

ORAL STATEMENT FROM WOMEN'S CONSORTIUM FOR AFRICA (WOCOA) ON
A NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION IN SPECIAL CONSULTATIVE STATUS WITH THE UNITED
NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL
TO THE 50TH SESSION

Preamble: Rural Women in sub Saharan Africa constitute about 70% of the population and although they are the major producers of the basic food crops, they live in extreme poverty. The excruciating economic conditions constitute a critical factor to the vulnerability of rural women to various forms of violence and sexual abuse, especially the trafficking of women and girls for exploitative labour and prostitution. Rural women are unable to protect themselves from gender violence neither are they able to protect their children, especially the girls. The economic powerlessness of rural women also makes the women voiceless in the affairs of their communities and their respective nations at large resulting in their marginalisation in decision making positions.

In addition the lack of resources, infrastructure and modern technology in the rural areas contribute to the aggravation of the women's workload and the provision of their health needs including their reproductive health needs and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

We Commend the national governments in Africa their domestic, regional, international, regional and Regional instruments and covenants such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa, the African Union Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which are welcome steps towards women's development.

We are however concerned that the implementation of these commitments have not had the desired impact on the rural women. A situation where the government institutions and mechanisms for the implementation of the policies and programmes are not fully funded and the underfunding of the failure of policies and programmes towards the implementation of Government commitments.

1. The Government should take the following steps:-

1.1. Periodic monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of policies and programmes targeting rural women to ascertain their effectiveness.

1.2. Government institutions and Agencies should be charged with the implementation of these policies such as the Federal ministries or Ministries of women Affairs.

1.3. Provide basic amenities and infrastructure such as portable water, electricity, Primary Health facilities and schools in rural areas.

1.4. Integrate poverty alleviation schemes with the participation of rural women at the planning and implementation stages, incorporating the special needs of rural women in joint collaborative efforts of Government and CSOs for maximal effects and grassroots reach.

1.5. Strategic and constitutive steps should be taken by Government Agencies and CSOs to ensure that rural women have access to information technology, life skills, modern agricultural implements and renewable energy to improve their standard of living and expose them to international economies.

1.6. Protect rural women against gender violence, discrimination and sexual and genital abuse.

1.7. Promote the knowledge and experience of gender violence and ensure the participation of rural women in decision-making. Attaining sustainable

development of women cannot be achieved unless the necessary jobs for the economic and political empowerment of rural women are available and accessible to the rural women.

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