



INTERNATIONAL
Women's Day

**Invest in Women:
Accelerate Progress**

In the pursuit of gender equality, investing in women's success in the workplace has become a top priority. It is crucial to highlight ways we can #accelerateprogress for Nigerian women even as we celebrate women who have made it to the top of their professions.

Women in other nations, such as the United Kingdom, celebrate the progress of women in the workplace by agitating for change, which has resulted in tribunal decisions, including a few on women's reproductive health concerns. An employment tribunal in the UK has held that menopause symptoms may, in certain circumstances, amount to a disability under the Equality Act of 2010, and there was also a petition to require employers to introduce a menopause policy in the workplace.



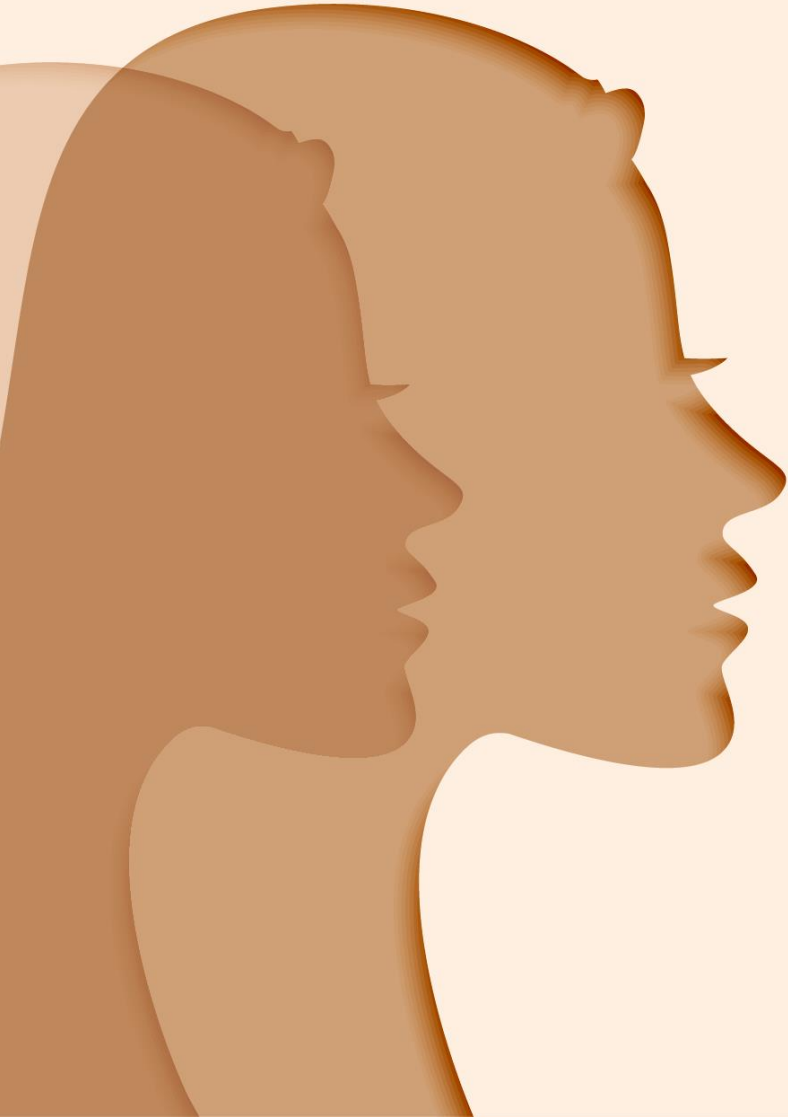
The progress these nations have made in relation to the welfare of women in the workplace highlights the limitations imposed by Nigeria's outdated Labour Act Cap L1, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 2004 (the "Act"), which continues to limit women's choice of profession.

Sections 55-57 of the Act highlight the ongoing challenges faced by women in the workplace. Section 55 prohibits women from engaging in night work in public and private industrial or agricultural undertakings. The provision allows for some exceptions, which include women working as nurses in such undertakings or women holding responsible positions of management in the undertakings.

Section 56 of the Act prohibits the employment of women in underground mines, and the exceptions to this provision include women holding management positions, working in health and welfare services, undergoing training in underground mine areas as part of their studies, or occasionally having to enter the underground mines for the purpose of a non-manual occupation.

Section 57 of the Act further empowers the Minister of Labour ("Minister") to create regulations prohibiting or restricting women's employment in certain types of industrial or other undertaking.

Section 58(2) of the Act provides that any person who breaches the provisions of Sections 55 and 56 is guilty of an offence and, on conviction, shall be liable to a fine or a term of imprisonment or to both fine and imprisonment.



The restrictions stated above, including the added power of the Minister to impose further restrictions, confine women and contradict the equality of rights promoted in Section 17(2)(a) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). Such discriminatory restrictions not only limit women's economic empowerment but also allow for gender disparities in the workplace, hindering the advancement of society.

The deafening silence on these important issues in Nigeria perpetuates the deep-rooted gender inequality that exists for women. To #accelerateprogress, investing in women's rights and opportunities is crucial. This means advocating for a review of laws like Sections 55-57 of the Labour Act and any other laws or regulations which prohibit a woman's career choice and hinder their participation in the workforce. By supporting policy reforms that promote gender-inclusive workplaces and provide equal access to employment opportunities, we can create environments where women thrive and can contribute their skills and talents to drive economic growth and social development. Investing in women remains a powerful tool for accelerating progress and creating a more equitable world.

Happy International Women's Day!

#UnitedNationsIWD2024Theme

#InvestInWomenAccelerateProgress #UNWomen