

PRESS RELEASE ON THE CONSTITUTION OF THE NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS WORKING GROUP FOR NEITI: OUR POSITION

Women's Right to Education Programme (WREP) writes to commend the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, **Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, GCFR**, in the timely appointment of the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, (NEITI) National Stakeholders Working Group, (NSWG). We also want to congratulate the newly constituted NSWG especially **Professor Humphrey Asisi Asobie**, who is the Head of the Board for the recognition given to him as a man of virtue who has carved a niche for himself through his selfless services to this nation.

While appreciating the efforts of Mr. President in his determination to bring progress to this sector, WREP wishes to point out that the constitution of the National Stakeholders Working Group (NSWG) is gender insensitive. Out of its fourteen constituted members only Mrs. Ofueko Omogui is a woman, whose appointment was not as a result of her gender bias but by virtue of her position as Chief Executive of Federal Inland Revenue Services (FIRS). Analyzed through gender lenses this has myriad of implications, given the fact that women are always at the receiving end when it comes to such issues and this ought to change when one considers the important roles women play in the sector.

The task of ensuring that the NEITI is comprehensively and successfully implemented will require innovative mainstreaming of specific realities and renewed commitment among all stakeholders. Women constitute more than 40% of the Nigerian population and therefore a critical mass of stakeholders in national matters.

It is an incontrovertible fact that a lot of Nigerian women have distinguished themselves in the Extractive Sector and therefore ought to have been included not just for the fact of gender disparity but as equal partners in the bid to deepen the reform of the sector. In addition, it is common knowledge that women in positions of authority have acquitted themselves well as persons of integrity and uprightness. Apart from all these, it is internationally acknowledged that gender issues in governance are being taken seriously by the international community, donor institutions and multilateral agencies. Nigeria cannot be an exception to this laudable development.

Consequently, we call for inclusion of more women not only in the NSWG but other bodies and fora that are being put in place to consolidate the reforms of the extractive sector. Coincidentally, a body such as the NEITI - NSWG that is established to monitor reforms in a critical sector such as the Extractive Sector can do with more nominees than the present figure of 14 members.

Indeed, we wish to remind His Excellency, our Mr. President of his unique affirmation to give thirty per cent of appointments to women in his administration. This is the time for His Excellency to put this affirmation into action. We at WREP therefore humbly demand that His Excellency should reconsider this error and do justice for women in this matter.

- We also demand that the inauguration of this Group should be delayed until the correction has been effected by His Excellency.
- At least three female members be included in the National Stakeholders Working Group to address the gender gaps in the sector.
- Such omissions as this should be guided against in future appointments for the sake of equity and fairness.

Mimidoo Achakpa
Executive Director, WREP