



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission on the Status of Women

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**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 Global Health and Awareness Research Foundation and Umuada Igbo 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

The economic empowerment for women aims at addressing the issues of food security and inheritance. Food security in terms of providing funds for micro economic aid to alleviate the sufferings of the indigenous people like the young girls and indigent women in the interior areas of the localities in various states. The group of women who are involved in agricultural businesses face hardships in a bid to produce their product that help as a means of livelihood.

The majority of these women have husbands but they are breadwinners of their homes. The widows are likewise breadwinners. The majority of the men in the rural areas marry more than one wife in order to have more labour force. The women spend so much time and energy in the farms due to lack of mechanized farming. It is especially in respect of those who engage in rice farming and processing and the cassava, corn and yam which is the most commonly eaten food among the people. They also get frustrated by the high cost of cultivation the youth charges them for those who begin to lack strength of cultivation as they advance in age.

Some in many cases find it difficult to access seeds for planting due to its high cost. Those who were trained in animal husbandry which they can rear and sell to make money do not have the money to take off. Empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors and throughout all levels of economic activity is essential to: build strong economies; establish more stable and just societies; achieve internationally-agreed goals for development, sustainability and human rights; improve quality of life for women, men, families and communities; and propel businesses' operations and goals. Yet, ensuring the inclusion of women's talents, skills, experience and energies requires intentional actions and deliberate policies.

The principles below (as adapted from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women) will ensure complete and measurable economic empowerment of women

**Leadership Promotes Gender Equality:** Women need to be empowered with strong support to participate in direct top-level policies for gender equality and human rights in the government and non-governmental organizations. Women should be allowed to participate in company-wide goals and targets to ensure that they are not marginalized thus, maintaining gender equality in workplaces. Empowering women to promote gender equality should cut across the development of company policies, programmes and implementation plans to advance equality.

**Equal Opportunity, Inclusion and Non-discrimination:** the most disheartening and economic development setback of Igbo women as a people is the issue of inheritance. Igbo women have been suffering from generation to generation on the issue of inheritance. It places the women as a second-class citizen in the society. The custom is made in a way that the social norms are very discriminating in terms of economic empowerment of women. The women are made to be completely dependent on the men. That is their fathers, their brothers and for those married their husbands. The most affected are the ones who are not lucky enough to have a husband. For them life is miserable. Society has little regard for them unless they have good jobs or a good position in society.

Lack of right of inheritance is a major barrier on women in Igbo land from attaining development goals as opposed to their male counterparts who have the rights on inheritance enshrined in the custom in their favour. It gives them the leverage to own land in the village inherited from forefathers. In a case of a woman that bears

female children only, her husband's lands and other properties are shared by the male relatives of the man. The wife (widow) has no right over anything as well.

The non-inheritance right of girls over their father's property and wives over that of their husband poses a big challenge to economic empowerment because denial of land for farming and setting up business is denial of power to make wealth.

Women should be given equal opportunities in work places with respect to wages and remuneration. Employers of labour must strive to include gender-sensitive recruitment and retention practices and proactively recruit and appoint women to managerial and executive positions and to the corporate board of directors. They should ensure at least 30 per cent participation of women in issues of the organization and decision-making.

Health, Safety and Freedom from Violence: Health is wealth, health related issues impact mostly women, therefore care should be taken in government and non-governmental organizations to provide a safe working environment. Work environment should be free from harassment, sexual abuse or any other form of abuse that women are vulnerable to. Strong policies should be made and taken into account in work places concerning verbal and/or physical abuse. More will be achieved if stakeholders train security staff and managers to recognize signs of violence against women and understand laws and company policies on human trafficking, labour and sexual exploitation.

Transparency, Measuring and Reporting: The government and non-governmental organizations should make policies that promote gender equality ensuring that it is implemented. Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of these policies should be in place with the proper benchmarks that quantify inclusion of women at all levels.

Education and Training: Empowering women at all levels to be able to sustain themselves, their families and the global world in general. Empowering them through skill acquisition, information technology, formal and informal education to bring about positive changes both locally and globally.

Enterprise development, Supply chain and marketing practices: Support the women in engaging in all forms of trade without discrimination. Banks and micro-credit companies should be willing to support the women, especially in granting credit facilities to them. Gone is the era when they say that women cannot walk into a bank and ask for a loan. Encouraging women to start up small and medium scale businesses and also form cooperatives to help in the alleviation of poverty, prostitution and trafficking.

Community Leadership and Engagement: Bring the community leaders and the stakeholders together to sensitize them on the need for gender equality and the need to collaborate with women to achieve better results. The need for the stakeholders to help bring the government closer to the grassroots. There is also a need for Non-Governmental Organization's to organize meetings and workshops to enlighten women on the need for them to participate in both the government of their state, country and all other aspects of human life

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