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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

A World We Women Want is equitable, sustainable, and connected. This overarching programme towards raising women's equity in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is in response to the Commission on Status of Women priority themes of 2016 and 2017 and now 2018.

The All India Women's Education Fund Association commenced this programme in 2014 to celebrate 85 years of service in youth and women's welfare. Also, the founding body of the Lady Irwin College for women, the organization envisages women in leadership roles, in charge of their own empowerment, and not as mute beneficiaries.

On September 25, 2015, when countries adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all, as part of a new sustainable agenda, the organization channelled all programmes and strategies towards including the gender and youth perspective towards achieving the 2030 agenda for change.

The challenge in 2016 was to make the Goals better known, categorise activities that could represent individual Goals and sub goals and identify good, scalable, replicable implementation practices.

To understand the aspirations of the Indian youth and women and document their perspectives in a world they want, the organization held 16 rural focus group discussions in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Kerala. Overwhelmingly, the voices from the ground expressed a need for additional income to supplement their agricultural revenue; the importance of education was recognised as a means towards an improved livelihood so they sent their children to private schools and for extra tuition; they emphasized on capacity building with trainings on farms for improved crops, higher yield and healthy livestock management; they asked for information on irrigation practices using less water. Water and sanitation were major issues as even where toilets were available, water was scarce and only one pot of water had to suffice for bathing; water quality was poor with frequent occurrence of vomiting and bad stomachs; where electricity was available, hours were restricted and bills were exorbitant.

Access to hospitals was limited to deliveries, so to treat minor ailments they wanted to revive traditional knowledge and plant nurseries with medicinal plants with tending and watering divided among all family members; to make their gas cylinders, where available, last longer, they supplemented with fuel wood stoves. Wood collection consumed a major portion of their day, followed by farm work and house work. They desired freedom from this drudgery. They yearned to travel and see the world, they wanted mobility on cycles and 'scooties' to visit the nearby shops and for the occasional visit to a city mall.

To aid in the work of the UN, to make the Sustainable Development Goals better known and translate them into implementation plans, the organization examined the developmental activities of village Nindana, Haryana, that had been adopted under the umbrella of the Prime Minister's Model Village Programme. These achievements were linked to national policies and welfare schemes and further correlated with the specific Goal and sub Goal. Tangible indicators, preferred by rural youth and women included income and employment generation from planting trees of economic, environmental, social and cultural value; assigning rights over trees in public land to the poorest households; development of local nurseries; simplification of systems for payment of maintenance; advocacy of scientific and participatory assessment of watershed management and developing treatment measures for enhanced irrigation, improved drainage and groundwater

levels; mitigation of pollution, smokeless cooking stoves, making villages open defecation and social ban on polyethylene bags and harmful pollutants were affirmative environmental actions voiced by women village leaders participating in the political process.

To provide a global outlook to local initiatives, the organization formed linkages with Asian and African civil society organizations and documented their successful strategies towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in the Compendium of Good Practices. In 2016 at the invitation of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, the organisation shared this compendium with the Government; with civil society at the national launch; at the sixtieth session of the Commission on Status of Women with Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Ms. Lakshmi Puri; at the Indian High Commission with the Minister of Women and Child Development, Ms. Maneka Gandhi.

This Compendium of Good Practices from Asia and Africa firmly focused on the link between women's economic empowerment and the Goals. It also called for providing sustainable livelihood opportunities near homes, easy access to finance to set up small enterprises, easy forward and backward linkages to sustain business initiatives, the need to blend traditional with progressive employment opportunities and new technology access.

Responding to this need, the organization conducted a series of capacity building pilot programmes and workshops on traditional and progressive employment opportunities and new technology access among women, youth and senior citizens.

For farm women nine renewable energy awareness rural fairs were held with awareness of training opportunities in solar equipment repair; nursery plantations with improved seed and sowing practices ensured larger harvests and provided income generation avenues; nutritious recipes and value added food preservation techniques of locally grown produce provided income generation at local fairs.

In urban areas, 350 underprivileged women received safe car driver training at Maruti Suzuki India Limited training centres; some are being mobilised to become cab drivers for women passengers or 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.

To engage youth to take ownership of a safer planet, the organization conducted 26 cyber security workshops in colleges on safe technology access; Intergenerational Bonding workshops were held for 250 participants to build solidarity between the generations, bring stability into youthful lives and harness the untapped potential of senior citizens; the organization will be conducting 5 college workshops on the prevention of drug abuse and help the youth to realize their full potential.

During 2017-2018 the Government of Andaman and Nicobar Islands, is promoting economic empowerment by developing local handicrafts using local resources, with a comprehensive plan that includes product development, pricing, packaging, branding, marketing, sales, including online, and exhibitions.

In 2017 at the Commission on Status of Women, the organization launched the low cost big impact global south website www.aworldwewomenwant.org to invite stories of inspirational change that can be disseminated and cross pollinated to suit local conditions. The Compendium of Good Practices on women's economic empowerment from India was also released.

The organisation uses the Women Economic Empowerment approach to build the capacities of the different actors throughout the value chain and the two documented stories are from urban and rural pilot projects conducted by the organization.

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 organisation 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 approximately thirty-five days. After successful completion of the training, she 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 mobilise 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.

Sumitra and Dayawati, are 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 using the dusty ground as a board, they explain 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 speaking about their journey of empowerment at UN conferences.
