



# 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 Centa for Organisational Development Ltd/Gte, 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## Statement

Women and girls in Nigeria have been left for several decades, since the country's independence in 1960, to help themselves in finding their solutions to the continued marginalization, abuse, denial of their rights, and suppression through systemic policy failures, cultural, religious, traditional, and patriarchal values that continue to keep women and girls down, impoverishing them, and making them scapegoats of a failing state.

Over the last decade and a half, Nigeria has consistently retained the labels of, "The poverty capital of the world, The most unequal society in the world, The country with the highest number of out-of-school children in the world, The country with the highest number of internally displaced persons in the world owing to the activities of the Boko Haram insurgents in the North, agitations for the sovereign state of Biafra by the Indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) and their Eastern Security Network (ESN) in the South East, and the Niger Delta Militants in the South-South to mention but a few.

There is the unabating farmer/ header communal clashes in some of the North Central States of Plateau, Benue, Nassarawa, etc. Kidnapping for ransom has reached a whole new alarming proportion everywhere in the country including the once-safe Federal Capital Territory where many victims have lost their lives in recent times to ONE CHANCE Kidnapping Ritualist ring operating within the territory and its environs. In all these women and girls bear most the brunt as they are easy victims and preys to a state that has proved incapable of providing sustainable peace and security for its citizens.

Nigeria has in this period recorded the highest maternal and child mortality rate in the world. It has also the least number of elected and appointed female representatives in the world.

The 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) report released by the National Bureau of Statistics on November 17, 2022, revealed that 133 million Nigerians, out of its 200million estimated population are poor based on the following indicators:

- 65 per cent of the poor (86 million people) live in the North, while 35 per cent (nearly 47 million) live in the South. Poverty levels across States vary significantly, with the incidence of multidimensional poverty ranging from a low of 27 per cent in Ondo to a high of 91 per cent in Sokoto;
- Over half of Nigeria's population multidimensionally poor cooks with dung, wood, or charcoal, rather than clean energy. One Kilogram of Gas in Nigeria sells above the equivalent of USD 10 as of date. High deprivations also appear nationally in sanitation, education, time to healthcare, food insecurity, and housing;
- In general, the incidence of monetary poverty is lower than the incidence of multidimensional poverty across most states, in that while 40.1 per cent of people are poor according to the 2018/19 national monetary poverty line, 63 per cent are multidimensionally poor according to the National MPI 2022;
- Multidimensional poverty is higher in rural areas, where 72 per cent of people are poor, compared to 42 per cent of people in urban areas, to mention but a few.

Sadly, these reports are against the backdrop of increasing government expenditures on poverty reduction strategies through the National Social Safety-Nets Coordinating Office (NASSCO), in the Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management. The question is, what are we as a people and a country not

getting or doing right? How can these serial wrongs be righted? We need your help to right our wrongs across all sectors of human development.

Besides, 24 years of Nigeria's uninterrupted democratic governance has not changed the invisibility of women, youths, and persons with disabilities in the roll call of those who make key decisions in governance and public space.

Nigeria's leadership elite has not shown enough commitment and political will to increase women's political participation. The current national average of women's political participation in Nigeria after the 2023 elections is 3.6 per cent. This is far below West Africa's average of 17 per cent and Africa's regional average of 27 per cent.

Nigeria is ranked lowest in Afro Barometer research 2022 carried out by IDEAS Stockholm, Sweden, where Rwanda ranks first at 61 per cent national average.

Yet, women's political participation is critical to our national development as there can be no equitable participation where there is no voice, access, and opportunity for women, youths, and persons with disabilities to influence policy.

The low representation of Nigerian women in appointive and elective governance and political positions across the 36 states of the federation is a cause for serious concern in Nigeria's socio-economic and political development. It is the same reason we are beckoning to the global community, "NIGERIAN WOMEN AND GIRLS' NEED YOUR HELP".

Studies have shown that equitable participation of women and men in politics is essential to building sustainable democracy. The role women play in society and during elections cannot be overemphasized. They propel the change process and enhance growth and development. The continued low representation of women in governance and elected political representations in Nigeria has been ascribed to the array of barriers that women face in their quest for full participation in socio-economic and political spheres.

Entrenched cultural attitudes and values hinder active women's participation in public life and politics. The lack of internal party democracy and the violent character of politics in Nigeria deter most female aspirants.

Meanwhile, democracy is about fair representation of all groups in society and the low representation of women is a violation of the principle of democracy. Poor representation denies women mass participation in governance.

### **Our Call**

The Centa for Organisational Development Ltd/Gte calls on the global community to, among other things impress Nigeria's 10th National Assembly to make a priority in the constitutional review process the prompt passage of the 2022, five truncated gender bills thrown away by the 9th National Assembly in February 2022.

The five gender bills include:

- Bill on Citizenship which seeks to amend Section 26 of the constitution to grant citizenship to foreign husbands of Nigerian women as is currently guaranteed in Section 26(2)(a) for foreign wives of Nigerian men;
- The indigeneship Bill, which among other issues, addresses Sections 31 and 318(1) of the 1999 constitution as amended to allow women to claim their husbands' state of origin after at least five years of marriage;
- The Affirmative Action Bill which seeks to specifically amend Section 223 to ensure women occupy at least 35 percent in political party administration,

elective and appointive positions at local, state, and federal levels in line with the 2006 National Gender policy that stipulates the same but lack of political will has made it a document on our shelves not backed with an operational legal framework and therefore nonjusticiable 17 years after it was passed.

- Other demands of women and girls in Nigeria include the Bill on Ministerial or Commissioner Nomination, which among others seeks to amend Sections 147 and 192 of the Nigerian Constitution so that at least 35 percent of the nominees are women; and
- Reserved Seat Bill, which seeks to amend Sections 48, 49, and 91 to create additional 37, 74, and 108 seats for women at the Senate, House of Representatives, and the State Assemblies, respectively.

Women and girls in Nigeria need financial, networking, experience sharing, and learning to create the change we have desired since six decades of our independence.

The resources Nigerian women and girls need to solve their immediate and long-term socio-economic and political problems are available within the global community. Kindly release these resources in support of women and girls in Nigeria.

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