These are a few ideas I have picked up so far:

1. Having dinner together.
2. Sharing a hobby or finding suitable hobbies for the child.
3. Repairing something together, working together, cleaning together, making the garden or landscape more beautiful. Encourage the child while he or she is working!
4. Walking, hiking, camping or jogging together.
5. Having a trip together.
6. Reading is very important for a child's development. It is beneficial for them to get used to reading from an early age. This is best done together with an adult since he or she can introduce the child to a variety of good books and thereby demonstrate that books are, contrary to what many think, interesting and exciting. Adults should pick out books that are suitable for each stage in the child's maturation. By learning the value of reading books, children can find a pastime much more intellectual and stimulating than wasting time on the Internet.
7. Singing together.
8. Cooking and baking together.
9. Leaving small messages for or calling each other during the day.
10. Playing games together.
11. Saying THANK YOU, YOU ARE EXCELLENT, I LOVE YOU...

Even those who do not have a family of their own often have the opportunity to do something fun with a child sent to him or her by God. Joyful memories are priceless. Every child and adolescent is important.

We can use all these ideas on the local level as well: Going for a trip together, singing together, walking together, and inviting parents with their children to join common activities.

CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WANT TO CARE & TO HELP IF PROVIDED WITH OPPORTUNITIES

We must not forget that children and adolescents are often happy to serve and be of assistance. Examples include serving elderly people, visiting nursing homes with us to hand the residents flowers or singing for them, helping poor families, passing on some of their old toys, or donating money for charitable work abroad together with their parents. Most children and adolescents are very satisfied and happy to engage in this kind of work. Helping other people is a biblical principle that should be taught to children. The Finnish couple Ilkka and Kaija Erkkilä regularly collects litter in their town on a voluntary basis. Many children have been inspired by their example and participate in their efforts. When working together with the children, the Erkkiläs use the opportunity to tell them about the dangers of smoking while using litter pickers to remove cigarette butts from public areas. Similarly, when picking up inappropriately discarded plastic objects, they educate the children on the adverse effect of plastic on lakes and oceans. Many children and adolescents are concerned about the environment and changing climate. The Erkkiläs tell the children that God wants us to take care of the environment with love and respect. Young people who understand this are eager to change their habits step by step so as to contribute to a decrease in pollution. There are many possibilities to do something meaningful for the environment together, either at home or outdoors.

THE INTERNET

Parents must ensure that the children and adolescents under their supervision use the internet safely and responsibly. They should not go out to meet online acquaintances and should not send pictures of themselves or others in ways that allow unauthorized access. Neither should young users spend too much time playing games and prioritizing online chatting over face-to-face interaction. They must also understand that online bullying is not any more acceptable than any other form of bullying, and they should be encouraged to tell their parents or another adult whenever online bullying occurs. Online bullying has become a major problem among young people around the world. Many suffer from mental health problems as a result, and some are unable to study. Even cases of suicide motivated by online bullying have been reported.

THE CHRIST-BASED FAMILY

More than ever we must make sure to base family life on Christ.

CHILDREN ARE A GIFT FROM GOD

When happy, children are filled with joy, love, innocence and laughter. As adults we should create an environment that supports the expression of these cheerful emotions throughout childhood. Let us also nurture their faith in accordance with biblical teachings from cradle to adulthood. We should sing, pray, introduce good Christian books, teach, discuss, give advice and take them to Sunday school. We must teach them the value of the CHURCH. Praying together and uttering blessing for the child every evening tells him or her about divine protection, allowing the child to fall asleep assured of being safe.

BUT AS FOR YOU, CONTINUE IN WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED AND HAVE FIRMLY BELIEVED, KNOWING FROM WHOM YOU LEARNED IT AND HOW FROM CHILDHOOD YOU HAVE BEEN ACQUAINTED WITH THE SACRED WRITINGS, WHICH ARE ABLE TO MAKE YOU WISE FOR SALVATION THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS.

2 TIMOTHY 3:14-15

I am worried about many cartoons, films and books aimed at children and adolescents being full of supernatural powers, witchcraft, magic and other occult phenomena. This form of entertainment does little to expand the minds of young people and is often violent and frightening. Popular culture may thus guide children and adolescents astray onto many dark paths. I know many parents who, as a consequence, actively choose more edifying books and films for their children to enjoy.

The Good Shepherd never leaves anybody behind. Children often illustrate this biblical story by drawing the Good Shepherd holding the lamb in his arms, almost as if in a “womb”, rather than carrying it on his broad shoulders. Many children say that their parents, especially their mothers, are their good shepherds.

This biblical story very strongly touches children, youngsters and adults alike. A wonderful puppet show or drama can be based on it, and it is also possible to simply read the passage from the Bible and discuss it. The story tells us the most important message from God, namely that He loves everyone and wants every last one of us to be saved. Jesus wants to carry us home, and knowing this, we can be ensured of our own safety as well as that of our children.

I have a wish or request concerning this type of image of the Good Shepherd. I love small stories about children or a younger person being helped by someone when the situation in the family was difficult in one way or the other. I would like to collect this kind of stories from you and put them in my collection, from which I could, each year, pick a few to be sent out to White Ribboners all over the world as a source of inspiration. Printed collections of stories could also be distributed at our Convention.

Please mention your country, the place where the story takes place and something about the people involved. The aid the child or the adolescent receives in the story can be great or small.

Some examples:

The following happened to me in the Finnish village I lived in during the early 1960s. My mother suffered from an incurable cancer. I was the only child in the family and had nobody to talk to about this. Our neighbors had nine children. The mother of the family could see that I was lonely, so she hugged me and said: "YOU ARE OUR TENTH CHILD, COME TO US WHENEVER YOU WANT TO!"

An adolescent who lived with his mother started visiting a motor repair shop owned by my husband's family. The mechanics allowed him to spend time there, taught him some skills, let him accompany them in their work and were friendly towards him. Now he has reached adulthood and has found his way in life, and he is always happy when bumping into his old friends from the garage.

I trust that God wants us to engage in acts such as these. Efforts to protect homes can indeed be considered charitable deeds, like handing the needy a glass of water.

We want all children to find a straight, if sometimes narrow, path filled with blessings on their journey towards adulthood.

DO NOT BE AFRAID FOR I AM WITH YOU. ISAIAH 43:5