



# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General  
1 December 2016  
English  
Original: Arabic

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## Commission for Social Development

### Fifty-fifth session

1-10 February 2017

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and  
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:  
priority theme: strategies for the eradication of poverty to  
achieve sustainable development for all**

### **Statement submitted by Memory Trees Corporation, 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**

### 10 Solutions to poverty you may be

#### Introduction

Hunger is a symptom of poverty, not the other way around. Many Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) have been fighting hunger for decades, often feeding the same people over and over again. A primary goal or mission for some organizations is to enrol as many people as possible onto government social benefit programmes, for example, U.S. Federal Government SNAP (food stamps) programs, or similar.

#### The Issue

The reason why these solutions above are not sustainable is because they are focusing on a symptom (hunger) instead of the root cause of the symptom, which is poverty.

Memory Trees offers strategies for the eradication of poverty to achieve sustainable development for all. In our mission to deliver sustainable social impact, we offer these 10 solutions:

#### Education

No, not school. Not even books. Education means skills, thought leadership, confidence, an ability to know one's value in and to society, learning how to contribute, and more.

#### Entrepreneurship

Manufacturing and mining jobs are gone. They are not coming back. The good news is that anyone has the ability to turn stuff, including their skills, into cash. We teach people how. Maybe you could do the same?

#### Sustainable Food

When we feed someone who is hungry, we solve a short-term problem, usually for only a few hours, if we are lucky, maybe for a day. This is necessary, but hopelessly ineffective longer term, definitely not sustainable. Learn about sustainable food. There is an abundance of resources available on this topic.

#### Urban Farming

Look around. Admire the millions spent on area beautification. Open fields featuring manicured lawns, trees swaying in the breeze. Now imagine all that "wasted space" used for growing something to eat, like fruit trees lining city sidewalks, providing beautification, colours, shade ... and food!

#### Micro-Lending

Do you know how little money one needs to start a small business? We are not talking about multi-level marketing scams, or the cost of creating a new social

media web application. We are talking about, for example, a cutting board, a chef's knife, containers, and access to clean water ... the microcapital one might need to sell something originally grown from seed.

### Food Donations

Emergency relief agencies have this down pat. In fact, some are so well funded and organized that they are building their own little fiefdoms. It is often suggested that "he who controls the food, controls the people". Fortunately, emergency relief agencies do wonderful work. So please keep doing what you are doing! But, also read the section about sustainable food, above.

### Self-sufficiency

Ah, the old "teach people to fish" philosophy. Recently we presented a workshop to non-profit owners and self-sufficiency was one of our topics. Afterwards, a member of the audience challenged us by saying, "You can teach people to fish, but they still need a rod, reel, tackle and bait ..." True. But please see the section about microlending, above.

### Family Health

We used to call this "Empowerment of Women". During another workshop, a lady angrily stood up and loudly stated, "Men have a role to play in this too". Then she walked out. In another session, a possibly irate fundamentalist accused us of supporting "a woman's right to choose". Both were correct. That is why we changed this header to "Family Health". This change represents our entire contribution to the PC movement.

The United Nations and other leading research organizations offer studies with facts supporting the direct correlation between female empowerment, and a reduction in poverty levels and/or family income.

For example, Bangladesh was one of the poorest countries on Earth. Women of previous generations had 7-8 kids on average. Now, their daughters are having 1-2 kids. These mothers and their daughters are learning to become doctors, lawyers, etc. And they busy themselves by opening retail stores, or clothing factories where they can employ other women. These employees manufacture the cute clothes young women all over the world may elect to purchase at H&M, for example. It is not yet a perfectly designed socioeconomic system, and the working conditions are often atrocious ... but the ongoing community revitalization efforts are light years away from the previous suppressive, patriarchal system where men ruled unequivocally, and with absolute power, from before.

### Social Change

Many people resist education, science, and new facts while clinging to long-held beliefs learnt at an early age. Evolution greatly assists in this change management effort, even if superficially viewed as a system that offers humankind an "out with the old, in with the new" approach to problem solving. Some of our greatest obstacles to embracing change are old adages like, "It's always been this way", or "That's not how this works". Fortunately the Earth will ultimately shake

off people who resist change ... much like a dog might shake off water after a delightful summer frolicking.

#### Public/Private Collaboration

If you really think that your job is done when you have voted for your favourite politician, you might also be surprised “that nothing ever gets done”. No, rather identify and focus on people working for public entities that support your mission. And be persistent in order to get things done. For many people, their primary objectives may include job preservation and recognition. You might not be able to ensure they keep their jobs, but if they help you do yours, you surely will be able to allow them the benefit of receiving (all) the glory and recognition for their great contributions, in return!

#### Accomplishments

During the past year, Memory Trees has funded and created more than 20 urban farming and/or community garden projects. However, it is not about the garden, but rather about providing better access to resources for health.

We achieve the above by delivering holistic solutions that include educational workshops; by building play sets and outdoor fitness equipment for communities to use; by creating educational gardens to teach people about diet, health and nutrition; by setting up Internet Cafes to allow people to build CVs, get connected to e-mail, become computer literate; and more.

#### Recommendations

We work in areas where most people live at or below the poverty line. Often two or more part-time jobs are required to sustain 2-3 people, or more. We try to reverse-engineer this dilemma. We offer entrepreneurship programmes, and provide microfunding that allows people to start businesses. Each small business we create offers employment opportunities to previously unemployed people. Each reasonable paying job can support 2-3 people. At least one single parent does not have to go without food, in order for her child to have food, for one day or more, at a time.

#### In closing

Victor Hugo famously said (loosely translated), “No army can stop an idea whose time has come”. Memory Trees works to inspire healthy communities. One cannot aspire to health, without first achieving financial well-being. That is our approach to creating better access to resources for health, for the communities we serve.

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