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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: Inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID-19 for sustainable livelihoods, well-being, and dignity for all: eradicating poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions to achieve the 2030 Agenda

Statement submitted by the Red Dot Foundation, 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

Red Dot Foundation works at the intersection of gender, data and tech, urban design and community engagement. Its flagship program is Safecity, a platform that crowdsources personal stories of sexual harassment and abuse in public spaces. This data which maybe anonymous, gets aggregated as hot spots on a map indicating trends at a local level. The idea is to make this data useful for individuals, local communities and local administration to identify factors that causes behaviour that leads to violence and work on strategies for solutions.

During COVID19 we have firsthand witnessed the increase in domestic violence and online bullying and harassment. This is a manifestation of deep seated patriarchal socio-cultural norms and unconscious bias that favours the man over a woman. Not only did the violence increase but also it translated into most women and girls being disadvantaged in a work from home scenario. The disproportionate burden of domestic and emotional care work fell on women, more girls were deprived of an education due to low or no access to digital devices and women were made redundant in their jobs.

As we build back better and think about inclusive and resilient recovery from COVID19, we would like to put forward some of our learnings from our programs in India.

- A) **Dignity and well-being for all** – This includes respect for human rights and fundamental rights. Violence against women and girls are not acceptable. More investment is needed for education on rights, unconscious bias and bystander intervention trainings. More investment is needed for shelter homes and crisis response centres. Post our Public Interest Litigation demanding for domestic violence prevention resources to be treated as essential, one of the ‘One Stop Crisis’ centres in Mumbai which was housed in the Female Beggars Home was shifted to a suburban hospital and managed by a NGO. However, for a city of Mumbai with 24 million people, we have only 2 one stop crisis centres.
- B) **Mental Health resources** – There is a dearth of good quality counselling and mental health resources. More investment is needed for helplines, counselling centres, peer listening circles and education on mental health in schools and colleges. From our own SafeCircle, a peer listening circle, we realized how important it was to make mental health a non-taboo topic, provide space for people to be vulnerable and share their experiences and find a community of support.
- C) **Sustainable Livelihoods** – We need more investment for job creation in rural and semi urban areas. COVID19 has shown us that jobs are disproportionately centred in urban areas whilst the rural areas remain under-developed. Women in these rural areas have aspirations for themselves, their families and their communities. By providing them with life skills, capacity building sessions and mentorship, we can help them be entrepreneurs or job ready. Our latest program for Rural Digital Women entrepreneurs where they were matched with mentors who were successful women in the private and development sector was very successful. Mentorship is critical in bridging the gap in knowledge, building confidence and creating an eco-system of support.
- D) **Participation of Youth** – It is important to give youth a platform to participate actively in social development. Through youth innovation challenges we have engaged over 1000 youth during COVID19 to be peer

mentors, first responders in incidents of violence and change makers at the community level to take action. Our recent challenge on Gender and Climate Justice saw 108 ideas being submitted and 12 ideas mentored into working prototypes. By providing the youth with a platform to “learn by doing” we are encouraging active citizenry, responsible leadership and intercultural sensitivity.

Red Dot Foundation firmly believes in participatory programming which enables agency for women and youth. If we wish for an inclusive and resilient society, we must provide transparent platforms where women and youth can actively engage, dialogue and debate issues and take action to design interventions that work for themselves. They deserve a seat at the table.
