

Commission on the Status of Women
Forty-ninth session
New York, 28 February – 11 March 2005

PANEL I

Integration of gender perspectives in macroeconomics

Written statement* submitted by

Nenadi E. Usman
Minister of State for Finance, Nigeria

* The paper has been reproduced as submitted.

THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATING GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN MACROECONOMIC POLICIES/PROGRAMMES AT NATIONAL LEVELS

INTRODUCTION

1. Whilst the Nigerian Constitution states that every citizen shall have equality of rights, obligations and opportunity before the law, the role of public policy cannot be overemphasized toward the achievement of gender equality in any nation. Our macroeconomic environment consists of the various policies that are put in place to affect every aspect of economic activity, and these include fiscal, monetary, exchange rate, pricing policy and other measures to foster economic growth and development. It is within this context that the Challenges of integrating gender perspectives can be meaningfully examined. One cannot ignore the growing awareness toward parity in all spheres of life and this informs various government policies/programmes that are geared towards integrating gender perspectives in macroeconomic policies/programmes at national levels.

- ! Modifying the legal and regulatory framework to enhance equal opportunities. The challenge here is that legal reform itself does not ensure equal treatment. Further public action is required to make sure that gender-neutral laws are enforced at national and local levels.
- ! Ensuring macro-economic stability and improving micro-economic incentives. Sound economic

series of deliberate actions aimed at resuscitating social values which enhance the recognition of women in public institutions and the mainstreaming of gender perspectives in policy formulation at the national level. For instance, it is today part of NEEDS document and national economic agenda to promote women's rights. To this end, the Ministry of Women Affairs and relevant Committees of the National Assembly are required to review substantive and procedural laws that affect women. The Ministry of Labour and Productivity along with other relevant Ministries are also examining areas in which women have traditionally been neglected.

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN NIGERIA

8. In Nigeria, women are said to constitute about 70% of the poor. This has fueled the need to empower women by enhancing their capacity to participate in the economic, social, political and cultural activities of the country. Among the measures being adopted towards the realization of these objectives are:

- ! Implementation of the provisions of the United Nations Convention on Eliminations of all forms of discrimination against women;
- ! Mainstreaming women's concerns and perspectives in all policies and programmes;
- ! Support legislation for the abolition of all forms of harmful traditional practices against women;
- ! Promotion of access to microfinance and other poverty alleviation strategies and reducing poverty among women; and

!D(a)T2S 08D(06)26 02D(04)04D(02)8J(0D)D(88)C2D(1)D(8)C1D(0)D(5)T2

Cottage Industry Project:

12. In order to boost the economic empowerment of women, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development recently completed the Damaturu Vegetable Oil, Kwali Pottery and Bayelsa Salt Industries.

Female Functional Literacy and Health Programme (FFLH):

13. This programme is being implemented through a tripartite collaboration by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, Federal Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization. The objective is to enhance the health status, economic independence and the literacy level of women. Food processing machines, fish driers, irrigation pumps, grinding machines, groundnut extractors, among other equipment, have been distributed to Women Cooperatives in different States, including Abia, Bauchi, Borno, Delta, Enugu, Kwara, Osun, Rivers and Sokoto States.

Modern Bee-Keeping Project:

14. Another economic empowerment project for women is the modern Bee-keeping venture implemented under an arrangement between the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development and the International First Aid Society (IFAS). Women in 10 States have been trained on modern Bee-keeping and honey production technology. All the States of the Federation will eventually benefit from the programme.

Micro-Credit Scheme for Women:

15. Part of the efforts to reduce poverty among women is to organize them into groups through NGOs, four of which have been approved to avail them of micro-credit from the National Poverty Eradication programme (NAPEP). The four include:

- ! Nigerian Association of Women Entrepreneurs
- ! Country Women Association of Nigeria
- ! Women Opinion Leaders Forum
- ! National Traders and Market Leaders Council of Nigeria

16. Similarly, the sum of 116 million soft loan package for the establishment of various micro-scale enterprises by Nigeria women (where over 4,000 women groups are expected to benefit), has been made available to the National Council on Women Societies (NCWS) by NAPEP. The essence is to establish a Nigeria Women Finance Trust that would foster and have multi-dimensional effects on both the economy and the Nigerian women empowerment endeavour.

Rehabilitation of Vesico-Vagina Fistula (VVF) Patients:

17. In order to address the problem of (VVF) the Federal Government made available 64 million sometime ago to develop surgical, nutritional, psychological,

social, education and economic programmes that would deal with the multifaceted problems and morbidity associated with Vesico Vagina Fistula and to improve the lives of the women victims. The VVF centres are also to serve as NAPEP vocational training centres for women.

The Universal Basic Edu

22. I agree with the view that to increase women's possibilities to react positively to macroeconomic incentives, we will require the implementation of a set of actions including:

- ! The provision of social infrastructure and services (childcare, health services, water supply, etc.), which competing scarce current public finance has not provided for particularly, as gender perspective investment is yet to become popular among countries with heavy debt burden like Nigeria;
- ! Security of their property and inheritance rights through legal reforms including the establishment of mechanisms to enforce claims;
- ! Support to the development and provision of financial services and encouragement of financial institutions to support and be seen to be encouraging and integrating gender issues into their business plans; and
- ! Investment into girls and women's education and training to increase their mobility with regard to the labour market. As part of its on going economic and political reform programme, Nigeria hopes in the days ahead, to develop social employment schemes and funds targeted at women as part of all efforts towards furthering and integrating gender perspective in our national life.

23. To achieve this objective, economic development programme is being tailored to address the following malaise: As we wait for the ful

! Mobilize and augment community, national and voluntary funds for anti

privileged in the society. Besides, greater labour productivity, a higher rate of human capital formation and stronger economic growth will be achieved.

CONCLUSION

30. The Federal Government of Nigeria appreciates the importance of women and children in the scheme of things and would continue to welcome their participation in projects and programmes designed for their upliftment. By so doing, it hopes to make a real difference to the future well-being and prosperity of her people.