



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
30 November 2017

Original: English

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 IDP Foundation, Inc., 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

Eradicating Poverty through Public-Private Partnerships and Education

Introduction and Purpose

As of January 1, 2016, the United Nations and its 193 Member States officially ushered in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a global agenda to end poverty by the year 2030. Made up of 17 goals that focus on a variety of initiatives like gender equality, health, and education, these goals recognize that social and environmental issues are interconnected and affect everyone in our global community.

For the IDP Foundation, an organization dedicated to supporting the development of innovative and sustainable solutions to complex global issues, many of the SDGs have found their way to the epicentre of the work we implement. We have engaged in a number of partnerships that have expanded our reach in the goal of eradicating poverty. For instance, we are a founding member of the Harambe Entrepreneur Alliance, a network of highly educated young African entrepreneurs using their talents to build high impact social and business ventures across the continent of Africa. Harambe uses the power of social entrepreneurship to create economic vitality and job creation across the continent and our partnership only strengthens that power. Additionally, through our keystone IDP Rising Schools Program we have set out to eradicate poverty through education by assisting in the development of improved learning environments.

IDP Rising Schools Program

In 2008, the IDP Foundation, Inc. President & CEO Irene Pritzker visited Ghana to learn about microfinance programs. During her time there, she met Paulina, a local yam vendor and school owner in the Agbogbloshie slum market in Accra. Paulina applied for a microloan to reinforce the second story of her school that served over 400 students; however, despite receiving loans for her yam business, she was denied the school loan.

After witnessing the market demand for microloans to support school proprietors, the IDP Foundation and local Ghanaian microfinance institution Sinapi Aba, created the IDP Rising Schools Program. The goal of the program has been to assist low-fee private school owners with improving their schools through extensive training in financial literacy and school management, coupled with access to microloans that are offered at below market rates. These loans are used to stabilize schools' infrastructure (i.e. purchase land where schools reside, build new bathrooms and classrooms, purchase buses, etc.). Additionally, the program encourages school proprietors to register with the Ghana Education Service and engage with district officials.

The IDP Rising Schools Program began as a three-year pilot that identified 105 existing poor primary schools with an enrolment of 27,000 students. To date, the program has proven to be sustainable and replicable with 584 primary schools that have entered the program, reaching about 138,800 students. In addition to improved learning environments and increased enrolment, the program has built the local capacity of these social enterprises to better serve their communities. There has been a 92% repayment rate of the loans and many schools have taken multiple loans, step by step improving their schools. And, the program is profitable to Sinapi Aba despite offering loans at below market rates.

It goes without saying, that one way to rid the world of poverty is through basic education, and the IDP Rising Schools Program has been integral in doing just that.

The Role of Public-Private Partnerships in Eradicating Poverty

While the focus has been to build more public schools to replace private schools, governments can leverage the cost-savings provided by existing schools and identify policies needed to support their improvement so that all children have access to quality education, thus breaking the cycles of illiteracy and poverty. This belief is what led the IDP Foundation to work diligently with the government of Ghana and with the Ark Education Partnerships Group to explore public-private partnerships between the low-fee private schools and the public schools. Public-private partnerships will create change in these communities together by reaching more children and using their pooled resources to create better schools.

While the IDP Rising Schools Program has been on a challenging crusade to provide a voice for inclusion of the low-fee private school sector other advocates are also emerging. It is time for more of us to move beyond the politics and ideology of private versus public provision of education and demand quality across entire education systems. We need to recognize the reality of a growing low-fee private school sector and determine the policies required to support their improvement. The IDP Rising Schools Program offers an education financing model that is sustainable and can potentially have a huge reach.

As the funding gap for education grows, governments should leverage the cost savings provided by these schools and determine funding policies that ensure equitable access to private schools rather than focusing on building more public schools to replace them. Without more inclusion of the sector by both governments and funders in programs and education sector plans, many of the world's poorest children continue to be underserved, in turn, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and illiteracy.

In Summary

The IDP Foundation is taking an innovative approach to address education finance to an ignored sector while supporting education entrepreneurs in a sustainable way. The exciting new partnership with the Harambe Entrepreneur Alliance further deepens the commitment of the Foundation to support the efforts of those on the ground and those with a deep-rooted passion to tackle social issues. It will take the ingenuity and power of social entrepreneurs to create economic vitality and tackle the eradication of poverty worldwide. It is the responsibility of funders, government and the citizens of the world to pull together and support sustainable solutions to the world's most pressing issues.
