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## Commission on the Status of Women

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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 Umuada Igbo 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.

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\* The present statement is issued without formal editing.



## **Statement**

### **Efforts of Umuada Igbo Nigeria towards achieving gender equality and empowerment of rural women and girls in Nigeria**

Education is a very important tool in improving the status of people generally, in any society. Women's education will undoubtedly help in alleviating poverty in their localities. Educated women have a vital role to play in politics, governance, administration and commerce, but they are faced daily with a number of grassroots challenges that have hindered their participation in those areas. We, however, note that these challenges can be drastically reduced, if not eradicated, by getting women involved in empowerment programmes and institutions designed to give them opportunities to improve their education and knowledge in various fields of human endeavors. Rural women are resourceful economic agents that contribute to the income of the families and their community. And while they are involved in the odd jobs such as home making, farming, trading, brick laying, they are hardly recognized or remunerated.

### **Projects undertaken by Umuada Igbo Nigeria towards Women Empowerment.**

Since our last empowerment presentation at this forum, Umuada Igbo has embarked on very laudable projects to enhance the statue of women in Nigeria. Umuada Igbo, in collaboration with Godfrey Okoye University located in Emene in Enugu State of Nigeria, is establishing an International Women Development Center, Guest House, Event Center, Parking Lot and Mental Health Center at strategic site in the University. The agreement to do this was signed on January 11, 2023.

As we had noted previously, HRH Igwe Raphael Offor KSM Ide of Omogho and Community, Orumba North LGA Anambra State Nigeria donated 7.7 hectares of land to Umuada Igbo Nigeria for the building of Umuada Igbo International Cancer, Diagnostic, Maternity and Mental Health Center at Omogho Orumba North Local Government Area of Anambra state Nigeria. Please Umuada Igbo Nigeria and in Diaspora needs donors and or partners for the two projects.

### **Women's Right to Landownership and Inheritance**

Our continuous sensitization of women regarding their right to inherit their deceased husband's property and share in the estate of their deceased fathers has continued to empower our women. Many cases where such rights would has been denied, have been given effect and enforced by our intervention or by legal process secured by our assistance. In April 2014, the Supreme Court declared that the customary law in Igbo land which disinherits women from inheriting their father's or husband's property null and void for being in breach of the fundamental human right provision in the 1999 section 42 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. At August meeting rallies and Town hall meetings, Umuada Igbo Nigeria sensitizes the women on their Inheritance rights, Family Planning, Reproductive Health and Rights, Cancer and malaria awareness.

### **Female Genital Mutilation**

This is a practice that is of interest and concern to the feminine world, and we realize the importance of assuring the world that it is being eradicated in Nigeria in particular. Umuada Igbo has taken steps to ensure that constant radio jingles are placed and aired for all to appreciate the evil and dangers of genital mutilation.

## Thinking Aloud

Women empowerment through education is a necessary factor in achieving economic development and will help in bringing an end to poverty or minimize the state of poverty in the country. We believe that to achieve National development, the government must eliminate traditional and cultural practices that are meted out against women by educating the society on how women can help develop the continent of Africa.

The importance of Women Education in African Development and the role of education in empowering women cannot be over emphasized as this is a back drop of their level of participation to the economic development in Africa. Generally, the level of women's access to either formal or informal education in Africa is still very low (Meera & Jumana, 2015). This can be attributed to religious, traditional and socio-cultural believe and sex stereotype. In recent times, the international development community and government of most developing countries have made increasing girls primary education a central policy of interest. According to International Centre for Research on Women (2005) women are more likely to control their destinies and make effective changes to their communities when they have higher levels of education. Accordingly, we plaud governments of developing nations that are investing significantly on girls and women post-primary education in a bid to achieve the third millennium development goal of gender equality and women empowerment.

In dealing with roles of women education in National Development for Poverty Alleviation, we note that it has been empirically proved that women education is a veritable tool in development and poverty alleviation, thus the role of women in national affairs in Africa is very important. Across the world today, women have tangible records of their contributions to economic development. African women like their foreign counterparts have significant roles to play in driving African economy to development to help alleviate poverty in the region. Some of the vital areas women education can help in proffering solutions to poverty in African region are available.

In the Agricultural Sector, women play an important role in agricultural development through food production, food processing and livestock management. Through women education, women perform activities such as clearing, planting, tilling of land, fertilizer/manure application to harvesting, weeding, food processing and livestock management. According to Oseni (2012), although women constitute a large share of the agricultural labour force in Nigeria, but due to social constraints and barriers little is known about their activities in the sector. Women involvement in commercial agriculture has the tendency of increasing the nations national output. In addition to the contribution of women to food production and livestock management, women play significant roles in food crop preservation and storage. This is why Umuada Igbo lays emphasis on providing women societies with cassava processing plants or machines, African bread fruit processing, cocoyam, Palm oil, among others.

In the Industrial Sector, we gladly note that one of the most widely recognized contribution of women in Africa development has been in the area of industrialization. Through the means of education, women have developed knowledge and skills needed for the establishment and expansion of small, medium and large scale industries across Africa. In most developing economies women have been gainfully employed in different types of industries that are both formal and informal, managing the various production levels of goods and services.

It goes without gainsaying that women are engaged in distribution of goods and services in most African societies. Most of the marketing begins by trading of excess farm products ranging from local trade to international trade. In rural areas in most African countries proceeds gotten from sales of product by women are used to offset

the daily expenditure of their households. Women are involved in marketing as full time occupation in most African communities; this includes foodstuff, processed food, local beer and crafted baskets, pots and life stocks. Although African women's traditional role in commerce has been greatly affected by the lack of innovations and illiteracy, this has made them less competitive when compared to their foreign counterparts in the developed world but through recent involvement of women education in some African countries, African women are gradually getting involved in commercial innovations.

Consideration is given to constraints to Women's participation in National Development. In spite of the seemingly remarkable achievements recorded by women education across the globe, African women remain severely constrained in contributing their quota to poverty alleviation in the region. These barriers have hindered their efforts towards making decisive contribution in the social-political and economic development in African. Some of the constraints are Culture and Tradition as well as religious belief.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we note that the 21st century has witnessed significant contribution of women education in poverty alleviation in Nigeria, Africa. However, a number of socio-cultural barriers still exist in Nigeria that has seriously impeded the participation of women in poverty alleviation in Nigeria. Education remains a vital tool to break this barrier and empower women with the needed knowledge and skills to contribute their quota towards poverty alleviation.

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