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People aged 80 and older have the largest poverty rate compared to other demographics. Yet, as with other demographics, poverty does not affect all older adults equally. A lifetime of lower earnings and lost employment opportunities because of childcare responsibilities leave older women extremely vulnerable to the adverse health effects of hunger and poverty. Considering that women have a longer life expectancy than men, older women often find themselves relegated to the fringes of society and forgotten by larger social movements.

Today, as we discuss the relationship between innovations that promote the Sustainable Development Goals and new technologies designed to enhance the human experience, I ask you to remember the basic premise of the SDGs – to leave no one behind. The Sustainable Development Goals were meant for all segments of society and our discussions to mitigate the effects of poverty and hunger cannot forget the most vulnerable demographic across our planet – our elderly neighbors.

As one of the first, home and community based long-term services and support delivery systems in Kenya, AgeWatch Africa Foundation acts where others largely look away. Our focus is to provide a continuum of long-term care services to our aging neighbors. In our model, care is delivered across a variety of settings including the home of our elderly client, a community gazebo, and our future residential care facilities. By creating a continuum of care services, AgeWatch Africa Foundation minimizes care disruptions or transitions, which have been shown to negatively affect the wellbeing of the older person.

Because of our scalable, network of professional caregivers, AgeWatch Africa Foundation intervenes where others have largely failed – by expanding access to quality health care and providing an infrastructure that negates loneliness and improves the overall health and wellbeing of our elderly neighbors. By allocating resources to all elderly Kenyans, our program works to mitigate poverty's negative effects on individual and population health. Although such programs have been successfully implemented in more developed countries, our model represents one of the first entries into long term care for the native Kenyan. Having successfully piloted in one county, we are looking to scale up our model to cover the remaining forty six counties in Kenya, and in the future, with the support of our strategic partners, beyond Kenya. During the pilot, the AgeWatch Africa team encountered the glaring and deplorable state of most of our elderly neighbors. This experience though saddening has strengthened our resolve to work tirelessly with the Kenyan government, the community, and all other stakeholders to create a more humane aging environment that will ensure graceful aging for this important segment of our society.

With today's discussion focusing on innovations to negate the effects of poverty, we implore the session participants to recognize older adults as a necessary component of all social change initiatives if we want to truly achieve a transformative development outcome.

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