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### **VISION 20:20:20: Gender Equity in Science and Technology For Attaining Economic Growth and Fostering Sustainable Social and Economic Development in Nigeria.**

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Since the 1980s, issues of gender and gender equality have been at the forefront of international summits. For instance, the *Beijing Platform for Action*, adopted at the *Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW)* in 1995, the Millennium Development Goals; and Vision 20:2020 called for women to be fully integrated into the system of development around the globe.

This is obviously a challenge which no government can afford to ignore. More importantly, it has become increasingly clear that development or progress in peoples' welfare cannot be achieved where the needs and contributions of half of the world's population, women, are continually downgraded, marginalized or completely ignored.

“Mainstreaming from a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels”. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

The United Nations Millennium Declaration states that “*men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice*”.

## **SOME GENDER CONCEPTS**

### **What is Sex?**

...the biological differences between men and women. These differences are natural because they are given from birth

### **Gender**

...the social relationships between men and women and the way that relationship is made by society. i.e. how we are shaped after we are born into society

### **Gender Equality -**

The concept that all human beings, both men and women, are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles and prejudices. Gender equality means that the different behaviour, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favoured equally.

### **Gender Equity**

- ▶ Fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. This may include equal treatment or treatment that is different but which is considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.
- ▶ Equity = a means ;

equality = the goal.

### **Glass Ceiling -**

Invisible artificial barriers, created by attitudinal and organizational prejudices that block women from senior executive management positions

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Sustainable development requires the full and equal participation of women at all levels. It is clearly inappropriate to try and address problems, to identify the appropriate

strategies, or to implement the solutions if only half of the people concerned are involved in the process. Gender equity is an essential building block in sustainable development. Indeed, none of the three “pillars” of sustainable development (environmental protection, economic well being and social equity) can be achieved without solving the prevailing problem of gender inequity.

- **Environmental protection** requires a solid understanding of women’s relationship to environmental resources, as well as their rights and roles in resource planning and management. It also requires acknowledgement and incorporation of women’s knowledge of environmental matters, as well as an understanding of the gender specific impacts of environmental degradation and misuse;
- **Economic well-being** requires gender-sensitive strategies. Reasonable percentage of the world’s estimated people living in absolute poverty are women. Segmentation of labour markets – horizontally and vertically – has only marginally improved. No economy can be called healthy without utilizing the contributions and skills of all members of society;
- **Social equity** is fundamentally linked to gender equity. No society can survive sustainably, or allow its members to live in dignity, if there is prejudice and discrimination of any social group.

It is important to point out that “Gender issues are not the same as women’s’ issues. Understanding gender means understanding opportunities, constraints and the impacts of change as it affects both men and women” (World Bank). Partnerships and equality between men and women are the basis of strong families and viable societies in a rapidly changing world. You will agree with me that women have been consistently excluded from decision-making across history and societies. Indeed, in all groups, women are being systematically discriminated against within system of governance that allow for dominance of a few social groups to the expense of others. It is such power structures that cause further imbalance, marginalization, suffering and conflict. Creating greater gender equity will contribute to building peaceful, democratic and prosperous societies.

- The broad objective of the vision is by the year 2020, Nigeria will be one of the 20 largest economies in the world

- ❑ Able to consolidate its leadership role in Africa and establish itself as a significant player in the global economic and political arena

The specific objectives of NV20:2020 are to:

- ❑ transform and diversify the sectoral contribution to GDP;
  - ❑ optimise the key sources of economic growth and fostering sustainable social and economic development;
  - ❑ achieve global competitiveness for manufactured goods;
  - ❑ achieve \$900 billion target for gross domestic product (GDP); and
  - ❑ attain annual average in national per capita income of \$4000 by the year 2020
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#### **IMPLICATIONS as regards gender and sustainable development:**

- The current gender inequality may hinder or threaten the realisation of NV20:2020, particularly with respect to:
  - Poverty incidence
  - Illiteracy rate among women (girls)
  - Poor representation in governance and decision-making positions
  - Lack of access to resources (both material and financial)
  - Traditional, religious and cultural barriers; and

Poor enabling environment (legal and institutional)

- There are indications that there is still problem of gender disparities, which could affect the role of women in sustainable development.
- The family factors affecting women's role in sustainable development reveal that parents prefer to have more boys than girls and they give more opportunity to boys than girls
- Sustainable development requires the full and equal participation of women at all levels

- *“Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity, free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice.” UN Millennium Declaration*
- Also, it is clearly inappropriate to try and address problems, to identify the appropriate strategies, or to implement the solutions if only half of the people concerned are involved in the process
- Gender equity is an essential building block in  
Sustainable development

### **Gender Assessment of Poverty in Nigeria**

- Four types of assessment are identified in the Gender Discourse:
  - ❖ Capability—lack of access to public services such as education and health
  - ❖ Lack of opportunity typified by lack of access to labour markets, employment opportunities and lack of access to productive resources
  - ❖ Empowerment—powerlessness and being without voice at household and community level.
  - ❖ Security—vulnerability to economic risk

### **Pillars of Sustainable Development**

- **Environmental protection** requires a solid understanding of women's relationship to environmental resources, as well as their rights and roles in resource planning and management
- It also requires acknowledgement and incorporation of women's knowledge of environmental matters, as well as an understanding of the gender specific impacts of environmental degradation and misuse
- **Economic well-being** requires gender-sensitive strategies
- 70 % of the world's estimated 1.3 billion people living in absolute poverty are women

- Economic well-being of any society cannot be achieved if one group is massively underprivileged compared to the other
- Nor can an economy be called healthy without utilising the contributions and skills of all members of society
- **Social equity** is fundamentally linked to gender equity
- No society can survive sustainably, or allow its members to live in dignity, if there is prejudice and discrimination of any social group
- Gender considerations is recognised as a viable tool for eradicating extreme poverty and advancing development
- Sustainable development implies meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the needs of the future generation
- In order to promote sustainable development, there is the need for citizens (males and females) to participate in the economy, policy and social development of the society
- **Equity and Sustainable Development:** two types of equity are required for full human development to take place

Equity for human generations yet to come, whose interests are not represented by standard economic analyses or by market forces that discount the future, and equity for people living now who do not have equal access to natural resources or to social and economic goods

- To ensure gender equality and NV20:2020 aspirations, the following strategic initiatives will be adopted:
  - Institute mechanisms for the political empowerment of women to take active part in governance
  - Increase in proportion of women in executive positions in the work-force to at least 30% by 2015
  - Continuously sensitize the rural communities on traditional, cultural and religious barriers
  - Promote systematic gender mainstreaming in all sectors by the year 2020 through:

- Capacity building;
  - Access to basic education
  - Implementing national gender policies;
  - Effective monitoring and evaluation of commitments; and
  - Providing scholarship schemes to support girl-child education to tertiary level in disadvantaged states
- Increase women's access to paid employment, land, credit and other productive resources by 80% by the year 2020
  - Establish a national empowerment fund for economic activities for women entrepreneurs
  - Ensure financial sustainability for gender equality policies and programmes
  - Create a gender database and disaggregate information and data by gender
  - The Beijing Conference of 1995 clearly recognises that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential for addressing the central concerns of poverty, insecurity and for achieving sustainable, people centred-development

Therefore, the Federal Government has been enjoined to establish and strengthen gender units or gender focal points at all levels in all ministries to ensure that the gender concerns are mainstreamed into policy making and budgetary processes

- Existing women organizations in the rural and urban areas can easily be used as platforms to educate women to participate fully in sustainable development, especially through green consumerism
- More females should be encouraged to read science and vocational subjects at all levels of education to prepare them for technological changes without which they cannot meet up with their roles in sustainable development
- Gender issues are not the same as women's issues
- Partnerships and equality between men and women are the basis of strong families and viable societies in a rapidly changing world
- Women have been consistently excluded from decision-making across history and societies

- Indeed, in all social groups women are being systematically discriminated against within systems of governance that allow for the dominance of a few social groups to the expense of others
- It is such power structures that cause further imbalance, marginalisation, suffering and conflict
- Creating greater gender equity will contribute  
to building peaceful, democratic and prosperous societies

### **Critical Success Factors**

- Increased women's control over their fertility
- Reduced institutional discrimination and bias against women
- Increased public awareness of women's issues
- A decline in violence against women
- Strong focus on infrastructure and productive sectors
- Provision of globally competitive economic environment to enhance maximal flow of investment by the Private Sector
- Empower/enable women and men collectively to determine their development
- Increase the access of women and men to resources, options and political power
- Involve women and men as development decision-makers
- Transform gender relations
- Technological Progress and innovations, tapping from available global technological common wealth and domestic science and technology resources.
- Investing in human capacity development to enhance national competitiveness
- Entrenchment of merit as fundamental principle and core value
- Intensifying war against corruption

- Fostering private sector powered by non-oil growth to build the foundation for economic diversification
- Deepening reforms in all sector, and
- Extending reforms to sub national levels

## **Conclusion**

- ▶ National Development, if not **engendered** is **endangered**!
- ▶ There are 3 principles for **engendering** National development:
  - ▶ equality of rights between women and men;
  - ▶ women must be regarded as agents and beneficiaries of change;
  - ▶ wider choices for both women and men & equal opportunities by women and men to make those choices

Finally, intensive awareness creation of human rights and economic rights will go a long way to ameliorate the current situation.