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Statement submitted by IDEAS for US, 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

IDEAS For Us is an international non-governmental organization that is aiming to advance sustainability by helping people, especially the most vulnerable, to create solutions that increase their quality of life, generate profit, and heal the planet. Our mission is to develop, fund, and scale solutions to the world's most pressing environmental and social challenges. IDEAS For Us has had a presence in over 20 countries. We are focused on projects in the United States, Uganda, Liberia, The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Rwanda, Brazil, The Philippines, Nepal, and China for 2017 and 2018.

In this endeavour, we promote local discussion and action, funding, and data collection and sharing in working towards a more sustainable future. Over the years, we have formalized our approach to developing solutions by using a community-based, human-centred design program called The Hive. The Hive is a program that assembles the community members to engage in discussions centring on promoting the 17 Sustainable development goals in the local community. IDEAS also funds projects through a micro granting program called "The Solutions Fund". Our members pilot new projects and repeat successful initiatives in new places. We then take action and collect scientific data before, during, and after projects in order to inform decision-making and advocate for data sharing.

In working towards all 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals, we at IDEAS For Us know the importance of Sustainable Development Goal 5, achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. The issues facing rural women and girls deserve and require specialized attention to their unique experiences. Our applicants to the Solutions Fund have shed an immense amount of light upon these challenges facing rural women and girls today.

Women in rural areas often have limited access capital and credit facilities, and also lack the collateral that is generally required by banks. Rural women also do not have adequate access to advisory services due to government workers not having the support to keep in contact with the more remote areas. This leads to a deprivation of information regarding things such as pest and disease control. These events lead women in rural areas to be unable to escape the fates of low-income. In Uganda, many of the women are peasant farmers that are suffering from low agricultural yields because of deteriorating soil fertility. Environmental issues such as these along with a multitude of others exacerbate the issues facing rural women.

Lack of sanitary menstruation products is another urgently important issue facing rural women and girls. In Africa, menstruation is a momentous social stressor that can lead to infections, as well as cause girls to be absent from school. Girls should not be hindered in their educational pursuits simply for natural bodily functions. The lack of access to menstruation products is frequently due to the high prices. The unaffordability leads women and girls to resort to employing cotton, cloth rags, paper, dried leaves or plastic bags. Aside from the immediate physical discomfort, this can lead to leakage and even infections. There is also a scarcity of private restrooms in schools, which inhibits girls from changing, washing, or throwing away their menstruation products.

Women and girls also do not have adequate access to technology or technological training. Enhancing the use and availability of technology to rural women and girls enables them to advance economically through jobs, advances the

community economically by having more women participate in the economy, and gives them access to educational materials.

Violence against rural women and girls is also a persisting issue. Women and girls who have suffered from violence and domestic abuse either from intimate partners or the police and court system often do not have the economic means to escape the situation.

Recommendations

With the above issues in mind, in order to establish true equality for all women and girls, IDEAS For Us calls for Governments to:

- Increase access for women to capital and credit facilities, requiring lower levels of collateral by banks to first time women account holders.
- Increase the advisory services of banks to rural women.
- Provide sanitary menstruation products to rural women and girls as well as private bathrooms in schools.
- Increase access of technology to rural women and girls.
- Provide spaces for women suffering from domestic and institutional violence and work against these issues to rehabilitate women.
- Fund women-run initiatives.
- Foster local discussions on women's issues and how to resolve them.
- Promote increased data sharing among Governments on challenges facing women and projects working to resolve them.
