



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
29 November 2022

Original: English

Commission on the Status of Women

Sixty-seventh session

6–17 March 2023

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 Medical Women’s Association of Nigeria, 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

In line with the main focus of Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, the Medical Women's Association of Nigeria submits a statement for consideration during the General Assembly as follows:

Whereas digital technologies bring about unprecedented opportunities for female empowerment and inclusion around the world. Digital technology has become an essential part of our lives; this reality becomes clearer following the Covid-19 pandemic experience. Everyone had to meet up by having access to online education, online formal and informal learning, online health and well-being information. Women and girls should not be left out of the necessity for online experiences and opportunities for their development.

Whereas female empowerment enables women and girls to live to their fullest potential and better their lives. Education (female education) is sacrosanct to enable empowerment. There must be access to sustained quality education which is accessible from anywhere and at any time. Innovative technology can be leveraged, to deliver quality learning for women and girls, from high-tech to low-tech, to no-tech. This is in line with the sustainable development goal target 5.B which is to enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women. With female empowerment we can reach and achieve many other Sustainable Development Goals. Due to the advancement in technology and information communication, computer applications can be used to propagate and promote girl child education by the development of computer applications that can be used by adult women for self-instruction wherever they are. The computer applications (apps) should be available offline as internet services are unavailable in some rural communities in Nigeria and much of developing countries so the applications can be used irrespective of the availability of internet services. Such applications should be self-instructive, so the user does not necessarily need a teacher.

In Nigeria, there is a lot of respect for religious and traditional leaders therefore engaging them in the fight to end gender inequality is apt. This will include advocacy and enlightenment and dialogue to end the preference for the boy child and male supremacy.

The creation of web hub for girls and child reproductive health and information opens opportunities for women and girls to have access to information that will help them make informed decisions about their reproductive health. Digitalization of required information offers great empowerment of female and encourages female participation in decision making about their own lives. It will reduce the occurrence of forced and child marriage: cultural rites that dehumanize our women/girls; and prevent actions that may result into complications during pregnancy or childbirth. Women and girls will be equipped with information on how to avoid becoming victims of physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime.

Social enterprise for rural women empowerment in Agriculture and trading through dissemination of digital technologies, opens the opportunity and creates the platform for a forward path. Digital technologies bring about unprecedented opportunities for female empowerment and inclusion around the world. Opportunities that will not only benefit women themselves, but also enhance the lives of their families and the well-being of entire communities both at local and national levels. Rural women can add immense value to the agricultural sector if they are exposed and opportune to have adequate training, access to land, and giving the financial assistants to participate fully in the agricultural sector. Agriculture training entails

new modern agricultural techniques tailored to meet the local conditions and resources specifically for women, especially the rural women. Provision of favourable working conditions, good access roads in agricultural areas, availability of electricity and access to markets for products will compliment training, as training alone is not enough to empower women in the aspect of agriculture. In addition to this is establishment of community financial institutions for micro-lending for women to sustain their agricultural practices

Medical Women's Association of Nigeria recommends that the commission should

- Create a web hub for girls and child reproductive health and information
 - Provide Social enterprise for rural women empowerment in Agriculture and Trading
 - Develop a culturally adaptable guideline for Stakeholder engagement to mobilize and involve men in girl child education, protection against rape and other sexual exploitation.
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