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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 VAAGDHARA, 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

VAAGDHARA's Approach to end inter-generational poverty among tribes to achieve sustainable and equitable development for all

Introduction and Purpose of the Statement

In achieving the dream of a World Free of Poverty, there has been marked progress on reducing poverty over the past decades. The world attained the first Millennium Development Goal target — to cut the 1990 poverty rate in half by 2015 — five years ahead of schedule, in 2010. According to the most recent estimates, in 2013, 10.7 percent of the world's population lived on less than US\$1.90 a day, that's down from 35 percent in 1990. Despite the progress made in reducing poverty, the number of people living in extreme poverty globally remains unacceptably high and as per the World Bank Report, India has made remarkable strides at reducing poverty. Yet 22 percent of the population in India or 270 million people are living below the poverty line. Given global growth forecasts poverty reduction may not be fast enough to reach the target of ending extreme poverty by 2030. Other statistics suggest, about 31% of the world's "multidimensional poor" children live in India. A "multidimensional poor" child is one who lacks at least one-third of ten indicators, grouped into three dimensions of poverty: health, education and standard of living.

This statement attempts to analyze the key causes of poverty in India and evaluates the government response to these challenges. The document also shares VAAGDHARA's experiences of working with the poor tribal of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat and recommends some practical strategies — based on the experience of organization — to address the poverty conundrum through cost-effective and locally available resources.

Background: Poverty in India

According to a report by the Johannesburg-based company New World Wealth, India is the second-most unequal country globally, with millionaires controlling 54% of its wealth. With a total individual wealth of \$5,600 billion, it's among the 10 richest countries in the world — and yet the average Indian is relatively poor. Compare this with Japan, the most equal country in the world, where, according to the report millionaires control only 22% of total wealth. In India, the richest 1% own 53% of the country's wealth, according to the latest data from Credit Suisse. The richest 5% own 68.6%, while the top 10% have 76.3%. At the other end of the pyramid, the poorer half jostles for a mere 4.1% of national wealth.

Rising inequality in India, leads to slower poverty reduction undermine the sustainability of economic growth, compound the inequalities between men and women, and drive inequalities in health, education and life chances. India — along with all the other countries in the world — has committed to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, and to ending extreme poverty by that year. But unless we make an effort to first contain and then reduce the rising levels of extreme inequality, the dream of ending extreme poverty for the 300 million Indians — a quarter of the population — who live below an extremely low poverty line, will remain a pipe dream. If India stops inequality from rising further, it could end extreme poverty for 90 million people by 2019.

VAAGDHARA's approach to end inter-generational poverty existing among the Tribal Community

VAAGDHARA is working in the tribal region of Southern Rajasthan from the last two decades and has implemented a number of development initiatives in VAGAD region. During these years, the organization has seen that the tribal population has been adversely affected by the development in the country because many of them have been displaced from their roots to make way for large dams, or for mines or for similar other 'public purpose'. Besides, the livelihoods of tribals are most endangered due to the shrinking forest area. Their sustainable and traditional way of living is absolutely changed, making them more dependent on the markets. VAAGDHARA believes that if the poverty of tribal is to be addressed for any significant and sustainable impact, then the younger generation of the tribe has to be better educated, has to be better nourished and has to be more aware and confident to deal with the mainstream development. The organization has learned from its experience that strong Community Based Institutions are must for sustaining the development intervention and we use this strategy of formation and nurturing of Community Based Institutions as a cross cutting approach in all interventions.

VAAGDHARA has adopted a three-point strategy to control poverty which is as follows:

Promoting True Farming — The concept of True Farming refers to 'Farming practices that are eco-friendly, and sustainable in nature, acknowledge the traditional knowledge and wisdom, aim at curbing/totally ceasing the use of chemical fertilizers, and promote soil conservation. VAAGDHARA promotes Nutri-Sensitive farming practices and Sustainable Integrated Farming System in order to deal with the problem of malnutrition in the area and providing with the sustainable source of farming. Tribal farmers adopting these approaches have proved with the improved nutrition levels, especially among the women and children, reduced dependency on markets and have also enhanced their income levels through reduced input cost and increased productivity. Efforts are also focused in establishing the market linkages in order to provide maximum benefits to farmers.

Ensuring True Childhood — VAAGDHARA strongly believes that the poverty among the tribals can be tackled only if we focus on ending the inter-generation poverty with a specific focus on the growth and development of children. The organization ensures to fulfil the four rights of a child, i.e. Right to Survival, Right to Protection, Right to Development and Right to Participation, to form a true childhood. A true childhood refers to, one in which a child is able to lead a life where he or she is provided with equal opportunities of development for better, emotional, physical and educational growth. Rather than creating a parallel system, VAAGDHARA focuses on strengthening the existing system like capacity building of various institutions to ensure the inclusive quality education.

Facilitating True Democracy — VAAGDHARA acts as a catalyst and facilitator by providing platform and network to help the community to voice their concern and to positively engage with policy makers for enabling policy environment. In the democratic space, changes can happen best if the community is aware and organized to seek their rights, to address their social-economic-political issues and to take their issues forward. Therefore, in this regard, the organization is investing in building the capacities of youth, community leaders and most importantly Community Based Organizations so that they can demand their entitlements and start the journey toward development. Awareness about schemes, programmes and

rights can help community to explore their ultimate power for development of their upcoming generations.

VAAGDHRA's initiatives are bringing change in the lives of the most deprived communities and it aims to reach at least 1,00,000 tribal families by 2020 to achieve the sustainable and equitable development for all. The key approach in all its interventions is Community Based Institutions and during the series of dialogue held with these institutions following are the strategies recommended for the sustainable and equitable development for all in all our thematic areas:

True Farming:

- Praise water as godly element, conserve and harvest wherever possible in ditch, pond, pokher, dam, anicut etc. and prevent pollution in waterbodies.
- Adopting True farming in the form of rainfed agriculture, living soils, organic farming, agro-forestry etc.
- Identification of traditional crops, quality seed production, preserving and establishing system of quality seed production and distribution.
- Adopt traditional food and farming system to fight malnutrition.
- Adopt approaches of food-forest, kitchen garden, nutrition garden, plantation and nutrition sensitive farming systems for food and nutrition security through traditional and modern foods.
- Prevent erosion of soil from farms, pastures, commons, forest and other lands and keep them fertile and improve their fertility.

True Childhood:

- Village level efforts and coordination with government programs and schemes for overall growth and development of children.
- Providing true-childhood for each and every child, by creating opportunities for growth and development through education, eradicating child labor, and checking migration.

True Democracy:

- Reviving 'Gram Chopal' for regular discussions, planning and action on development.
- Adopting traditions like Halma and Hundel for revival of indigenous tribal culture.
- Building leadership skills and guiding youth for participation in democratic processes.
- Linking and networking with other institutions and villages for strengthening and sustainable development of village community.
