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**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 Lotus Initiative for the Blind, 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

Introduction

Most commonly, poverty is defined as a state of being in which we are unable to meet our needs. The World Bank Organization describes poverty in this way: Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job. It is fear of the future, living one day at a time. This statement focuses on some of the key factors that contribute to poverty in: political instability, unemployment, corruption, inequality, laziness, and a poor education system. Accomplishments made by our organization and its challenges and recommendations.

Causes of poverty

In search of the urgent problem of widespread poverty and seeking to combat its many negative effects, there is a need to identify the causes of poverty in order to create sustainable change.

Political Instability

The failure to successfully actualize political transition programs and policies result in social and economic unrest domestically and internationally. Political instability lowers private investment, investments are withdrawn, slows economic growth, productive ventures are unable to flourish with a restricted and market for sales, and gives rise to insecure jobs, unemployment and poverty. It breeds corruption, bad governance, shortens policy-makers horizon, inconsistency in policies, and creates volatility.

Unemployment

When people are unemployed, their source of livelihood depletes over time. The cost of living becomes high and the standard of living goes down. Education once was seen as the surest, undisputed gateway to employment but no longer looks so certain. The fact that you are educated is no guarantee that you will be employed. Many graduates wander the streets without anything reasonable to do for a living. People with disabilities are in many ways no different from others who live in poverty they are often socially isolated, poorly educated, with limited job skills.

Corruption

Government funds are being misappropriated on a daily basis by the leaders, who only put the interest of their family and friends at heart while ignoring the masses. Most government's income is generated mostly from natural resource revenues. This income, instead of being used for developmental purposes, is then circulated among the political office holders and their families, leaving the rest of the people to wallow in poverty. There are several issues involved with bad governance, use of wrong policies, adaptation to wrong policies and implementation of those wrong policies.

Inequality

Income inequality has increased the dimension of poverty in countries. The income inequality between the people in rural and urban areas is remarkably high, as those who live in the rural areas base all their income on agriculture which is today not a thriving sector in most countries. They do not invest their money to acquire skills as

people in the urban areas would and this makes them more vulnerable to poverty and leads to some social and economic problems such as violence, corruption and so on. A more equal distribution of income would go a long way in reducing the rate of poverty, but because it is typically the rich people who hold political offices or are related to those holding political office, income remains concentrated among the rich.

Laziness

Laziness is a common disease which is virtually suffered globally today, especially those from wealthy households. Everyone wants to be comfortable but they are not ready to work towards it. This often leads to greed where people will do whatever they can to keep the family wealth for themselves. In most families with children and adults living with disabilities, they are made to stay at home, hidden from the society while others become beggars. Most poor families living with disabilities resort to street begging because for some, it is an easy means to make money and surprisingly, able bodied men fake being disabled to get money and pity from the society.

Poor Education System

According to the World Bank, education is central to development. It promotes economic growth, national productivity and innovation, and values of democracy and social cohesion. This deprivation of education applies more to females than males, because they are considered the inferior sex. Hence educating them is seen as unnecessary as they are expected to marry as early as possible. Likewise, people with disabilities are highly neglected because the society believes that they have nothing to offer to themselves, family, and community hence, education is more given to the able bodied.

Accomplishments

Lotus initiative for the blind (LIB) is a Not for Profit organization that has been actively involved in assisting people with different disabilities such as, the blind, visually impaired, physical disability, mental disability, women and children with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups in Nigeria.

Scholarship

We provide scholarship programs to different communities of people living with disabilities to ensure that they acquire sound education, to enable them live independently and add values towards the development of their society. This has encouraged people living with disabilities reach out to our organization for assistance.

Employment

Employment opportunities have been granted to people living with disabilities in government and private organizations through our NGO. Especially for those who are well educated.

Advocacy programs

We equally engage in advocacy sensitization and enlightenment programs on radio, television, print, media, seminars and conferences in the rural and urban areas.

Sensitization programs covers the government to adjust policies to alleviate poverty especially for people living with disabilities, to construct social amenities like easy access to public buildings, to care givers, families and all vulnerable groups in the country.

Currently, our organization is partnering with Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to ensure that people with disabilities are not left out in participation with elections thereby giving voters education and ensuring full participation. Ensuring that these disabilities are not seen as barriers, motivating them to partake in heading positions in public offices like running for elections for more advancement in their communities.

Nigeria Communication Commission (NCC) an independent regulatory authority for the telecommunications industry in Nigeria through our NGO has contributed immensely by giving lots of tariffs packages and low data rates to people living with disabilities, sending multiple messages for easy accessibility.

Recommendations

Over the past years there has been a lot of Poverty Alleviation Programs designed to break the cycle of poverty in many households and communities in the world. The result is remarkable, but there is still a lot to be done.

Development of rural areas

Government approach by developing the rural areas, providing basic amenities: electricity, water and promoting the establishment of industries in rural areas. Science schools should be established in rural areas so that rural kids can develop local technologies to help improve the output from local occupations. Technology should be adopted in conjunction with foreign experts, who will reside in the rural areas to ensure technology transfer. As a result, stemming rural-urban migration, curtailing crime, wealth more equitable amongst its people.

Family Planning

While a poor woman may have as many as seven children or more, many rich women have one or two kids. Low birth rates amongst elite women is due to better education that has enabled them to assert their independence and reproductive rights better than poor women who often are dependent on their husbands and have no say. Maternal mortality is low amongst rich women because better family planning reduces complications and ensures they are in better health when they have a subsequent pregnancy. It is therefore important government empowers the female through education. The government must take it as a priority to build, equip and properly staff maternal and child care centers in all local government areas in the country to address this.

Conclusion

Poverty is multidimensional and even though it is difficult to separate the various dimensions of poverty from the various causes of poverty, we have shown that unemployment, corruption, inequality, laziness, and a poor education system are some of the key determinants of poverty. These determinants are many times related to each other and enforce each other. Hence, all these factors are correlated and must all be tackled together if any progress is to be made especially for people living with disability.