

Keynote Speech by Dr Orji Ogbonnaya Orji, the Executive Secretary, Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), During the 5th Edition of the Nkechi Isigwe Annual Lecture (NIAL) Organized by The Association of Professional Women Engineers of Nigeria. (APWEN) Held on 12th November 2022 at Rockview Royale, Abuja.

Protocols

I feel honoured and privileged to be invited by The Association of Professional Women Engineers of Nigeria. (APWEN) to deliver the keynote speech at the 5th Edition of the Nkechi Isigwe Annual Lecture (NIAL).

2. This Lecture with the theme “Diversity and Inclusion in the Nigerian Extractive Industry: An Entrepreneur’s perspective” cannot come at a better time than now, when our government's attention is more on revenue generation and resource mobilization and when our country desperately needs revenue from the extractive sector to meet her social obligations to the citizens. Government is also reaching out to the private sector and entrepreneurs to join hands to accelerate sustainable development in the country.

3. The theme for this year’s lecture speaks to how Nigeria can maximize gender inclusiveness, equity in the governance of the extractive industries

and broaden women's participation and inclusivity in the sector's management while looking at the opportunities created by our diversity. At NEITI it is our goal to provide information and data that will aid and enhance stakeholders' engagement in this area.

4. Our goal remains to work with you to remove structural barriers that impede women, girls, and other vulnerable groups from participating in sustainable natural resource management and other potential gender impacts of extractive activities. On this note, may I use this opportunity to commend every woman in this hall for rising against all odds and excelling in your various chosen career especially in the field of engineering.

5. As you are aware, the global Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which NEITI implements, is founded on the philosophy that regular disclosures of information and data in the extractive sector will promote public debate, foster civic actions and accountability in the sector. The goal is to ensure that revenues from the sectors are optimally mobilised and prudently utilized for the benefit of our citizens and create opportunities for entrepreneurs to thrive .

6. So far, NEITI has conducted and published eleven (11) cycles of audits in the solid minerals sector, spanning the years 2007 – 2020. Our reports also contain information on recoverable revenue from the sector, including recommendations for reforms.

7. Let me use this medium to urge members of The Association of Professional Women Engineers of Nigeria. (APWEN) to take a serious interest in the NEITI reports and use the contents to demand not just accountability but greater women's involvement in the sector. Except we are involved united and understand the contents of the reports, we cannot make the desired impact.

8. For instance, out of 102 companies covered by our 2020 solid mineral sector audit report, only 29 provided information on gender and employment. Out of the 5,820 employees, only 14% of women were employed.

9. NEITI in keeping with the EITI's mandate on gender reporting is conducting series of studies on the impact of extractive activities on gender. One of these studies will soon be presented to the public and focuses on the impact of mining in our communities through the prism of gender inclusivity and impact. This study looked at the employment, ownership, decision making and benefit sharing for women in the mining industry.

The study also threw up a number of issues that should be of interest to APWEN in your promotion of gender inclusivity and diversity in our extractive industry. These issues include:

- Deprivation and marginalization of women in the employment structure and relegating/limiting them to only ancillary service providers such as providing drinks and vending snacks in mining sites;
- Decreased opportunities from land-based livelihoods such as land, water, forests etc. as a result of mining activities.
- Maternity leave for women returning from childbirth or caring for children (They end up struggling to regain employment);
- The practice of payment of benefits (royalties and compensation) to men “on behalf of families” leaving the women more exposed to hardship.
- Mining in the community leads to prevalent cases of girl-child abuses, girl-child early marriage and girl-child prostitution.

10. NEITI has initiated aggressive programs to pay special attention to generating reliable data and subsequent engagement to improve women's participation in the mining sector. Our goal is to address the huge gap in gender imbalance in employment, investments, and decision-making in organizations in the extractive sector through empirical evidence based on data and constructive engagements.

11. Furthermore, the EITI now requires member countries to disclose material environmental payments and encourages the disclosure of

information related to environmental impacts, monitoring and management.

12. It is imperative to state that there are huge potentials for entrepreneur in the extractive sector. What is required is identifying this potential and exploring the opportunities presented as we have deposits of different minerals in almost all the states of the federation and abundant reserves of crude oil wealth. We need to get our women involved in the entire value chain of the industry -exploration, production and refining of crude oil as well as mining of our mineral deposits. It will interest you to note that extractive resources when beneficiated has the potential and capability of unlocking and attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) thereby boosting revenue earnings for our country and create the much needed jobs for our teeming youth demographics. NEITI aligns itself completely with these objectives.

13. It may interest you to note that the Federal Government has identified seven strategic minerals and targeted them as a priority for promotion and investment. The strategic minerals which can be found across the country are barite, gold, bitumen, iron ore, Lead/ zinc, coal and limestone. Government in enacting the Petroleum Industry Act after more than 20years has also laid the foundation to unlock the full potentials of Nigeria's extractive industries providing for more investments in renewable energy through gas infrastructure and production. Nigeria's

extractives are believed to have the potentials to lead the country's economic diversification plan and contribute significantly to the country's development.

16. I wish to restate that we need to do more to expand opportunities for women in the extractive sector. NEITI is ready to offer any support and partnership to help our women realise their full potential in the sector. We call on APWEN to lead this conversation as professionals and provide the needed guidance and expertise in this area.

17. Once again, I thank you for inviting me and wish you fruitful deliberation.