Commission for Social Development
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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
Priority Theme: “Fostering social development and social
justice through social policies to accelerate progress on the
implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable
Development and to achieve the overarching goal of
poverty eradication”

Statement submitted by Women’s Board-Educational Cooperation
Society, 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.

* Adopted by the pre-sessional working group on 2 November 2023.
Statement

Without social development and justice, the possibility of achieving the sustainable development goals – SDG 1 to SDG 17, may continue to be a mirage. Social policies that are formulated on the basis of social development and justice promotes social well-being of citizens - where all people have an opportunity to enjoy long and healthy lives; to function, participate and live independently; and to enjoy civil and political entitlements as well as economic, social and cultural rights.

Social protection policies are designed based on the recognition that poverty remains the biggest threat to human welfare, and therefore pursues well-being through appropriate labour market policies, the provision of social security, basic social services and developmental social welfare; including strengthening livelihoods of individuals, families, communities and the nation at large. These policies are borne from the desire to aid citizens to overcome natural and human challenges. The policies provide a framework for promoting social justice, equity and inclusive productive growth. It is a transformative tool for addressing poverty, unemployment, social and economic vulnerabilities, inequality, exclusion and other threats to sustainable development. Many nations including Nigeria have not recorded significant progress in translating impressive social policies and economic reforms into improved well-being for the generality of their citizens.

The fact remains; that poverty eradication continues to be a major global challenge. With daily incomes of less than $2.15, nearly 700 million people worldwide are living in extreme poverty. According to Development Initiatives factsheet 2023, extreme poverty is increasingly concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa. It recorded that in 1990, 13% of people who were living in extreme poverty lived in the region; in 2022, an estimated 62% of people living in extreme poverty lived in Sub-Saharan Africa. Today Nigeria is tagged the world capital of poverty, with 71 million people living in extreme poverty (World Poverty Clock, 2023) and a total of 133 million people classed as multidimensionally poor according to National Bureau of Statistics data.

The framework of the 2030 Agenda lays out a broad range of economic, social, and environmental goals to propel the ongoing development priorities like eradicating poverty, health, education, and food security and nutrition. Additionally, the 17 global goals and 169 targets outlines the means of implementation, which is crucial to achieve the overarching goal of poverty eradication with a unified approach.

Social Policy Implementation: The development and implementation of social policies determine the following; the extent to which social services are provided, accessibility of financial services for economic endeavors, level of industrialization, degree of social or economic inequality, extent of social security and so on.

However, most policies in Nigeria are ineffectively implemented by the government agencies due to poor implementation, and inconsistencies. As a result, policies ultimately fail to alleviate the problems for which they were intended and fail to meet their goals leading to significant gaps between the formulation of policy goals and their achievement.

For instance, the policy of free education and health services for all in some states in Nigeria have witnessed very ineffective implementation resulting in deterioration in the quality and standard provided; some people prefer to send their children to private schools and seek medical services from private hospitals, even though their fees are higher.

Also, the Nigeria’s National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) was created to give workers a minimum level of financial security. It is based on a pre-payment
system in which both the employer and the employee contribute to the scheme, and the employee uses it whenever he or she becomes ill. The NHIS is unarguably an indispensable strategy for improving the poor health indices of the country and reducing out-of-pocket expenditure for quality health care services. However, the effectiveness of NHIS has been adversely affected by the lack of accountability, and transparency in the nation.

The Role of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET):

Owing to inadequate educational policies, many young people are without education, living in poverty and lack employment. The typical Nigerian youth who struggles to complete secondary school is solely focused on obtaining a university education. As a result, there are many university graduates who lack the necessary employable skills for industries. The necessary skills to fit into these industries are directly provided by TVET.

TVET is important because it offers an alternative educational path for youths and adults who wish to grow professionally and also provides manpower across all sectors of economy. There is a dire need of trained man power especially in the service industry.

TVET Colleges, like our four vocational institutions train young people to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes that are needed in the labour market for paid or self-employment opportunities. Our students are equipped with technical and professional skills which enables them to break the poverty cycle and overcome early marriage.

TVET is an important tool for the achievement of SDGs 4, 5 and 8 since they promote sustained economic growth, higher levels of productivity and technological innovations which are important measures to eradicate poverty, forced labour, slavery, irregular migration and human trafficking.

Health Care for Rural Communities:

Quality health services is the right of everyone and should be made accessible to all. With the aid of carefully thought out healthcare policies, people can be assured access to essential medical services regardless of their financial circumstances. This not only improves health outcomes but also prevents people from falling into poverty as a result of medical expenses.

Universal health coverage (UHC) means that all people have access to the full range of quality health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship (WHO, 2023). Providing access to primary health care in Nigeria is one way to ensure that universal health coverage is achieved as a country. Primary health care is the first level of healthcare that helps to identify, treat, and refer patients to specialists when appropriate. Unfortunately, most Nigerians still fail to access primary health care services.

To address this, we established a primary health Centre to serve the Iloti rural community and its environs in 1996. The Centre provides basic medical care, maternal and child health services, laboratory services and preventive health education. Clinic workers carry out home visitation to the elderly villagers in their homes and free medical outreaches are organized on a regular basis in communities that lack primary health care units. Efforts are made to combat malnutrition and special care is paid to preventive medicine especially malaria which is so prevalent.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

The crux of the implementation of the 2030 goals is to end extreme poverty and all other forms of poverty, thus it is imperative that all stakeholders, including government, should stick to designing and implementing programmes and interventions that have a significant impact to protect the most vulnerable individuals and families.
Access to social protection is a fundamental right hence, policies and systems on social protection must be adopted to address gender inequalities and promote women empowerment, leadership and participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) education. Social policies aiming at increasing access to quality education for all is key as good education is a powerful tool for breaking free from the cycle of poverty.

Supportive macroeconomic policies that provide grants, soft loans to Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and adequate financial aid to boost industries such as hospitality, clothing and textile, automotive, agriculture and so on for income generation must be adopted. A multisectoral approach to development will be made easier by the improved partnership among the three sectors of development (government, private and civil society) through prioritizing good governance, human dignity, quality services and collaborations, adequate funding, project implementations, transparency and accountability.