



## **Economic and Social Council**

Distr.: General  
28 November 2017

Original: English

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### **Commission for Social Development**

#### **Fifty-sixth session**

31 January–7 February 2018

**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 the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, 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**

Endorsing Organizations in Special consultative status with ECOSOC are:

- Carmelite NGO
- Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary — Loreto Generalate
- International Public Policy Institute
- Partnership for Global justice
- Sisters of Charity Federation
- Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

## **Introduction**

Society of the Catholic Medical Missionaries, a faith-based, Non-governmental organization present in 18 countries around the world, hope that our experiences and insights can bring the United Nations closer to its goal of developing people-centered strategies to eradicate poverty and achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

Our world is quickly evolving in the face of obstacles like climate change, refugee crises, and urbanization; strategies for fighting poverty must evolve as well since 767 million people live on less than \$1.90 a day. These people are more than a broad statistic; they are real people with hopes and aspirations for a better life. We strongly believe that the international community must speak for them and act for them.

## **Right tools for measuring poverty**

Poverty is not just an income deficit. Poverty is isolation: isolation from opportunities, society, necessities, resources, work, and security. Many of these amenities are not quantifiable, yet the common method for describing poverty still uses individual's daily expenditure as a measurement. The definition of poverty as living on less than \$1.90 a day, and extreme poverty as living on less than \$1.25 are not useful when developing strategy for tackling poverty because income is not directly correlated to quality of life. Quantifying poverty based on access to amenities would be more useful in achieving sustainable development. Poverty has many different faces that is why the United Nations needs to develop a measurement tool that can analyze instead of simplifying. Developing a quality-of-life amenity-based formula for assessing poverty would be beneficial because it would address the social dimensions of poor communities with details that would be useful during local implementation. Poverty should be thought of as a person's relationship with resources, needs, and amenities instead of monetary scarcity.

As the United Nations' Second Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008–2017) is ending this year, it is important to come up with a new measurement tool and new strategies.

## **Engaging Non-Governmental/Faith Based Organizations in public policy processes**

Often, the urgency of the world's problems, especially poverty, is lost in the formality and bureaucracy of the United Nations. NGOs are an under-utilized resource that can advocate for individuals and understand the nuances between different occurrences of poverty. The niche that NGOs inhabit helps bridge the gap between the immense goals of the United Nations and far corners of the world. Our

experiences give us a unique perspective on poverty eradication, so creating policy without consulting NGOs would be a mistake that disadvantages the poor. When civil society is not adequately consulted during the policy-making process, the voices of poor communities are lost. Eradicating poverty means, no one is left behind, and for that to happen, the UN must engage civil society and other stakeholders.

### **Poverty is a security threat**

When deliberating strategies to eradicate poverty, human rights and development are always a part of the discussion. It is time to acknowledge how the third pillar of the United Nations, peace and security, is impacted by poverty. People living in poverty do not have peace or security. Once poverty is regarded as an obstruction of peace and security, it can be given the same urgency as short-term issues like military conflict, and hopefully the same amount of financing as military budgeting. Poverty causes pain, suffering, and even death, just like war. By declaring poverty a security risk, the UN would be demonstrating that they do not discriminate between suffering caused by poverty and suffering caused by conflict.

### **Social assistance to ensure human rights**

The United Nations should examine the relationship between social exclusion and poverty when targeting and eliminating the social barriers that perpetuate poverty. Human rights like health, education, property rights, social security, and wages are at the core of eradicating poverty. People pre-disposed to social exclusion like women, children, elderly, disabled, and ethnic or religious minorities are often denied their human rights. Social insurance can secure human rights for the poor by guaranteeing basic rights for all, as well as close the social divide between the poor and society.

According to the UN High Commissioner on Refugees, 65.5 million people worldwide are displaced this year, which is the largest number the world has ever seen. They have little or no security, resources, or rights. The United Nations must include strategies to protect and help displaced people in order to eradicate poverty. Essential services and safe passage for refugees and displaced people will be an important strategy for eradicating poverty and ensuring sustainable development for all.

Social protection strategies reduce social vulnerability and increase sustainable development. Social assistance programs like conditional cash transfers and social pensions act as universal social protection floors for the impoverished and increase access to necessities. A guaranteed minimum income increases a person's inclusion in society and provides an opportunity to access essential goods and services. Other social protection strategies such as job training and subsidizing employment give individuals economic mobility and community's sustainable development. Universal social protection is a public concern, and should be a priority at the national level supported by budgetary allocations and community-based implementation.

### **Empowering women as antidote to poverty**

Though Poverty is a societal issue across the globe, women and children are adversely affected. Women account for one-half of the potential human capital in any economy. Women make up 40 percent of the agriculture labor force but 5-20% only owns land. According to the World Bank, increasing land rights is "the key to reducing poverty," for land rights increase their wealth. Countries with greater gender equality are more prosperous and competitive. Rwanda having the highest

share of women in parliament in the world, ranks four in income gender gap and is a good example of women empowerment.

According to the 2017 World Economic Forum report, if economic gender gap is closed, China could add \$2.5 trillion to the GDP, the United States could add \$1750 Billion.

In order to eradicate poverty, it is inevitable to give agency to women living in poverty because they are the ones most familiar with their situation. A method for giving communities the ability to create wealth for themselves is microfinancing. Economic opportunity for communities living in poverty gives them a voice and agency as to how to tackle poverty at a local level. Asset-based community development is a strategy that can empower entire communities and drive sustainable development. From our experience if you give resources to women in a community, they will use them to escape poverty.

### **Climate Change is an added threat to poverty reduction**

Climate change is and will continue to affect the most vulnerable among us and even pushback people who were out of poverty. Whole communities must move in order to escape drought, natural disasters, or rising sea levels. Rural, agriculture-based populations will have their livelihoods threatened as regional climate changes and farming becomes increasingly difficult. Food security, water, sanitation, and health are jeopardized as climate change progresses. Economic policy will do very little to secure resources for the poor when resources are scarce, which is why adhering to the Paris Climate Agreement, along with sustainable consumption and production, is integral to sustainable development and poverty eradication. Limiting the effects and adapting to climate change is a necessary strategy for eradicating poverty for this generation and future generations.

### **We recommend to the CSOCD Bureau Members and other Member States:**

- Develop new tools to measure poverty based on quality of life and not currency
- Establish poverty as a priority security threat
- Progressive structural change and inequality reduction
- Connect social insurance with human rights
- Make universal social protection floors as a priority at the national level
- Give people living in poverty agency and resources to empower themselves
- Inclusion of women in policy-making from the local to International levels
- Mitigate and adapt to climate change through sustainable consumption and production, adhering to the Paris Climate Agreement.