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“Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for
the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic
objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further
actions and initiatives**

Statement submitted by Development Promotion Group, 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

Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls

About Development Promotion Group

Development Promotion Group was founded in 1986 with the objective to support grass-roots-based small non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations and to directly implement field projects. Our activities are spread out in states in India such as Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. The projects cover a broad spectrum of issues and include housing, education, community organization, women's empowerment, sanitation, organic farming, watershed development, microfinance and livelihood enhancement.

Development Promotion Group has strong links with several government departments and non-governmental organizations.

Millennium Development Goals

In 2000, eight development goals were established to offer a guideline to overcoming poverty and achieving positive development by 2015. India is among the 189 member countries that committed to achieving these goals.

The first goal is intrinsically interlinked with all the other goals, as eradication of extreme poverty and hunger can only be achieved when the economic, social and political empowerment of poor and marginalized persons is realized.

The Tendulkar Committee poverty line indicates that 29.8 per cent of the population (350 million people) were below the poverty line during the period 2009-2010.

India has initiated many schemes to overcome poverty:

- (a) Self-employment programmes such as the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana;
- (b) Wage-employment programmes such as the Sampoorna Grameen Rojgar Yojana and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme;
- (c) Area development programmes such as the Drought Prone Area Programmes, the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana and the Integrated Wastelands Development Programme;
- (d) Social security programmes such as the National Old Age Pension Scheme, the National Family Benefit Scheme and the National Maternity Benefit Scheme;
- (e) Other programmes such as the Indira Awaas Yojana, the National Rural Livelihoods Mission, the Integrated Watershed Development Programme, the National Rural Drinking Water Programme, the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Mid-day Meals, the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana and the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme.

Some of the achievements under the Eleventh Plan:

- Growth in the Eleventh Plan from 2007-2008 to 2011-2012 was 8.0 per cent, compared with 7.6 per cent in the Tenth Plan;
- Agricultural growth accelerated in the Eleventh Plan, to an average rate of 3.7 per cent, compared with 2.4 per cent in the Tenth Plan;
- Poverty declined at roughly 8 percentage points per year during the 11-year period before the Eleventh Plan;
- The rate of unemployment declined from 8.2 per cent in 2004-2005 to 6.6 per cent in 2009-2010.

Challenges to eliminating poverty, despite targeted programmes and subsidies provided by the Government, include a lack of devolution of funds and power, political interference and a lack of capacity to implement programmes at the operational level.

Our organization's strategy is to work towards mobilizing the marginalized into self-help groups and organize them into community-based organizations. As at the end of March 2013, Development Promotion Group and its 22 partner organizations had promoted 5,000 self-help groups with a total membership of more than 75,000 members.

An important part of breaking the poverty trap is the promotion of entrepreneurship and income-generating projects. Members receive loans from our partners, their self-help groups or community-based organizations and are linked to banks to receive loans for setting up small enterprises. More than 7,900 individuals have started small businesses. Some 60 per cent of the target community have the capacity to access government welfare schemes and 30 per cent have accessed them.

Another goal is to achieve universal primary education. According to the Eleventh Plan, the net enrolment rate at the primary level rose to 98.3 per cent in 2009-2010. The dropout rate (classes I-VIII) also showed improvements, falling 1.7 per cent annually from 2003-2004 to 2009-2010.

Challenges include a lack of teacher accountability, a shortage of qualified teachers, poor learning outcomes for children and continued high dropout rates between elementary and secondary schools, in particular among girls who must travel long distances to school.

Ninety-eight per cent of the target children in our target area are enrolled in schools. Emphasis has been given to ensuring that girl children continue their studies, especially in the secondary and higher classes. Since 2008, we have provided scholarship assistance to 432 boys and girls to acquire vocational skills.

Millennium Development Goal 3 calls for promoting gender equality and empowering women.

The Indian story is one of paradoxes. Despite development gains, there is much to achieve when it comes to equality and the empowerment of women. Cultural barriers and traditional gender roles continue to hamper women's participation in all spheres of life.

Development Promotion Group's gender empowerment initiatives include organizing training and awareness programmes, Women's Day campaigns and other demonstrations. Training programmes cover topics such as women's rights and

entitlements; women's education; advocacy training; legal awareness; the rights of adolescent girls and young women; awareness about the need to eradicate female infanticide, early marriage, bigamy and desertion; environmental issues; income generation programmes; unequal wages; sexual exploitation by landlords; dowry harassment; property rights for women; the right to education for the girl child; and the Government's special schemes for women and girl children. As a result of the initiatives, 7,662 women attended training programmes on different topics relating to gender development.

Positive aspects of our gender empowerment initiatives:

- Women's economic growth is reflected in the construction of new houses and the repair of damaged houses by women;
- All eligible children, in particular girl children, are continuing their studies;
- Families have purchased land, and both movable and immovable assets are registered in the names of women;
- As a result of active and increased bank transactions, strong relationships with banks have been established for women's groups;
- There has been a decrease in dependence on local moneylenders;
- All the women members have acquired the habit of regular savings and have more than one savings account.

Goals 4, 5 and 6 are related to health and include:

- Reducing child mortality rates;
- Improving maternal health;
- Combating AIDS, malaria and other diseases.

India has made some achievements within the term of the Eleventh Plan, including an increase in immunization rates of 2.1 percent per year from 2002-2004 to 2007-2008. Similarly, institutional deliveries increased by 1.6 percent per year during the same period.

According to the Human Immunodeficiency Virus Sentinel Surveillance 2008-2009 survey, India has an estimated HIV prevalence of 0.31 percent among adults.

Health cannot be seen in isolation and is interlinked with issues of food security, employment and livelihoods, nutrition, water and sanitation and environment degradation.

The focus of Development Promotion Group's programme related to health has primarily been to provide awareness on what constitutes healthy sanitary and hygiene practices. Development Promotion Group has facilitated the construction of 23,442 individual sanitary latrines.

Millennium Development Goal 7 calls for ensuring environmental sustainability.

Inequitable land distribution and land reforms, population and livestock pressure, poverty and a weak institutional framework have often been viewed as the predominant underlying causes of forest depletion and degradation. Large projects such as big dams, thermal power projects, mines and special economic zones also

need land, and there is pressure on both agriculture and forest land to meet this demand. Desertification, drought, over-exploitation of water resources and various forms of pollution all affect the environment.

In Development Promotion Group's project area, the environment goal is realized through our focus on agriculture activity. We have a strong focus on organic methods of cultivation. Some 1,500 farmers have received orientation training and 675 farmers have taken up (completely or partially) organic cultivation methods. Homestead gardening by women is another activity.

Millennium Development Goal 8 is aimed at promoting a global partnership for development. It is unique in the sense that it essentially focuses on donor-Government commitments and achievements towards realizing that goal.

In India in particular there has been a positive achievement in realizing the targets for the Millennium Development Goals. However, there are challenges in terms of ensuring that that these goals ensure gender equality and empowerment.
