



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
17 November 2015

Original: English

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 All India Women’s Conference, 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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development

Change the mind set to accept change- Integrate gender equity culturally sensitive solutions

All India Women's Conference is of the view that women's empowerment for sustainable development cannot take place unless women are offered equal opportunities, there are gender specific policies and there is support from the community and family system. Without support from the family and the community women cannot get equal status in the society. A change of mindset is the crux of solving any problem. If any program needs to be successful it is imperative that people are convinced to accept it. Therefore, awareness is a must to influence the mindset of people. It is also very important that we understand people's culture, surroundings and their inhibitions to accept change and also offer them opportunities in their own geographical area to improve. Empowerment of women is an essential ingredient in protecting women's right and has to be looked at from a holistic perspective. Proper education, economic self sufficiency, self confidence and courage are needed on the part of the women with a matching response from men based on mutual respect. HE for SHE (to elaborate) Gender equality is a primary goal in all areas of social and economic development.

All India Women's Conference through its branches has been working with the community at the grassroots level. It is a fact that in these areas women do not have a direct standing in the credit market as they do not own any assets in their name. The vulnerability of women in this area is exacerbated by several predominant factors, for example massive illiteracy, rigid and conservative customs and traditions and many more such factors. No property rights in family property till 2005, the custom of dowry as a substitute to inheritance gave them the role of 2nd class members of the family and society, no budget for spending on their education. All India Women's Conference's role has been to support a change in the legal rights of women, stop the inhuman practice of female feticide, gender bias, etc. Through involvement of local leadership, awareness generating activities on rights and other social issues, advocacy and counselling, convincing the family and community to encourage women and girls to get education and acquire vocational skills, form self help groups and set up small entrepreneurs has proved significantly helpful in integrating gender equity solutions that are culturally sensitive.

Relying on this tried and tested holistic implementation strategy that is gender sensitive and takes into account the local social and economic conditions of the community, All India Women's Conference wishes to strengthen its activities at the micro level under the program of "Adoption of villages". We will focus on the theme "change the mindset" while delivering services to target the economic, health, education, social problems, sanitation and climate change issues covered under the Sustainable Development Goals.

To make the program cohesive in nature, the services offered would be quality health care and education, income generating activities for constant economic growth, sanitation and waste management, clean drinking water, renewable energy, climate change and awareness of rights. One of the important components is relating

literacy with skill so that women learn and earn. The program will cover preschool children, school dropouts and also school going children who need supportive education. As an initiative to sensitize boys on gender inequalities we have designed a program on Enhancing life skills of Adolescent Boys. During this stage of life when many physical and psychological changes are taking place, the children need proper guidance to decide their future and maintain social relations. This program aims to build resilience and promote positive mental health in teenage boys.

The other important component will be a rural community resource centre. This centre will function as a multisectorial service delivery centre. It will be a community meeting place where there will be exchange of information, computer literacy, cultural activities, discussion on women's education, income generating options, health and sanitation issues, women empowerment, planning of programs as per the need of community people, sharing of success stories. Village health dispensary will also be opened to take care of health needs of the community people. Income generating activities will be eco friendly. Solar drying of locally available fruits and vegetables, promotion of local craft items that are sellable are some of the activities that will be introduced. Every year, we hold a women's craft bazaar at Aga Khan Hall, All India Women's Conference Head office, New Delhi. We will give exposure to these women artisans, entrepreneurs to sell their products at competitive rates. It will produce many marketing options for them.

The approach will be bottom up involving the local men, women, girls and boys to frame future course of action. It will also encourage women groups to make the program self sustainable over a period of time. The success at this micro level can influence success at the macro level.

We feel that this approach will target many issues related to gender equality, family harmony, peaceful living, clean and green environment. It will also help to stop migration of the people from rural to urban areas who migrate in search of jobs. It will also keep the local dying art and culture alive by introducing income-generating activities that promote local art. Art and culture can also work to change the mindset of people

All India Women's Conference believes that a better informed Civil Society with a better mechanism for monitoring would lead to effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the coming 15 years. Commitment from the Indian government on some of the goals is essential to take on issues like poverty and inequality. All India Women's Conference aims to be part of this process of change with equal support and co-operation from the government.
