



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
3 December 2015

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixtieth session

14-24 March 2016

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and
to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly
entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and
peace for the twenty-first century”**

Statement submitted by Kimse Yok Mu, 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

Women Empowerment for Sustainable Development

Achieving social justice, ensuring respect for human rights and consolidation of democracy requires full realization of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls. Along with a strong awareness of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, these are the prior conditions for socioeconomic progress and inclusive sustainable development. Once achieved, only then can an environment that is welcoming to equal access, opportunity and participation for all members of a society come to fruition.

When discussing women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development, it is vitally important to take into account the socio-cultural and socio-economic contextual factors. It is also important to address the discriminatory nature of certain norms, values, and policies, since they still present a major challenge to full and effective participation of women in society and achieving de facto equality. Thus, implementing policies that aim to find solutions to the structural limitations and injustices experienced by women in various social and cultural environments, which include women as active participants in the decision-making processes, is a prerequisite for the achievement of women's rights and empowerment.

All actors, including governments, international organizations and civil society have different yet closely intertwined roles to promote gender equality and empower women as stated in the Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, Kimse Yok Mu would like share its projects and experiences in preventing and combating discrimination against women and girls, as well as its influence on politico-economic inclusion to sustain the goal of "Ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere."

Kimse Yok Mu has United Nations Economic and Social Council Special Consultancy Status. It signed a memorandum of understanding with the African Union in 2015. It is a member of the United Nations Global Compact, voting member of the Civicus organization and a member of the Clinton Global Initiative. Kimse Yok Mu carries out humanitarian aid projects in more than a hundred countries worldwide and has more than 220.000 volunteers.

Kimse Yok Mu plans and executes projects that promote women's participation in economic production, and access to educational opportunities. It fulfils these goals through a variety of programs:

To fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals target: Achieving gender equality and empower all women and girls, and sub target "women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws," Kimse Yok Mu, in cooperation with international governments, provides vocational training and microfinance programs in several countries. These projects provide start-up financial aid and enhance the opportunities for women to strengthen their socio-economic statuses. Women are trained in macaroni making, sewing, carpet weaving, flower making, computer usage, language learning, and other specialties. These projects have been initiated in countries such as Somalia, Sudan, Kenya, Albania, Palestine and the Philippines.

In the Philippines, Kimse Yok Mu partnered with the local Non-Governmental Organisation, TESLA and funded a vocational training program. It offered up to seven course specializations such as computer software, baking, sewing etc. The beneficiaries included 134 women who had no financial income. All trainees who completed 240-hours of coursework, and passed a comprehensive exam, obtained state-approved certificates of completion. Participants were also assisted in finding employment, starting their own businesses upon its completion, and meeting with potential employers.

In Albania, joining forces with the Compassion Society, a vocational training centre that offered courses in Art and Design specifically for women was opened. The Centre was named after Gürseli Kato, a miniature artist well-known in Japan and Turkey. The artist attended the opening ceremony in person, and set a great example for women's solidarity worldwide.

In Pakistan and Kenya, Kimse Yok Mu has provided financial support to orphans that enabled them to go to school and purchase the basic food items to sustain their health. It also provided support to a group of nearly two-dozen women so they could complete vocational training in sewing and tailoring. An equal number of women are currently registered to attend the next session. At the completion of the program sewing machines and start-up financial support will be offered.

In many developing countries, the water utilized by impoverished communities is often polluted and inaccessible because of distance. Women and young girls who are often given the responsibility of collecting water may spend hours a day travelling to the source and back. This time-consuming task prevents young girls from continuing their education and women from seeking opportunities outside of the home. Having better access to clean water sources empowers women to improve their futures and to bring their families and communities out of poverty.

Kimse Yok Mu has opened more than 1,700 water wells in eighteen countries since 2011. These efforts have produced sustainable solutions to the problem of water access, and have freed women and young girls from the burden of having to spend hours carrying this needed resource every day. Around 3.5 million people are benefiting from these water wells. More girls from rural areas are able to continue their education and improve the prospects for their futures. They are also protected from epidemics and waterborne illnesses, which is another barrier to schooling and employment. Hundreds of thousands of women and young girls who lose their husbands, fathers, or siblings are left unprotected.

In the Philippines, Kimse Yok Mu reconstructed the Women's Shelter of Tacloban City in Tacloban Province, which was partially destroyed during 'Typhoon Haiyan,' in November of 2013. During this time, volunteer psychologist provided regular psychological rehabilitation.

To assist the estimated two million Syrian refugees who have entered Turkey, Kimse Yok Mu has delivered more than 35 million dollars' worth of aid. Between December 2012 and January 2013 in partnership with UNHCR, it carried out a "Cash Assistance Project." Exactly 2,825 debit cards with a total value of 1.6 million dollars were distributed to Syrian refugees who lived outside the camps. Of the 16,750 people who had received the cards, approximately 8,019 were women and girls. The project differed from other aid activities largely in that people who qualified for assistance had the liberty to choose the supplies they needed with the cash assistance.

Within the framework of designing projects that promote sustainable development, Kimse Yok Mu has built hospitals in Somalia, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Haiti. It particularly pays close attention to the treatment of Cataract Disease. Every year 600,000 young people lose their sight because of it. Since 2008, Kimse Yok Mu built hospitals and other health centres it has donated to, have carried out more than 30,000 operations to regain their sight. Improved health outcomes for women can help to strengthen their own independence and empowerment. Healthy women are more able to actively participate in society and are likely to have greater bargaining power and control over resources within the household.

Another project initiated by our female volunteers in Turkey is called “Design for Good.” Set up to benefit women affected by tragedy in the country. The volunteers created by hand, specially designed bags to sell to the public. These bags, which were shared via social media, attracted a great deal of attention. The initiative grew to include many other women outside of Kimse Yok Mu who wanted to support the project. The bags were displayed in an exhibit, and then sold for a suggested donation. This project has helped local women in need meet their rent, food, and health expenses. The proceeds were also spent to supply a select group of woman with a sewing machine so they could create products from home and make a living.

This project not only supports social responsibility, but also constitutes a promising, innovative, and universal solidarity model that promotes the idea of helping one another in need. With this project, Kimse Yok Mu is able to support economic opportunities to Turkish women who can utilize their skills. This supports the Sustainable Development Goals to, “Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.”

By contributing to women’s health and economic advancement, as well as to social and political representation, all communities in developing countries stand a better chance of becoming more united and empowered. We have a great hope that Kimse Yok Mu, partnering organizations, and civil society will succeed in encouraging the implementation of projects that work towards meeting all of the Sustainable Development Goals.
