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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: strategies for the eradication of poverty to
achieve sustainable development for all**

Statement submitted by the United States Sustainable Development Corporation, 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

Introduction

In rural communities around the world, localities are faced with declining economies, fewer opportunities to support enterprise or for citizens to find local employment. As a result, not only is wealth fleeting, poverty is endemic. One approach to eradicate poverty can be found in the implementation of strategies that are designed to strengthen the rural urban continuum. Creating opportunities to connect the natural resources of low density agricultural areas to high density, distribution hubs in metropolitan areas is vital to the economic recovery of both communities. Rural communities rely on the access to commerce in urban areas and likewise, cities require on the natural commodities for sustenance. The United States Sustainable Development's contribution to the 56th Commission on Social Development is a local model that has the potential for replication in other regions of the world.

Case Study

The case study community is located on the Eastern Shore of Virginia, a two-county region, one of which is experiencing a declining population and loss of industry. It is a coastal area on the Delmarva peninsula which spans a three-state region of the eastern seaboard of the United States. The southernmost section of the Delaware, Maryland, Virginia peninsula is not connected to the rest of the Commonwealth of Virginia by land, rendering it physically isolated from the mainland and consequently the access to the free flow of commerce that exists there. Twenty-five years ago, residents of the New Road Community of Exmore, Virginia, organized to engage the local government to see that infrastructure was put in place that would allow them to have the indoor plumbing and running water that had been denied to them for decades. Along the way, the local community of Indigenous and African descendants of colonialism and enslavement acquired the 30-acre land mass on which they had lived for generations, removed the substandard housing and built new housing, both for rental and homeownership. Today, the residential property is almost fully developed, but the lack of access to economic opportunity for local young people continues to loom in the same way that access to an indoor bathroom once stood in the way of their quality of life. Due to the forward thinking of community leaders, part of the land was subdivided for future community economic development uses. Initially, they envisioned retail and light industrial recruitment but more recently they have explored the potential for local business and entrepreneurial development.

Over the last several years scholarship about the region has been published that suggests that the agricultural, aquacultural and wood and forestry industry sectors show significant investment potential. Studies have also focused on the innovation potential of the region, and have considered the practical experience of the labour force, entrepreneurial base and other resources that are intensely invested in the industry sectors as evidence that the possibilities for innovation are significant. As such, the community made the decision to develop the property into the "New Road Innovation Park". As most of the citizens of the community date back to the colonial and enslavement eras, farming and fishing have been the primary entrepreneurial and employment options, though few have been the business owners and employers. For that reason, the first project, "Innovations in Food", was the most likely initiative to launch the park. Slated for construction in 2018, the project will include six hydroponic growing sites, one aquaponic growing site, a commercial kitchen, distribution centre, retail operation and dining area. All business management and employment opportunities will be performed by local people.

Model

The asset-based vertical integration model for alternative growing and value-added agriculture can be applied to other industry sectors that are most appropriate for the subject region. The model is first based in sound applied research from which the best data about growing, processing, preparation technique and market potential can allow future business owners to remain ahead of the innovation curve. Following the establishment of a management team that should consist of member that can be drawn from, academia, business, local government and non-profit sectors and the local community, a research committee should be established. The research committee can be comprised from numerous sources of information, academia, public and private research institutes, community and economic development specialists and others who are committed to forging the alliance between analysis and practice.

As the various test sites for production are developed, the research team will identify technical assistance providers to work alongside local people to ensure that the best practices are used to produce the commodities and subsequently to add value so that all may be introduced to the marketplace. The goal for the first year of test site operations is to perfect the participants' skill in the production method. In the event of the revenue based distribution of the raw commodity, participants may receive an equitable portion of the post expense sales. At the end of two years of training, successful participants may receive support to spin off to develop their own operation on another developed site in the park. The same principle applies to those who seek to add value to the commodity in processing or preparation of the commodity for sale on the wholesale or retail market. The best technical support that is available in technique and market research is necessary to ensure the success of both the test site and the future business interest of the participant.

Market research is one of the most significant elements of the model. Part of the research will include identifying those crops that have the best potential for wholesale, retail and international distribution. In another part of the Commonwealth of Virginia for example, local people have learned that medicinal herbs have the significant potential in the Chinese market. As a result, some 50 farmers received technical and marketing support to sell the commodities that they are cultivating for international trade.

The slogan for the New Road Innovation Park, "turning ideas into innovation and innovation into enterprise", describes a fully integrated model for converting the best thinking on a specific industry sector into successful business enterprises for local people. Funding for the innovation park is a mix of equity, grants and loans. The land investment of the community as well as any initial start up capital provides the basis for project equity, grants assist with the development of the test sites and facility, and long-term low interest loans fills in the gaps between equity and grants. As participants graduate from the test sites to their own business operations, they will be assisted with a similar mix of funding.

Of specific interest to the Indigenous and African descendants of colonialism and enslavement in this diasporic community many of whom can trace their ancestry to people who preceded the settlement of first English colony, is to explore the opportunity to forge trade alliances with those on the continent of Africa and other indigenous people and their descendants in the global community. The New Road Innovation Park is a planned destination point for the trade of natural resources, value added products and cultural goods for retail and distribution in the United States and abroad. Following the innovation in food project, the management team will consider the potential for value added wood and forestry sites for retail and distribution. Like the rural urban continuum, the stated goals of international trade alliances will reinforce not only the economic condition of the domestic population, but are intended to open a venue for commerce for those of Indigenous and African descent in international markets around the diaspora.