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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 Education Fund Association, 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

All India Women's Education Fund Association established India's premier home science college for women, the "Lady Irwin College" in 1932, towards the empowerment of women and youth.

The organization completes 86 years of service in promoting women and youth education and training to advance women's rights including ending violence against women; recognizing their role in family and child care; environmental sustainability; nutrition and health; imparting vocational skills and building women's capacity for political representation, especially at the village level.

Realizing that women's economic health is the gateway to achieve women's empowerment, the organization with support from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), New Delhi office, held a stakeholder's seminar "Transition of women from education to full employment" on 23 May 2015. Sessions were held on education and women's career development; creating an enabling environment for 'make in India'; and means towards achieving women's full potential. Participants included the India heads of International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Skill Development Ministry and Councils, Planning Commission, Distance Education Universities, entrepreneurs, civil society and beneficiaries. The outcome was a joint UNESCO and organization compendium of case studies on "Women, education, skills and work".

Recognizing that women's empowerment and success of the Sustainable Development Goals lies in world-wide implementation programmes, the organization, in response to the priority theme of the sixtieth session of the Commission on Status of Women "women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development", mapped the developmental programmes activities of its partner organization, Lupin Foundation, in the village of Nindana in the Indian state of Haryana. Each activity was first correlated with India's national policy and schemes and further linked to the appropriate Sustainable Development Goal and sub Goal.

Responding to the "NGO Committee on Status of Women's call to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to get involved with Breakout Groups at the Consultation Day, 13 March 2016, and submit project descriptions that focus on innovative ways to create new advocacy strategies, solutions, partnerships for non-governmental organizations to work together to implement and realize the Sustainable Development Goals, the organization submitted its proposal 'A world we women want, holistic village development, Nindana model village in the Indian state of Haryana' on 28 January 2016. Simultaneously, a power point presentation, containing photographs, as hard evidence, of the work already accomplished was also submitted. Since sustainable living is a way of life in India, the programme makes full use of community wisdom, capability of the Non-Governmental Organizations, the experience of the organizations of the United Nations, regional and national government agencies, civil society and the business sector.

Implementing the post 2015 development agenda: moving from commitments to results, and taking action to improve lives, the organization launched an impact

study “A world we women want”, to map rich implementation strategies based on grassroots voices from India, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and Africa. Observing the gender and youth perspectives, this study envisaged women in leadership roles, in charge of their own empowerment and not as mute beneficiaries. These implementation strategies were published in the Compendium of Good Practices and released nationally at a stakeholder’s consultation on 9 March 2016 in New Delhi. The programme was in partnership with Development Alternatives and All India Women’s Conference, with technical expertise from Pam Rajput, Convener Women 2030.

On 15 March 2016, at the Church Centre, UN Plaza, New York, the organization held a Parallel Event “A world we women want”. The Panel Chair was Rosa Lizarde, Global Director Feminist Task Force, New York with panellists from India, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Malawi.

Copies of the Compendium of Good Practices were shared with United Nations Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Deputy Executive Director, Lakshmi Puri.

One documented story of change in the Compendium was of Sumitra and Dayawati, farm women from rural Haryana, India who with equal ease upgraded and married their traditional knowledge with scientific technological innovations to reduce drudgery and improve their standard of living. Expertly wielding a twig as a drawing tool and the dusty ground as a board, they explained the intricacies of building a low-cost vermin-compost pit or a biogas plant to avid visitors; installing net houses for early cropping of nursery-grown vegetables; using improved quality seeds for profuse flowering; adopting efficient sowing methods to conserve water and energy; using innovative technology like the hand-held wheel hoe to reduce drudgery; or with veiled heads spoke about their journey of empowerment, at United Nations conferences.

A major conclusion from the grassroots, in the Compendium of Good Practices, was that women themselves voiced a crying need for sustainable livelihood opportunities near their homes, easy access to finance to set up small enterprises, easy forward and backward linkages to sustain their business initiatives, as these are not getting fulfilled to the required extent with the value chain approach.

The sixty first session of the Commission on Status of Women also echoes the need to create women’s livelihoods through the priority theme “Women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work”.

After Asia and Africa, the organization now plans to set up a Global South nations website ‘A world we women want’ to capture good practices in women’s economic empowerment. These will enable civil society to learn from the experiences of each other and access best practices of specific benefits for women in this precarious time of climate change, economic instability and inequality. It will help member states in the planning of national policies. It will aid in the work of the Commission and facilitate the United Nations to achieve the 2030 agenda for change.

New technology access and progressive employment opportunities by the organization include safe car driving training to 350 underprivileged women at

Maruti Suzuki India Limited training centres; some are being mobilised to become cab drivers for women passengers or are encouraged to become entrepreneurs; women are being identified to become insurance advisors; 150 women have been trained in self-defence techniques by Delhi Police instructors; cyber security workshops for 5,000 college students and faculty with Google India have been conducted; for farm women nine renewable energy awareness rural fairs have been held and they have been provided opportunities for solar equipment repair training; nursery plantations with improved seed and sowing practices have ensured larger harvests and provided income generation avenues; nutritious recipes and value added food preservation techniques of locally grown produce provide income generation at local fairs.

New skills and rapid development have widened the gap between the youth and the senior generation. The organization is conducting 'Intergenerational Solidarity' college workshops with support from the Ministry of Social Justice. While promoting the continuance of a harmonious environment, new technology like mobile messaging is being utilised to maintain dialogue between the generations.

Drug abuse among the youth is a growing menace. The organization is conducting college workshops to create awareness of, and recognize the signs of drug dependence. College associations are being formed to reduce the vulnerability of youth towards this hazard.

Sheena, a college student, with an annual family income of USD 4,500, is an example of the organization's efforts to introduce new skills and technology access. Selected by the organization to learn safe car driving at the Government and Maruti Suzuki India Limited Managed Institute of Driving Training and Research, Sarai Kale Khan, New Delhi, she was provided with a learner's license and trained for 35.5 days. The training curriculum, bifurcated between theory and practical skills, included lesson plans in basic car mechanics, traffic rules and their relevance, and issues related to driving like road rage, speeding, drunken driving and its fallouts. The instructor-led discussions situational analysis, with the solutions being drawn from the trainees. Advanced driving simulators replicated Indian driving conditions and the vagaries of the weather.

Sheena, after successful completion of the training, has been awarded the skill compliance certificate by the Automotive Skill Development Council. Her confidence in her own capabilities has grown tremendously and she has become a role model among her contemporaries and peers. On graduating from college she seeks to mobilize other women to learn car driving and plans to take up the role of an instructor. She will set herself up as an entrepreneur, skilled in a field that is newly accessible to women from underprivileged milieus; she will play a part in making roads safer by training more women and will be a beacon of hope to women of her community and neighbourhood.