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African Women's Day 2025

African women have long been the backbone of our communities, serving in multifaceted roles as caregivers, economic drivers, educators, and leaders. Their resilience, ingenuity, and unwavering commitment to societal progress have fueled transformative change despite the persistent barriers they face. African Women's Day therefore reminds us to recognize African Women contributions to progress and to honor them, both the well-known trailblazers and the countless unsung heroines, whose endeavors have laid the groundwork for a more inclusive and equitable future.

As we observe African Women's Day 2025, the Initiative for Research, Innovation and Advocacy in Development (IRIAD) solemnly reflects on the immense contributions that African women have made, and continue to make, to the socio-political and economic fabric of our continent. This day is not merely a ceremonial occasion marked by celebration; it is a profound moment at which all stakeholders are called upon to recognize and confront the entrenched inequalities that continue to impede the full realization of women's rights and representation in Africa.

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In line with the African Union's recognition of urgent continental priorities, this year's African Women's Day is guided by the theme ***"Advancing Social & Economic Justice for African Women through Reparations."*** This theme is profoundly relevant, as it draws attention to the historic and ongoing injustices that have shaped the socio-economic realities of African women. Reparations in this context extend beyond financial redress to include comprehensive measures aimed at empowering, and elevating African women within a world shaped by centuries of marginalization. The theme challenges governments, policymakers, civil society, and the public to embrace justice not merely as legal restitution but as an ongoing process that addresses systemic imbalances and creates meaningful opportunities for African women across all sectors.

While we celebrate, let us remember that significant gaps persist in women's political representation, particularly in Nigeria. Currently, women hold only 5% of the 1,462 legislative seats across Nigeria's Senate, House of Representatives, and State Houses of Assembly. In the Senate, only 4 of the 109 seats are occupied by women, representing 3.7%. In the House of Representatives, women hold **15 out of 360 seats, representing 4.2%**. The State Houses of Assembly have **54 women among 993 legislators, accounting for just 5.4%**, with 13 States having zero female representation. Nigeria ranks 180th out of 185 countries globally in

women's representation in parliament – the lowest figure in Sub-Saharan Africa. These figures signify systemic exclusion, limiting the diversity of voices in policy and governance in Nigeria.

The Special Seats for Women Bill championed by the Speaker of House of Representatives, Rt. Hon Tajudeen Abbas, PhD is designed to address the acute underrepresentation of women in Nigeria's legislatures. The Bill seeks to create 74 additional reserved seats for women at the federal level, with one additional seat for women in the Senate and one in the House of Representatives from each of the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory. At the state level, it proposes 108 additional reserved seats for women, three extra seats for women in each of the 36 State Houses of Assembly. The Bill seeks to add 182 elective special seats exclusively for women across Nigeria's legislative bodies. This measure is intended to dismantle entrenched structures and barriers that have excluded women from meaningful participation in governance, fostering a more inclusive and representative political system. Globally, reserved seats have proven effective in increasing women's political representation and participation, leading to broader policy focus on healthcare, education, social welfare, and the elimination of gender-based violence. Worth stating that these issues disproportionately affect women and children and underpin sustainable development. A legislature that better reflects gender diversity enriches democratic decision-making by incorporating a wider range of perspectives and experiences.

IRIAD is deeply committed to advancing the passage of the Special Seats for Women Bill. Our advocacy is grounded in collaboration with lawmakers, women rights advocates and defenders, CSOs, and grassroots partners to organize and build the consensus necessary for this reform. Although the dismantling of cultural and political obstacles to gender equity will require sustained effort, immediate actions such as the Special Seats Bill are crucial. Delaying reforms risks perpetuating inequity and inequality across generations.

As the African Women's Day 2025 invites reflection and renewed commitment, IRIAD calls upon critical stakeholders to take deliberate action:

- **National Assembly:** Accelerate legislative processes to ensure the swift passage and implementation of the Special Seats for Women Bill. Prioritize gender-sensitive policies that dismantle barriers to women's political participation and representation.
- **Political Parties:** Commit to inclusive candidate nomination processes, actively recruit and support women aspirants, and promote gender equity within party structures, platforms and processes.
- **Civil Society Organizations:** Sustain advocacy efforts, mobilize citizens, and monitor compliance with gender representation commitments, ensuring accountability at all levels of government.
- **Traditional and Community Leaders:** Champion women's leadership within communities, challenge patriarchal norms, and endorse social acceptance of women in political roles.
- **The Media:** Amplify women's voices, highlight successes and challenges in women's political representation, and foster public discourse on the importance of gender parity in governance.

- **General Public:** Exercise voting rights with conscious consideration for women candidates, participate in civic education, and hold elected officials accountable for gender-inclusive governance.

Together, these concerted efforts can transform Nigeria's political landscape, ensuring that women become visible and pivotal political representatives within the country's policy processes. African Women's Day 2025 must be marked by a recognition of women's contributions to national and continental development and renewed commitment to raising the bar of gender parity and equity in political representation and decision making.

Today, we honor the courage, resilience, and achievements of African women. Tomorrow, through decisive action and continued advocacy, we look forward to a Nigeria and a continent where women's voices are central to shaping our collective future.

*#AfricaWomensDay2025 #AfricanWomensRightsMatter #ReservedSeatsBillNG
#SheDeserveASeat #HerAtTheTable #WomenLeadWithMen*

Signed

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ABOUT IRIAD AND THE ELECTORAL HUB

The **Initiative for Research, Innovation, and Advocacy in Development** (IRIAD) is an interdisciplinary knowledge and advocacy hub committed and focused on developing a critical understanding of governance processes and regimes from research, documentation, policy engagements, public education and impact advocacy.

The **Electoral Hub** is an interdisciplinary knowledge, policy and advocacy hub committed to promoting electoral knowledge, integrity, inclusion, and accountability in Nigeria. Our aim is to strengthen electoral governance and accountability in Nigeria through the provision of data, critical and contextualized analysis, and solutions to improve the credibility and integrity of the electoral process.

**Knowledge| Innovation | Inclusion|
#Advocacy #Results #Impact
...promoting electoral knowledge, accountability, and integrity**