



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
3 December 2015

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixtieth session

14-24 March 2016

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

Statement submitted by Centa for Organisational Development and Young Women’s Christian Association of Nigeria, non-governmental organizations 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

Nigeria, the world's most populous black nation with an estimated population of over 170 million people has since the fourth Republic (1999-2015) initiated several empowerment programs for women at National, State and Community levels through policies and projects of relevant Ministries, Agencies and Departments of government. International Development Partners, the organised private sector, civil society organisations, faith based organisations and non-governmental organisations have also made significant contributions towards the empowerment of women in Nigeria.

Notable among these are the 2007 Business Development Fund for Women and The Women Fund for Economic Empowerment, both, micro credit initiatives of Nigerian gender architecture — Federal Ministry of Women Affairs & Social Development in partnership with the Bank of Industry and Agricultural Bank of Nigeria. To date, less than one million of over 70 million women in Nigeria have accessed this facility.

Various state governments through their Ministries of Women Affairs and Social Development or Poverty Alleviation as the case may be and the Offices of The First Ladies / Wives of Governors in most states of the federation through their various pet projects have at various times developed and deployed empowerment programs that include the establishment of skill acquisition centres, capacity building trainings and provision of skill equipment like sewing/tailoring machines, Hair Dryers, Milling machines to women in their states and communities.

Specifically, Young Women Christian Association Nigeria, Arm of Hope Foundation and Centa for Organisational Development to mention but a few are among numerous non-governmental and private sector led organisations that are deploying various empowerment initiatives among communities across Nigeria.

The Young Women Christian Association Nigeria has partnered with World Young Women Christian Association Nigeria, IPAS Nigeria, United Kingdom Department for International Development, United States Department for International Development, Lagos States Aids Management Agency and Enugu State Agency for the control of Aids to provide skill trainings to over one million young women and girls in ten states of the federation in catering, fashion design, computer programmes, bead and hat making, tiling and marble laying. In recent times, make ups, make overs and Gele (Big Head tie) tying have been included in the skills training module.

Arm of Hope Foundation established a decade and a half ago to meet the growing needs of vulnerable people in Nigeria, the majority of who are women and girls, have championed the cause of victims of Boko Haram insurgency in North East Nigerian States of Bornu, Yobe and Adamawa. They have rehabilitated and assisted thousands of victims of communal and religious crises in Plateau and other North Central States. They have attended to numerous victims of flood disasters across 12 states of the federation in addition to the provision of Health Services. The Arm of Hope Foundation has built schools, and placed on scholarship over 354 women and children in Northern Nigeria. They have rebuilt several homes razed down due to violent crisis and provided clothing and boreholes to communities without portable water in Imo, Rivers, Cross Rivers and Anambra States.

At the policy level, Centa for Organisational Development Nigeria and other non-governmental, faith based and community based organisations have engaged Nigeria's national, state and community policy architecture towards the empowerment of women. Specifically, Centa for Organisational Development Nigeria in March 2015 published "Twenty Years of Implementing Beijing Platform for Action in Nigeria 2010-2015" a critical analysis of steps taken by the immediate past administration of former President Good Luck Ebele Jonathan toward gender equality and empowerment of women. Currently, Centa for Organisational Development Nigeria is articulating and co-ordinating civil society inputs towards the production of Nigeria's 8th Country Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women Shadow report to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women Committee due in 2016.

Our concern as we prepare for the 60th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women holding in New York from March 14th to 24th, 2016, is that despite interventions, poverty among women in Nigeria who constitute 46.9 per cent of the country's population is still pervasive. Gross domestic product growth rates are not reflective in the lives of women. Growths in information and communications technology development and deployment including use of mobile telephony, internet connectivity, data bundles and broad bands have not impacted in concrete ways on women especially rural women. The over 100 million active telephone lines and 80 million internet users is not impacting in significant ways empowerment of women. Collectively and individually we seem to be scratching the surface on sustainable empowerment of women.

Our collective challenge remains how can empowerment interventions at various levels be better structured, better sustained and effectively managed for sustainable development of more women in Nigeria. What are we doing wrong? How can these wrongs be righted? How can we galvanise the right energies and synergies for effective service delivery towards sustainable empowerment of women in Nigeria.

We raise these concerns at a global level against the backdrop of the current administration of President Muhammadu Buhari (05/29/15-05/28/19) not showing commitment in appointing women into The Federal Executive Council. Following the March /April 2015 general elections women in parliament dropped from a national average of 6.7 per cent to 5 per cent. There are fewer women in parliament and the 35 per cent affirmative action in appointive positions surpassed by the previous administration of President Goodluck Jonathan may be rescinded to less than 15 per cent by this administration.

Furthermore, there are fears that Nigeria's Vision 20:2020 hinged on Nigeria becoming one of the world's 20 largest economies by the year 2020 with special interest on women may be discontinued by the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari. This reverse policy if pursued will reverse our national goal of "Engendering Human and National Development through equitable contribution of the Nigerian women, men and children" which keys into the core principle of 'Gender Equity and Women Empowerment' stipulated in the National Gender Policy of 2007, that seeks to bring about sustainable human development and a just society devoid of discrimination based on sex.

The YouWiN! (Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria) and YouWIN Women designed exclusively for female entrepreneurs, aged 45 years and under through an innovative annual Business Plan Competition, targeted at aspiring young Nigerian entrepreneurs that resulted in the empowerment of over 2000 young female entrepreneurs' in 2012 by the previous administration may also be discontinued by this administration.

In the area of health, Nigerian women are suffering from lack of access to quality health care delivery and services. Our maternal and infant mortality that recorded significant progress between 2012 and 2014 through investments from the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme is also on a reverse gear. With the current administration's determination to rationalise and scale down government programs and projects, most of the Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme staff are being laid off.

The National Health Insurance Scheme established in 1999 as a Public Private Partnership to provide accessible, affordable and qualitative healthcare for all Nigerians 15 years after is still limited to federal government employees and staff of organised private sector that constitute less than 10 per cent of the country's population. The majority of Nigerians especially women are still outside the scope of The National Health Insurance Scheme and unless the coverage is extended to the informal sector, qualitative health care for Nigerian women will remain a mirage.

Women in Nigeria still suffer deprivations based on sex, religion and ethnicity. They are grossly disadvantaged with no fundamental 'rights' of ownership of their body and properties. Their rights to income are curtailed by patriarchy and male dominance. This creates the necessity for men to validate/legitimize decisions of women. Most women in Nigeria have no title to property. This hinders access to certain types of support, including access to credit from financial institutions.

Citizenship for Nigerian women is guaranteed more internationally than at home. A woman married to a man from a state other than her state of origin — usually her father's place of birth — she may be disenfranchised in her husband's state in appointive positions in government. Nigerian women cannot confer Nigerian citizenship on her foreign spouse.

By This statement the Centa for Organisational Development Nigeria, Young Women Christian Association Nigeria is appealing to the United Nations systems and structures to come to our assistance in sustainable empowerment of women in Nigeria.