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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: Creating full and productive employment and decent work for all as a way of overcoming inequalities to accelerate the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Statement submitted by Lady Fatemah Charitable 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

Introduction

In this statement we showcase the Lady Fatemah Trust's approach to create full and productive employment and decent work for all through our Mothernomics programme.

Why Mothernomics? A model of sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, for families impacted by decades of war and terror that promotes a holistic framework for economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development cannot be underestimated. With reference to our flagship Mothernomics programme which places women at the heart of community-led interventions, we recognise that the global Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected women and girls with existing inequalities heightened. At the core of the program is providing mental health first aid to heal the trauma felt by the families impacted by war, famine, and tragic personal loss.

Therefore, in the Mothernomics programme we start with mothers to empower whole communities in the world's poorest places. We work with local partnerships to improve physical and mental health, access fair education and create sustainable incomes for these families who are otherwise dependent on charitable handouts.

What is Mothernomics? The Mothernomics programme combines mental health first aid, training in vocational skills training, a microfinance loan to purchase equipment and a social enterprise model that designs, markets, and grows their brand recognition. Mothers become tailors, beauticians and caterers and bring an income in to support their family – often for the first time. They can franchise goods under the Mothernomics brand, 'MOM' and raise their visibility in society, becoming active role models for their children and stand, with dignity, on their own two feet.

We have piloted this model for three years across four countries: Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, and Yemen. In total over 1,000 women have participated in the programme.

Mothernomics gives women the tools to secure their own financial futures. It does so in five stages:

- Shifting the mindset through coaching - one week
- Training in a skill such as sewing or beauty salon treatments – two months
- Tests the skills regularly and only graduates' mothers when they are ready to work professionally
- Providing a repayable loan for equipment repayable in monthly instalments from their sales over two years
- Provides packaging, branding and sales channels together with mentoring in entrepreneurship. Mothers can reasonably expect incomes of USD 300-450 per month in the first 6 months. This helps them look after their respective family's needs as well as paying for the education of their children and the family's healthcare. There is no limit to their success, their efforts are recognised and rewarded through financial incentives as well as mentoring for increased growth.

What inspired Mothernomics? Mothernomics' flagship project is in Iraq. The Lady Fatemah Trust has worked here for 16 years supporting women and their children with hardship subsistence cash handouts through a sponsorship programme. The women we supported told us of the deeper hopes, dreams, and desires they had

for their children. They wanted to be role models and support themselves. The culture and their society were holding them back.

In Iraq, widowed mothers face double discrimination at the intersection of gender and poverty. Rebuilding from prolonged insecurity and war, Iraq has over two million orphaned children and high rates of widow headed households. Women's burden of care, coupled with stigma and oppression mean widowed mothers in Iraq are without a voice or roads of opportunity. Despite determination to stand on their own feet, many mothers are subject to societal norms and depend on charitable sponsorship.

How did Mothernomics respond to Covid? Just before the onset of the pandemic in Iraq, the Mothernomics graduates were sewing bedlinen, school uniforms and ladies' garments. The project had orders to serve food to orphaned schools and the Holy Shrines. However due to public health safety recommendations these were put on hold.

Instead, and in keeping with the ethos of the Mothernomics project, the project created an agile opportunity to support mothers by serving a high local need for Covid19 protective clothing. Facilities were adapted to ensure that the mothers' safety was paramount through regular disinfection and upholding social distancing. Their products are packaged in sterilised facilities ready for use by doctors and workers on the frontline.

Widowed mothers from many different areas in Karbala came together to stitch face masks, PPE suits and surgical gowns to sell to local hospitals, pharmaceutical unions, public health authorities, large charities, and many others. This transformation meant that mothers who previously relied on monthly handouts are now working to provide for themselves and their children at a time of global economic hardship. All through the pandemic, the project created employment opportunities for not just the mothers but also tailors, delivery drivers, logistics planners among other who lost their jobs during nationwide lockdown, providing whole communities with a much-needed income.

What have we learnt? Today 2,000 women involved in Mothernomics have moved towards fully supporting themselves through their new skills and knowledge gained through the programme. Just this month, we passed a tremendous milestone for the programme. We now have two retail stores in Iraq and have just opened an online store for e-commerce.

We have learnt that first and foremost women's mental health must be supported before, during and after they graduate from the programme. Providing adequate support for the deep trauma these women have experienced must go hand and hand with the training.

We have learnt to listen to the mothers and provide them with active roles shaping the programme. Some mothers are now employed on the main office of the project in Iraq.

How has Mothernomics accelerated recovery from Covid19?

The programme has been instrumental in shifting both individuals and community level mindsets about women's economic power and choice, certainly in the communities in Iraq where we operate. Mothers can work flexibly to suit their needs and the model is scalable and replicable. We have developed a Brothernomics programme in Yemen which follows the same core principles to help men towards financial security whilst ensuring that over 5,000,000 loaves have been distributed to the most vulnerable in society.

Where next for Mothernomics? The success of the model in these countries has encouraged us to drive it to new countries as well as diversify the types of industries in which the mothers can be trained so as to allow more enterprises to flourish for the benefit of more families to move out of poverty.

This also allows the cross selling of products across the customer base that appreciates the services provided by the mothers and the value of sourcing quality products at competitive pricing from them.

A program that started to empower the widowed mothers is now also serving single mothers as well as mothers with disability like deafness.
