



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 November 2013

Original: English

Commission for Social Development

Fifty-second session

11-21 February 2014

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development
and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: promoting empowerment of people in achieving
poverty eradication, social integration and full employment
and decent work for all**

Statement submitted by Mamta: Health Institute for Mother and Child, 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.



Statement

The mission of Mamta: Health Institute for Mother and Child is to empower underserved and marginalized individuals and communities through gender-sensitive participatory processes for achieving optimal and sustainable health and development. It has strived to alleviate poverty using a cross-cutting approach to achieving social integration and gender equity. Universal access to comprehensive, quality-driven and sustainable health care is the ultimate goal of the organization. We recognize the need for a rights-based approach to better sexual and reproductive health care and have been advocating such an approach in South Asia for the last decade. We also strongly support and complement the efforts of local government in the implementation of national policies on health, population and inclusive development.

Mamta: Health Institute for Mother and Child supports the strengthening of the commitment to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of women, including their sexual and reproductive rights, without compromise. We recognize that violence against women throughout their lives derives from patriarchy and harmful cultural practices. These may include certain traditional or customary practices and acts of extremism related, in addition to their gender, to women's race, language, religion, workplace, community and society. We believe that gender equality cannot be fully achieved without an intersectoral approach to reproductive and sexual health and human rights, including respect for sexual orientation and gender identity. Sexual and reproductive rights are indivisible, inalienable, interrelated human rights that are fundamental to achieving gender equality and human development.

We therefore emphasize the need to prevent vulnerability, discrimination, violence and marginalization based on gender, age, race, caste, class, marital status, livelihood, migrant status, HIV status, disability, etc., aiming to remove discriminatory laws, policies and programmes and addressing social and economic barriers.

Mamta: Health Institute for Mother and Child strongly endorses policies that encourage decent work and lives by facilitating social integration, building skills and providing employment opportunities.

Poverty eradication

We put great emphasis on eradicating poverty as a priority in any intervention and recognize the absence of a gender perspective in most of the large-scale programmes. Gender equality and equity in sexual and reproductive health and human rights are recognized as central to all of our projects and integral to poverty eradication and sustainable development.

Women in our part of the world bear the burden of poverty and food insecurity within their families. They get the least share of food and are nutritionally insecure. They do not have land ownership rights; discriminatory traditions, policies and laws make their position worse. Hence, we always recommend and adopt a comprehensive approach to women's empowerment in seeking to eradicate extreme poverty.

We recommend the formulation of evidence-based strategies to eradicate poverty. The strategies need to ensure that the marginalized and most vulnerable

people are included in welfare schemes, services and resources so that they can lead healthy, productive and fulfilling lives.

Health

Mamta: Health Institute for Mother and Child supports the right to health for all and promotes better linkages between health policies and practices. There is a need for an integrated approach and the inclusion of proven, high-quality health-care practices for marginalized, rural and urban poor households. We promote the inclusion of vulnerable populations in remote pockets and urban slums in recognition of their unmet needs. Vulnerable groups in the countries of South Asia include children and young people, particularly girls; out-of-school youth; people living with HIV/AIDS; persons with disabilities; indigenous people; migrants; refugees; sex workers; and displaced persons, irrespective of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

We recognize that strengthening health-care systems should include capacity-building of the health-care providers to deliver comprehensive, high-quality health-care services that include treatment for mental illness and non-communicable diseases. We recommend and promote respectful, non-judgmental services, free from discrimination, personal bias and prejudice. Public health systems should be strengthened by enhancing community participation and two-way communication between the community and the health system delivering these services.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

We support a comprehensive multipronged approach to the provision of an essential package of integrated sexual and reproductive health services, information and care. Services should be delivered in a non-discriminatory manner and include access to a full range of safe, affordable, effective and voluntary forms of modern contraception; adequate information, education and counselling; youth- and adolescent-friendly services; comprehensive maternity care, including pre- and postnatal care and safe delivery services; safe, high-quality comprehensive abortion care under national government policies and programmes that are in line with the protocols recommended by the World Health Organization.

We appreciate the efforts of national Governments, international donor agencies and civil societies to encourage women's participation and empowerment at every level, from household to community and then within political systems. The participation of women and their empowerment in terms of education, employment and the environment would be a major step in achieving poverty eradication and social integration, which should pave the way for decent work for all.

We recommend and reaffirm our efforts to address discrimination on the basis of gender, including sexual orientation and gender identity, which places persons of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities in a vulnerable position, preventing their equal access to human rights and to the full exercise of citizenship.

In addition, we also recommend a comprehensive response to gender-based violence based on acknowledging that violence within the family is a form of violence, with specific efforts aimed at preventing violence and creating a safe environment at workplaces and private and public spaces for boys, girls and women.

We advocate for enhanced media involvement and sensitization of civil societies towards gender equality, including reporting on gender issues and violence.

Adolescents and young people

It is crucial to ensure that access to youth-friendly, non-discriminatory, non-judgmental health and social services is maintained and that confidentiality and informed consent are respected at all times. We also support the right to formal education and vocational training leading to skill-based employment and livelihood options for all.

Therefore, we recommend and endorse the view that it is essential to accept the diversity of young people and adolescents across all populations in providing for their overall development and access to better sexual and reproductive health and human rights. We recommend comprehensive sex education for adolescents with a holistic approach to improving the quality of human capital under the banner of human rights.

Mamta: Health Institute for Mother and Child strongly believes that the women and marginalized populations of South Asia should be effectively included and participate to the maximum extent in promoting an efficient model of sustainable development.
