

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS



PRESS STATEMENT

Women's Month:

ACCELERATING GENDER EQUALITY



The growing list of global challenges that loom over our progress toward achieving the 2030 Agenda, notably gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, includes poverty, hunger, inequality, armed conflicts, violence, displacement, terrorism, climate change, disease, and the adverse effects of technology. The potential of technology and innovation, if managed effectively, could provide a brighter future for all. Yet, for us to truly benefit from these opportunities, human rights must be at the forefront. Without the full, equal, and meaningful inclusion of women and girls at every level, and without eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against them, conflicts will not be resolved, sustainable development will not be achieved, and poverty alleviation efforts will fall short.

As we celebrate International Women's Day 2024 in Nigeria, with the International Women's theme 'Count Her In: Accelerating Gender Equality Through Economic Empowerment,' it's imperative to reflect on the pivotal role women play in accelerating gender equality through economic empowerment. The challenges faced by women, especially in the context of economic participation, are profound and multifaceted. Despite significant progress over the years shown in the National Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Policy and Action plan, gender inequality persists in Nigeria, hindering the full potential of our women and jeopardizing our collective progress.

According to current statistics, Nigerian women account for 70 percent of the country's extremely poor, even though they comprise only 49.3 percent of the general population (IMF Report). The gender gap in economic participation and opportunity remains a significant concern. In Nigeria, women's labour force participation rate stands at 56%, compared to 80% for men, highlighting a substantial disparity in workforce representation. Additionally, the gender wage gap remains a stark reality, with women earning 45% less than men in similar roles.

Entrepreneurship is often considered a key avenue for economic empowerment, yet women face unique barriers in this realm. Women-owned businesses in Nigeria account for 41% of enterprises, but they tend to be smaller in scale and face challenges in accessing financing and market opportunities. This hampers their growth potential and limits their economic impact.

The COVID-19 pandemic, post Covid outcomes, heightened insecurity coupled with inflation further exacerbated these challenges, disproportionately affecting women and families. Job losses, disrupted education, increased caregiving responsibilities, and limited access to healthcare and social protection have disproportionately impacted women, especially those in vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach. We must prioritize policies and initiatives that promote women's economic empowerment, including migrants, displaced and diaspora, such as providing access to quality education, financial services, improving vocational training, supporting women-led businesses, and enhancing women's participation in decision-making processes.

We must also challenge societal norms and stereotypes that perpetuate gender inequality. This includes advocating for equal pay for equal work, promoting shared caregiving responsibilities, and fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect in the workplace and beyond.

As we commemorate International Women's Day 2024, let us reaffirm our commitment to accelerating gender equality through economic empowerment. Let us continue to partner and collaborate across sectors; government, multilateral and bilateral organizations, private sector, development partners, the civil societies, women groups, young people, religious and traditional institutions to scale up reach and sustainability with each institutions bringing in their comparative advantages

Let us strengthen our work with women organizations by making the voices and agencies of women Count! – in the workforce, in entrepreneurship, in leadership, and in every sphere of society. Together, we can create a Nigeria where every woman has the opportunity to thrive and contribute to our shared prosperity.

The Development Partners Group on Gender (DPGG) is a multilateral body and group of about 100 technical representatives from government, UN, INGOs and relevant women groups and foundations working to enhance co-ordination for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in alignment with the national and state gender machineries. The group is committed to promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls through effective collaboration and partnership.

Signed:

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Co-Chair, DPGG/ActionAid Nigeria

Signed on behalf of DPGG