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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.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



Statement

Empowering the Nigerian woman with necessary skills.

Women by virtue of their role as mothers and care givers in the society are saddled with the responsibility of providing the basic necessities of their families. With the increased level of unemployment in Nigeria, they have become more creative and innovative in their choice of work. They have developed skills which are marketable and also give them the time to take care of their families.

The high level of unemployment as a result of the economic meltdown and many corporate organizations reducing their staff strength, a lot of women become the providers of the family resources — since the men are mostly affected as corporate organizations prefer employing men in top supervisory positions.

At Women's Board-Educational Cooperation Society, we empower women with the necessary skills in Hospitality Management and a high sense of work so that they can be useful to themselves and the society and/or are exemplary staff. Our participants, who are women and young girls, gain employment in the rising Hospitality industry and some of them set up their own businesses. At present, we have four institutions in the country and these are in four different states — Lagos, Ogun, Oyo and Enugu.

These institutions are established through the donations received from individuals and International agencies who share our objectives of empowering the Nigerian woman. The Millennium Development Goal 3 — “promote gender equality and empower women”, which necessitated our project of empowering the girl child, showed at the end of 2015 that the target of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferable by 2005 and at all levels of education not later than 2015 was achieved to a relative extent. However, the girl child is still disadvantaged when it comes to tertiary education and for those living in the rural areas.

In three of the states where we have our institutions for Hospitality management, the girls from the rural areas lack the necessary opportunities to further their education after secondary school. Their parents prefer to send them to sell or help them with farm work. These girls become disadvantaged as they do not have any marketable skills with which to earn an income for themselves. We engage in creating awareness in such communities of the need to train their girls and make them acquire skills which they can use later on in life. At the end of the programme, most of the beneficiaries are happy for the knowledge gained and also the opportunities opened to them.

In urban settlements, for example, Lagos state, where we have another Hospitality institution, in addition to the skills given to young girls, short courses are organized for women who aspire to start a business of their own either as a sole means of income or in addition to paid employment. This skill affords them the opportunity to cater for events where they provide finger foods, cocktail drinks, plan and manage events such as birthdays and weddings.

We are also aware that a large number of women are getting skills as photographers, graphic designers, branding and monogramming agents, jewellery

designer, hair stylist and make-up artist. The general aim is to increase their income to meet the rising demands as a result of the current state of the economy.

The challenge faced by most women is lack of financial resources to be able to either start the business or take it to a higher level. The source available is slim where it is gotten from the families alone. For those in the rural setting, where there is little or no money or social amenities, the opportunities to explore ways of improving their income are even slimmer.

It is imperative to note that the agreed conclusion, recognized the empowerment of women as being central to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal and the new set of developmental goals — the Sustainable Development Goals, because of the crucial role women play in family and the multiplier effect it will create in sustaining economic growth.

We would therefore want to call upon the government to encourage organizations who are involved in various projects that empower women. They could be granted tax relief, given land to establish their projects and also some of the government and statutory fees could either be waived or given at a discount. This we believe will enable them to use their limited resources to reach out to more women and provide more assistance required.
