Commission for Social Development
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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 Shrimad Rajchandra Sarvamangal Trust, 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

Shrimad Rajchandra Sarvamangal Trust welcomes this opportunity to address the Commission for Social Development on its continuing efforts to address the serious issues related to inclusive and resilient recovery of communities in need within the context of COVID-19.

The world has been faced with an unprecedented global health crisis that has devastatingly impacted societies and economies. With worldwide known cases reaching ~250M and deaths surpassing 5M, we as a civilization have experienced one of the most challenging periods in human history. In addition to losing family members, friends, neighbors, and members of our community, we have also noticed a growing dichotomy between socioeconomic classes. COVID-19 has exposed the systemic gaps and cracks regarding accessing basic needs like food, shelter, clothing, education, economic security, and health. As we move forward towards the 2030 Agenda, aimed at eradicating poverty in collaborative partnership with all countries and stakeholders, it is imperative to implement policies and programs that mitigate the very nuanced and specific effects that COVID-19 has had on poverty.

To this effect, Shrimad Rajchandra Sarvamangal Trust has been involved in various initiatives, from health to social, in aiding the recovery of those who have been affected during these times. Shrimad Rajchandra Sarvamangal Trust has channeled efforts to ameliorate conditions in the most hard hit and impoverished areas.

With over 34M cases of COVID and nearly 0.5M deaths, India was hit hard by the pandemic. The rural areas of the state Gujarat, which are considered home to amongst the poorest sections of society in the country, was disproportionately affected. Shrimad Rajchandra Sarvamangal Trust responded immediately by setting up a dedicated, fully equipped 200-bed COVID treatment facility in the region. Medical specialists from cities like Mumbai as well as trained physicians from the USA and UK, actively volunteered to treat patients and provide expert medical treatment and guidance. Given the increasing need on ground, our very own Shrimad Rajchandra Hospital has been working to expand and build a modern 250-bed hospital. The new multi-specialty hospital will bring specialized and comprehensive health care to rural populations of South Gujarat and will be amongst the most technologically advanced hospitals in the region.

Moreover, a large-scale outreach program covering 450K people across ~250 villages was undertaken to reach out to the remote areas for early COVID detection and spreading awareness about COVID symptoms, the benefits of vaccination, as well as the administration of vaccine doses to villagers. This outreach was executed through a unique collaboration with local government authorities and NGOs. In Mumbai, a special COVID-19 Hospital Wing was setup at a local COVID Critical Center, and in the state of Karnataka, Shrimad Rajchandra Sarvamangal Trust established and directly supported over 300+ beds across 4 facilities.

In the world today, there are approximately 690M people who are malnourished, and a staggering ~190M – nearly 28% – of them are living in India today. Despite surviving the pandemic, the harsh reality is that externalities of the pandemic caused even greater challenges. Given quarantine measures, millions of migrant workers who came to India’s large cities for work as maids, butlers, cooks, and drivers were forced to return to their villages without money, food, or even a method of transportation. Shrimad Rajchandra Sarvamangal Trust has been working tirelessly to aid the countless lives stricken with poverty, lacking the most basic needs in a time of crisis. During these vulnerable moments, some villagers expressed to our volunteers how they used to distract their children from this extreme hunger. One of them said: When
our children would ask for food, we would clap and sing to distract them. After putting them to bed, we would also go to sleep hungry while chanting God’s name.

The values of the Shrimad Rajchandra Hunger Relief Program stem beyond COVID relief – food distribution has been one of our core initiatives under this Humanitarian Care Program. In 2021 alone, we have been able to provide food to 580K+ people and have distributed 200K+ liters of buttermilk through the program. Additionally, through the help of thousands of volunteers, we have also been able to distribute 10K winter essentials, 62K+ pieces of clothing, 12K monsoon essentials, and even 25K of various other necessities such as footwear. Lastly, our global volunteering efforts have resulted in 2.7M served meals, 1.1M served drinks, and 1.4M daily essentials and food items distributed.

While these efforts aim to provide temporary relief, given the systemic nature of poverty, Shrimad Rajchandra Sarvamangal Trust is focused on building accessible education as a bridge to reduce the gap between socioeconomic classes and build the next generation of business owners, scientists, engineers, doctors, political leaders, teachers, and artists. Through institutions like Shrimad Rajchandra Vidyapeeth – the first science college across 238 villages in the region, offering Bachelor and Master programs, Shrimad Rajchandra Gurukul – a secondary and higher secondary school, and Shrimad Rajchandra Skill Development Centre – a vocational training center, we continue to make education easily accessible for men and women residing in remote areas of South Gujarat.

As we continue to grow and make a larger impact on those in need, we hope to strengthen our commitment by forging more partnerships, and collaborations, thereby allowing us to achieve the 2030 Agenda in a more timely manner, and together.