



CARITAS AFRICA

COMMEMORATION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY (IWD) 8TH MARCH 2025

THEME: 'ACCELERATE ACTION'

As the world marks International Women's Day 2025, Caritas Africa stands in solidarity with women across the globe. This day is an opportunity to honor the resilience, strength, and contributions of women while acknowledging the systemic barriers that continue to hold them back.

The 2025 theme, 'Accelerate Action,' underscores the urgent need to break down these barriers and create opportunities for women to thrive. From access to quality education and healthcare to economic empowerment and leadership, equality between women and men must be prioritized. However, achieving this progress requires more than just policies and discussions, it demands financial justice. One of the greatest obstacles to sustainable development in Africa is the crippling burden of debt, which disproportionately affects women.

As 2025 marks the Jubilee Year, Caritas Africa calls for a renewed commitment to debt cancellation. Debt is not just an economic issue, it is a fundamental justice issue. The structural consequences of debt hinder social and economic progress, with women bearing the heaviest burden. By addressing debt relief, we can take a crucial step toward equality between women and men, economic justice, and sustainable development.

The Impact of African Debt on Women

Widening Economic Disparities - Debt repayment often forces governments to implement austerity measures, cutting essential social services such as healthcare, education, and social protection. Since women rely more on these services, they experience greater economic hardship, deepening existing inequalities and limiting opportunities for growth and financial independence.

Limited employment and Income Opportunities – Debt ridden economies struggle to invest in job creation, leading to high unemployment rates, especially among women, who are overrepresented in informal, low-paying jobs. When resources are funneled into debt repayment rather than economic development, women remain trapped in cycles of poverty, unable to secure stable and dignified work.

Barriers to Education and Healthcare - Debt repayment frequently takes precedence over funding for critical sectors such as education and healthcare. This disproportionately affects girls and women, many of whom are denied access to schooling, reducing their ability to break free from poverty. Likewise, inadequate healthcare funding increases maternal mortality rates and limits women's access to essential reproductive and medical services.

Climate Change and Debt – A double Burden for Women. African nations facing severe debt constraints struggle to allocate funds to climate resilience and humanitarian responses. Climate change disproportionately impacts women, particularly those in rural areas who



depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Without the financial capacity to invest in climate adaptation, these women face even greater vulnerability, worsening their economic and social conditions.

Debt Relief - A Path to Women's Empowerment and Equality between Women and Men

Debt cancellation is not just about financial relief, it is a powerful tool for social transformation. When countries are freed from unsustainable debt burdens, they can redirect resources into essential services that empower women and promote equality between women and men. Debt relief would allow governments to increase funding for education, ensuring that more girls have access to quality schooling, breaking cycles of poverty, and opening pathways to economic independence.

Strengthening Healthcare Systems - Resources could be addressed into healthcare services, reducing maternal mortality, improving reproductive health services, and ensuring better overall well-being for women and children.

Expanding Economic Opportunities - With financial resources unlocked, governments can support women entrepreneurs, create job opportunities, and implement social protection measures that reduce economic vulnerability.

Promoting Women's Leadership - By addressing the root causes of inequality, debt relief enables women to take on leadership roles in decision-making spaces, strengthening democracy and governance across Africa.

Conclusion – Turning Debt into Hope

The struggle for equality between women and men cannot be won without addressing the unjust financial systems that keep African nations in perpetual economic distress. Debt is a barrier to progress, and its cancellation is a step toward justice, empowerment, and dignity for all women.

We urge you to sign the Jubilee Debt Campaign's 'Turn Debt into Hope' petition and support debt cancellation as a key step toward equality between women and men. Advocate for reforms to the Global Financial Architecture and push for a comprehensive United Nations Debt Framework. Together, we can accelerate action and build a future where women and communities can thrive.

Signed:

Lucy Esipila
Regional Coordinator
Caritas Africa