Economic and Social Council

Commission for Social Development
Fifty-third session
4-13 February 2015
Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the
twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: priority
theme: rethinking and strengthening social development in the
contemporary world

Statement submitted by Prahar, 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.

Statement

Society is an integral part of human life. Society is not only a group of people but also an organization of people who share a common culture and social background. Society serves as a strong support in human life. People belonging to different religions, castes, creeds and races live a collective life within society. They have been facing various critical problems, such as social inequalities, racial discrimination, economic disparities, poverty or overpopulation, for a long time. Consequently, the central authorities of society, in their effort to tackle those issues, have planned and implemented social development policies in an attempt to "mainstream human life". Social development encourages a bottom-up approach to growth that channels the voices of the poor and deprived people into the otherwise top-down development process. Public health and educational facilities, the public transport system, skill development and the upgrading of infrastructure are some of the important elements taken into account in social development policies to enable people to satisfy their basic needs. Governments, or any form of a central governing authority, help in managing the natural and human resources that belong to society and they regulate the provision of public services to its individuals.

At present, many countries, whether developing or developed, face social development problems. An observation of various societies in different countries around the world reveals that the world is divided into two major groups, the rich and the poor, which can be found in both developing and developed countries. Poor and underprivileged groups in urban, rural and remote areas have been facing challenges for a long time. These challenges differ because of geographical reasons and differences in economic development and social norms. Several institutions, organizations and central authorities around the world implement social development policies with the aim to eradicate socioeconomic problems and the discrimination faced by many people. Unfortunately, the success rate of such development schemes appears dismal. It is because of such outcomes that time has come to rethink social development in the contemporary world.

As stated above, there are two major groups in world society: the rich and the poor. This may be seen as the consequence of the disparity that exists between different people in different social settings. Such disparity leads to further deterioration in that it breeds crime and intensifies poverty. Despite large-scale investments in various poverty alleviation schemes, it remains a social reality. The constant presence of poverty in several societies all around the world reflects how human lives have been turned into pitiable existences in the absence of the basic amenities of food, clothing and shelter. Problems related to poverty are common not only in developing or poor countries but also, to a certain extent, in developed countries. Rising inequalities in the world can be seen between the rich and the poor. There are more poor people in rural areas than in urban areas . Poverty in urban areas is of a different kind, one that is not as intense as in rural areas.

A survey of socioeconomic conditions of the urban and rural poor may draw a clear picture. Education and skill development are two very powerful driving forces for eradicating poverty from society. Education is a strong agent of social change. A good education policy may build a strong socioeconomic foundation for countries. Governments and institutions have to ensure an equitable education policy to all children and adolescents. An adequate number of well-trained teachers and school buildings are the basis of a well-performing and high-quality stable education

system. We support not only basic education policies but also health education and education on national and international security and peacekeeping, whether in villages or among the urban poor. A good education system can be a good weapon that can help in eradicating frustrating trends in society and that, at the same time, can empower people to create opportunities for themselves.

Like education, skill development is another element to empower the weaker section of society. As mentioned above, the urban poor are different from the rural poor. We must identify their potentialities in their respective areas. The urban poor do physical jobs or other jobs that are traditionally categorized as menial. The people involved in physical jobs are mostly illiterate and unskilled. Since urban areas are commonly in the vicinity of industrial zones, the urban poor must be trained in proper vocational and technical training, and they can be motivated to do so by organizing awareness-raising programmes, workshops, etc. In addition, local and regional competitive business locations may be created, so that they can boost creative and competitive energies among this class.

Rural people, on the other hand, are mostly dependent on agriculture. Even today, farmers are following traditional methods of cultivation, resulting in low agricultural productivity, inequalities in distribution of land and other assets and, ultimately, rural poverty. Efforts must be made to revamp village trades, which have been gradually declining because of industrialization and urbanization. Research in agriculture would help to develop sustainable production, advanced land farming skills, livestock farming and breeding, and aquaculture. We support organizations that train the poor and weaker sections of society with several skill development programmes. Training on the use of better seeds, adequate fertilizers, the modernization of the production process in traditional arts, such as crafts or pottery and metal working, promoting institutions and the sustainable use of land resources, while creating a market-oriented environment, can empower such people to create opportunities for themselves.

Social development is a crucial problem because it is tied to human life. It is a highly sensitive area and that is why Governments should not make random decisions. It would perhaps be beneficial to the effectiveness of social development programmes to have a certain level of political non-interference. People and organizations associated with these programmes should be given adequate freedom to carry out their plans and schemes with minimum political intervention. We request the international community to ask and pressurize central governmental authorities to take initiatives for a strong and effective social infrastructure in all sections of society, especially among deprived people, so that everyone in this world may live in dignity. Guaranteeing a dignified life to every individual in this world is the least one can do to ensure that human rights are not violated.

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