



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-second session

12–23 March 2018

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 Imam Ali’s Popular Students Relief Society, 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](#).

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

The process of the development of the villages is facing challenges nowadays and in many regions the traditional forms of agriculture, cattle breeding, and handicraft made by indigenous women are undermined by industrialisation. This has resulted in mass migrations from villages to cities and megacities. People who migrate from villages to cities live in marginalised regions in poverty because of high unemployment rates. Subsequently women and children are wrapped in complex layers of poverty.

In a patriarchal society that is also struggling with poverty and other forms of social harm, women automatically become inferior; their mere reason of existence becomes to serve men; and, they will be deprived from education and forced into arranged marriages at a very young age. This trend is a result of patriarchal traditions in the villages coupled with poverty and issues that migrant have to deal with when living in the city.

This crisis worsens with natural disasters such as drought and seasonal floods when people become poorer and deprived from their fundamental needs. For example, Balouch people from South East of Iran and South West of Pakistan have been forced to migrate to Tehran to earn a living from begging or working in inhumane conditions and by moving to the big city other than poverty they are dealing with new and bigger problems such as addiction and prostitution.

Imam Ali's Poverty Relief Society has spent years with impoverished Balouch minorities in Tehran to understand their culture and their issues to be able to help the women retain their self-esteem and enable them to get dignified jobs.

'Souzan Douzi' is a special type of sewing that is one of the cultural and traditional handicrafts made by Balouch women. Souzan Douzi is an art that has been undermined and underappreciated in recent years. Imam Ali's Popular Students Relief Society has marketed this art and combined it with modern art to reintroduce it to the market under a brand called 'Noora'. This has resulted in creating a network between Balouch women in Tehran, Balouchistan to produce high quality products and sell their work in a national and international level and generate income so they will not be forced into marriage and be able to continue their education. This movement has enabled women to earn their own living and be less influenced by the patriarchal system.

The 'Noora' brand includes accessorise, bags, shoes, clothes and other items, which are available for sale online and or in charity bazaars and national and international festivals with the presence of Balouch women themselves.

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