

56TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (CPD56)

ORAL STATEMENT by **Rozaria Memorial Trust**

Good afternoon, everyone, all protocols observed, my name is Wambui Njoroge from Kenya and I represent Solar Mtaani which works in collaboration with Rozaria Memorial Trust and WREPA. We have an outreach to thousands of young women and adolescent girls in rural communities in Kenya who are at risk of high levels of unintended pregnancies and in some communities, harmful traditional practices such as, FGM and early and forced marriages. These young women also have limited access to education, digital skills and economic opportunities for achieving sustainable livelihoods.

We collaborate with faith-based organizations, other Civil Society Organisations and the Kenya government to address these challenges by implementing programmes that are aligned with the Kenya Vision 2030, African Union Agenda 2063, the Nairobi Summit ICPD25 commitments which are critical for the implementation of the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

In Kenya, according to a UNFPA report, 13 thousand girls drop out of school each year due to unintended pregnancies, and in Kilifi County and Busia County where our programmes are implemented, the Kenya Ministry of Health Fact sheet states that 22 percent of girls in Kilifi County aged 15-19 years have begun childbearing and in Busia County 21 percent of girls aged 15-19 have begun childbearing. Given this reality we believe that comprehensive sexuality education is a fundamental human right, and we are committed to working with Faith communities to provide these girls with appropriate information, knowledge, and skills to achieve their full potential. This is important as many girls miss school or drop out because they cannot afford menstrual hygiene products, are forced into marriage or sexual activities with older partners.

A key strategy we have used is engaging faith-based communities to create safe spaces where they access theologically relevant information on sexual reproductive health and rights.

We work to reduce menstrual poverty, teenage pregnancies and enhance economic and social transformation through mentorship, by distributing menstrual hygiene kits, solar kits, access to basic education and skills development, which empowers the young women to make informed decisions about their reproductive health outcomes. For in-school girls, we provide academic support such as school uniforms and stationeries. We also train teenage mothers on nontraditional livelihoods where they can work in dignity and increase their income and assets, for example we train them on solar technology, digital skills, tree planting, crop production, fishponds, business development and a self-managed revolving fund.

In alignment with the ICPD commitments we recommend more resources, and engagement with local communities, young women-led organisations such as Solar Mtaani, community-based organizations and faith communities, in order to address gender inequality, energy poverty, gender-based violence, exclusion from education and health care services and livelihood skills that will promote empowerment and agency of women and adolescent girls to live fulfilled lives. Thank you.