



**YEARS AFTER
BEIJING:**

**PERSPECTIVES OF
YOUNG NIGERIAN WOMEN**



A large, stylized number '25' composed of multiple overlapping purple lines, serving as the main graphic element for the anniversary.

25
YEARS AFTER
BEIJING:

PERSPECTIVES OF
YOUNG NIGERIAN WOMEN



CONTENTS

ABOUT VISION SPRING INITIATIVES	03
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	05
BIOGRAPHY OF WRITERS	06
LIST OF ACRONYMS	12
FOREWORD	14
INTRODUCTION	16
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	18
CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN	
1. Women and Health-----	22
2. Women and Poverty -----	31
3. The Girl-Child -----	38
4. Sharing of Power and decision making at all levels between women and men -----	52
5. Women and Environment -----	64
6. Unequal access to education and training of women and girls -----	74
7. Insufficient mechanism at all levels to promote the advancement of women -----	86
8. Violence against women -----	97
9. Effect of Armed Conflict on women -----	106
10. Human rights of women -----	117
11. Women and the economy -----	125
12. Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media -----	136
REFERENCES	144



ABOUT VISION SPRING INITIATIVES

Vision Spring Initiatives (VSI) is a duly registered (RC 908183) non-governmental, not-for profit human rights organization partnering with strategic stakeholders to achieve developmental rights of children, young people and other vulnerable groups and supporting their attainment of these rights using multi-pronged approach and diverse strategies.

We envision a society where gender equality and social justice becomes part of everyday life

Our mission is to provide our constituents; women, girls and minority group's practical tools for self-development, voice and action through research, education, advocacy and movement building.

Our Thematic Areas:



This publication is VSI's contribution to the generation equality movement and the review of Beijing 25 years after its adoption. The **Generation Equality Forum** was a global gathering for gender equality, convened by UN Women and co-chaired by France and Mexico, with the leadership and partnership of civil society organisations. The forum took stock of progress and helped chart an agenda of concrete action to realize gender equality before 2030, as part of the ground-breaking, multigenerational campaign. This publication is VSI's contribution to the process and a document for advocacy with strategic stakeholders towards the world we want to see!

Disclaimer: This publication is the sole production of Vision Spring Initiatives with support from Global Fund for Women. Vision Spring Initiatives hereby state that all views expressed in this publication are not that of Global Fund for Women.

25years after Beijing: Perspectives of Young Nigerian Women

Copyright 2021 by VISION SPRING INITIATIVES

ISBN: 978-978-993- 969-5

All rights reserved , No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without prior permission of the Author & Publisher.

Published by: DWIN GLOBAL CONCEPTS

Plaza Suite 15 Upstairs First Floor (12, Ogunmokun Street Along Adedoja Str Opposite Temidayo Central Mosque Mushin Lagos)

dwinjobs@gmail.com

Author Name & Contact:

Vision Spring Initiatives

2B Kofoworola Street, Dele Kuti Estate Beach Road, Ebute Ikorodu Lagos Nigeria

☎ +234 8023412994 +234 8183346356

✉ visionspringinitiatives@yahoo.com

🌐 <http://visionspringinitiatives.org/about-us/>

🐦 @vsi_ng Instagram @vsi_ng

📘 Vision Spring Initiatives

For counselling and psychosocial support

+234 91361103643 / 9136100039 / 9136046904

Designed by:

Amazyn Arts

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to recognise the work of all the young activists who contributed to this publication. This is the result of your collective effort. We hosted a writers' workshop in Lagos state where we deliberated on the issues that impact young people, other writers from other states joined us via zoom. Thank you for deliberately taking each other through this route and addressing those issues critical for youth engagement and participation.

We particularly thank Global Fund for Women who continually support and believe in the work we do in Nigeria.

We acknowledge the Project Director Ngozi Nwosu-Juba who continues to impact young activists through mentorship programs, Tobi Ayodele for her focus, Adesoji and others who continue to support our vision. Thank you to Zainab Haruna who graciously agreed to write the foreword to this publication.

To everyone who will have the opportunity to read this publication, this is from young Nigerian activists, they have not just categorised the problems; they have provided structured recommendations that can support rights realisation of every Nigerian citizens with a focus on young women.

We look forward to engaging governments, heads of Civil Society Organisations, private sector organisations, funders and individuals with this document towards achieving a world we all want!



BIOGRAPHY OF WRITERS



TAWAKALIT KAREEM

Tawakalit Kareem is a Writer, Development Communications professional, and advocate for Gender Equality. Her articles on gender have been published by platforms within and outside the country, including the West African Civil Society Institute.

OLUFUNSHO ALUFOGE

Alufoge Olufunso is a political analyst and human rights activists. He works with Improved Sexual Health and Rights Advocacy Initiative where he serves as the Project Manager. He holds a M.Sc. in International Relations from Covenant University.



LOIS CHINEDU

Lois Nkwachi Chinedu is a gender specialist with expertise in organizational development and management. She currently works with the Nigerian Women Trust Fund as a Programmes Manager. She has designed, managed, and evaluated programmes aimed at ensuring quantitative and qualitative participation of women, youths, and other vulnerable groups in governance and leadership processes. She has gained valuable experience working for international development agencies in the area of gender analyses, manage gender strategies and build organizational capacity in gender equality and women's rights. She is adept at coordinating, facilitating and producing reports of meetings and possesses strong analytical skills particularly in project development, training and facilitation, human resource, and administrative skills. Her advocacy and research interests cover women and credit mobilization, women in politics, and violence against women.



BIOGRAPHY OF WRITERS

ANITA GRAHAM

Anita Graham is an advocate for young people's sexual reproductive health & rights. She focuses on improving access to family planning information and services, promoting comprehensive sexuality education, and the elimination of sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls.



OHOTUOWO OGBECHÉ

Ohotuowo Ogbeche is a writer, lawyer, researcher, and feminist advocate. She is experienced in raising awareness about feminist issues and formulating ideas to promote gender equality. Ohotuowo writes for various publications including the feminist blog www.colouredafrica.com on feminism, sexual minority rights and social issues. She is the current Director of Research and Knowledge Management with The Initiative for Equal Rights, Nigeria.



ZAINAB HARUNA

Zainab Haruna is a development practitioner who has worked for the past eight years to initiate and implement projects on youth and women empowerment. She is motivated to build enabling systems for women and youths to thrive.



BIOGRAPHY OF WRITERS



IBIFUBARA DAVIES

Ibifubara Davies is a Psychologist and Research Analyst living and working in Lagos, Nigeria. She has worked with organisations like Stand To End Rape Initiative that focus on helping survivors of sexual trauma and PTSD get back on their feet. She is dedicated to providing good mental health care to young Nigerians.

MARIAN NWAOKOLO

Marian is a feminist, activist, trainer and researcher who is passionate about the health and rights of marginalized minority groups of women; Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (LBT) women, Female Sex Worker (FSW), Women With Disabilities (WWD) and Persons Who Use Drugs (PWUD). She is very passionate about diversity, inclusion, intersectionality, and meaningful youth engagement in decision-making processes. She firmly believes that issues affecting marginalized/minority groups of women, especially Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights needs, should sit firmly on the women's rights agenda and must be integrated into mainstream women's rights programming in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Marian is very transparent, honest, passionate and a good team builder. When not working, Marian enjoys reading, writing, tending to her plants and spending time with her partner. She can be reached on mariannwaokolo1@gmail.com



BIOGRAPHY OF WRITERS

PRIYE DIRI

Priye Diri is a Feminist writer and Filmmaker with over three years of experience in response to SGBV in Nigeria. Currently, Priye is Programs & Productions Manager at Dorothy Njemanze Foundation, focusing on providing the response and Prevention of sexual and gender-based violence. As a filmmaker, her lens tells stories of women and girls, preaches on gender equality, feminism and changing the narratives of women and girls around the world.



FOLAKE KUTI

Folake Kuti is the health financing and advocacy specialist at Save the Children International.



BIOGRAPHY OF WRITERS



BUKOLA OSIDIBO

Bukola Osidibo is a Lawyer of about 10 years post call, she has been in the Development sector afterwards with specific interest in Women's rights, Maternal health rights, Access to Justice, SRHR, Legal Aid among other. Bukola has participated in workshops, trainings, seminars, outreaches and capacity building exercises where she has acquired wealth of knowledge on topical issues both locally and internationally. She is a daughter, sister, wife, mother and above all a FEMINIST.



OLUWATOBI AYODELE

Oluwatobi Ayodele is a feminist and Communications consultant currently working on the intersections of communication, policy advocacy and strengthening democracy with non-profit organizations in Nigeria.

PHOTOS FROM THE WRITERS' WORKSHOP



LIST OF ACRONYMS

CDC	Centre for Disease Control
LBT	Lesbian bisexual and trans
FSW	Female sex workers
UNFPA	United Nations for Population Activities
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrom
NHP	National Health Policy
FMoH	Federal Ministry of Health
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
TB	Tuberculosis
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
CSO	Civil Society organisation
ABP	Anchor Borrowers' Program
LIFE	Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprise
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
CLC	Child Labour Convention
BESDA	Better Education Service Delivery for all
NGP	National Gender Policy
FME	Federal Ministry of Environment
FEPA	Federal Environmental Protection Agency
RESWAYE	Recycling Scheme for Women and Youth empowerment and Development Strategy
NEED	National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy
STEM	Science Technology, engineering and Math
UBE	Universal Basic Education
EFA	Education for All
STVE	Skills Training and Vocational Education
ISTC	Industrial Skills Training Centre
ECCE	Early Childhood Care Education
AA	Affirmative Action
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
SSMPA	Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act

NPoPC	National Population Commission
CRA	Child Rights Act
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
LGA	Local Government Area
UNCF	United Nations Children Fund
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
CRVS	Civil Registration and Vital Statistics
UNPF	United Nations Population Fund
NDHS	National Demographic and Health Survey
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
HTP	Harmful Traditional practices
ICPD	International Covenant on Population and Development
EU	European Union
UN	United Nations
GBV	Gender Based Violence
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
ROLAC	Rule of Law and Accountability
WASH	Water, Sanitation Hygiene
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
MC	Maternal Child Health
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
AYFHS	Adolescent Youth Friendly Health Service
NLA	Nigerian Labour Act
NAPTIP	The National Agency for the Prohibition of trafficking in Persons
NWTF	Nigerian Women Trust Fund
INEC	The Independent National Electoral Commission
NBS	National Bureau for Statistics
YIAGA	Youth Initiative for Advocacy, Growth Advancement
NDI	National Democratic Institute
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
VAPP	Violence against Persons Prohibition

FOREWORD

It has been twenty–five years since Nigeria joined other UN Member states to adopt the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA). The BPfA was meant to chart the path for addressing challenges faced by women and twenty five years after, it is pertinent for us to look back at where the journey started, and assess concretely what progress has been made, what lapses remain and how to bridge the persistent gaps for the future. This publication by Vision Spring Initiatives (VSI) does the good work of compiling perspectives from the target group directly affected by the issues. Much more importantly, this publication looks at the facts and figures of the journey, comparing progress with pitfalls and documenting what needs to be done to push forward.

A review of the publication makes it clear that some gains have been made. Government, civil society, the press and gender activists have all worked separately and jointly to continue to place the women’s agenda at the forefront of development discourse. This is evident in the legal and policy instruments devised by the Nigeria state to address some of the challenges that women and young people face in the country. The focus on women’s reproductive rights in the newly revised National Health Policy, the adoption of the Violence against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act 2015 by the Federal Government of Nigeria, the domestication of the Child Rights Act across several states in Nigeria, and establishment of Gender Units in all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) are all testaments of the commitment of state to responding and rectifying challenges facing women.

However, more needs to be done to get us where we need to be. Exclusion and discrimination remain a bane shadowing the lived realities of women, youths, persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups. Gender parity in education, participation in both elective and appointive positions, representation by the media, effects of poverty and armed conflict show that there is still a lot to be done to achieve the objectives of the BPfA.

Furthermore, the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic highlighted more than ever before the need to address violence against women as an emergency. The sexual health and reproductive rights of women need to be made an urgent priority. The position of the state towards gender issues can also adequately be gleaned by how the state prioritises issues facing children and girls. As ten states are yet to domesticate the Child Rights Act and more girls are forced into marriage in Nigeria, the Nigerian state has a long way to go in providing safe and healthy environments for children living in Nigeria.

Going forward, and as many of the contributors to this publication have opined, several things need to be done including, but not limited to the following:

- Implementation of the numerous laws that support equality and gender advancement. It is not simply enough to create laws but to implement them and prosecute offenders. This is the necessary deterrent that is needed to prevent people for subverting the rights of girls and women in Nigeria.
- It is important to ensure that policymaking and law-making becomes an inclusive process for all marginalised groups. There needs to be adequate consultation so that target groups can contribute concretely to the policy design process.
- There is a need to address investment in young people, women and girls as an urgent priority, be it in education, providing jobs or enabling environment for entrepreneurship to thrive, liberalising access to resources (land, capital, etc.), addressing security and mitigating the impact of conflict among others.

It is commendable that VSI has worked on this publication as a stop gap to help us reflect on where we are and where we need to be. Policy makers and civil society need to properly engage with this document to address the challenges highlighted therein and implement the recommendations.

Zainab Haruna

June 2021

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria was one of the 189 countries that adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA) in 1995. Not only did this provide institutional legitimacy around the demand for accountability on women's human rights in Nigeria, but it also enabled the evolution and combining of women's groups and gender equality advocates around a broad set of shared aspirations. Twenty-five years later, as we celebrate the improvements, we acknowledge the significant gaps that persist on multiple fronts leaving women and girls behind in the effort to achieve the Sustainable development goals by 2030.

The effective participation of women and equal leadership opportunities are recognized globally as key drivers to achieving sustainable development. Although much progress has been made to increase women's representation in all areas of public life since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), change has been incremental and slow. Gender equality and women's full and equal participation in all areas of life, especially decision-making, are integral to the Decade of Action and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

A total of 12 young persons convened after a writers' workshop to review the 12 critical areas of concern of Beijing from young peoples' perspective thus:

1. Women and health
2. Education and training of women
3. Women, leadership and decision making
4. Women and poverty
5. Women and media
6. Women and economic empowerment
7. Women and environment
8. The Girl child
9. Women and armed conflict
10. Human rights of women
11. Violence against women
12. Institutional framework for the advancement of women



Through an activists writers' workshop the 12 young persons agreed on the thematic areas to review and discussed extensively on how to identify issues that still require urgent attention and continues to impede their inclusion in development. Their approach was to highlight possible set-backs to the implementation of the Beijing commitments and others such as the CEDAW, Protocol to African Charter, the 1999 Constitution and other policies, and more importantly to provide wide array of suggestions that can help all stakeholders fast track the realisation of the rights of women as promised at Beijing, Sustainable Development Goals and other policies and commitments.

They were all in agreement that adequate attention had not been paid to issues that affect young populations of Nigerians. They are also of the view that civil society organisations have not done enough in mentoring and stepping down knowledge to help the next generation.

They acknowledge that Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in new realities, and the need for profound paradigm shift in how aspects of social and economic life are approached. They suggest renewed energy and commitment to actions to eradicate persistent gender gaps and inequalities. They also suggest need to engage youths and bridge generational gaps in the creation of a broad base for advancing the gender equality agenda.

The voices of young people resonated clearly and their demands are legitimate: they ask for deliberate actions and are willing to partner where necessary towards achieving gender equality in its entirety. Come with us as we have this conversation with the future!

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Beijing +25 coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic, disrupting gains made by governments across the world. Almost all sectors nosedived. UNFPA COVID-19 impact brief outlines the disruptions in meeting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights needs of women and girls. It states that the limited supply chain of contraceptives, the lack of personal protective equipment to provide services safely, closure of several health facilities, restricted movement, among other factors drastically increased the numbers of unintended pregnancies.¹ Before the emergence of COVID-19, LBT women in Nigeria already faced inconceivably high levels of violence. The laws criminalizing same-sex relations have been used as justification to assault ostracize and kill them. These forms of discrimination against them are buried in a culture of silence with no societal or government sympathy. Unsurprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated their human rights situation to dangerous new levels of isolation, stigma, abuse and violence.

While Nigeria is known for its oil richness, the reality is that corruption, unemployment, and inequality have destroyed the nation's economic framework, causing the country to be the world's poverty capital. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), in the "2019 Poverty and Inequality in Nigeria" report, states that almost 83 million people live below the country's poverty line of 137,430 Naira (\$381.75) per year. The statistics indicate that 70% of poor Nigerians are women. More than half of rural women live below the nationally defined poverty line, with 75% of girls out of school; women have lower access to health and financial services.

Under Sections 42 and 43 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, a girl child has the right to freedom from discrimination as well as the right to acquire and own property anywhere in Nigeria¹⁶. Despite the reinforcement of this section in a landmark Supreme Court of Nigeria ruling in 2014 against the Igbo customary law excluding female children from inheriting their deceased father's inheritance¹⁷, customary and religious inheritance laws, especially in instances where the father passes on without a valid will in place, still, discriminate against the girl child. Across Nigerian societies, female children are either completely denied of inheritance rights, denied rights to leadership even in instances where they are the first-born children, receive smaller inheritance portions as opposed to male children, or lose inheritance rights should they choose to marry.

¹ https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19_impact_brief_for_UNFPA_24_April_2020_1.pdf

Nigerian women have always played a significant role in the democratic process since 1999 when Nigeria returned to democratic rule. Unfortunately, twenty-two years after Nigeria returned to democracy and twenty-five years after the country adopted the Beijing Platform and Declaration for Action, progress made is yet to translate into huge gains in terms of women's participation in both elective and appointive positions. This is a growing concern to many Nigerians especially since this has been the case despite concerted efforts by the government, non-governmental organizations, civil society, women's rights activists, and women's group to increase the level of participation of women in politics in line with the declaration made at the fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, which advocated 30% affirmative action. In Nigeria, the extant National Gender Policy (NGP 2006) recommended 35% affirmative action instead and sought for a more inclusive representation of women with at least 35% of both elective political and appointive public service positions respectively.

Twenty five years after the World Conference on Women in Beijing and fifteen years after the National Gender Policy adoption, reports on gender in Nigeria shows that women are still largely under represented and are generally not inclusively participating in the productive sectors that actually affect their day to day survival and development. Nigeria's gender development index ranking stands at 123 out of 140 countries and 145 out of 162 countries in gender empowerment measures linked to access and ownership of land and gender pay gap. On land ownership, 60-79% of the rural work force is women but men are 5 times more likely to own land. Women own 4% of land in the North-East, and just over 10% in the South-East and South-South. It is reported that 80% of the 100 million Nigerians living in poverty are women (UNDP, 2016). Though Nigerian women play a critical and important role in environmental conservation, there is still a limit to how much land, capital and labour they can control. In various communities, women manage food, water, forests and agricultural terrain. Their perspectives and experiences are therefore crucial to sustainable development and policy making at different levels in order to have a healthy planet.

With the drawbacks on progress made with girls' education due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the United Nations Population Fund predicts that an additional 13 million child marriages can be expected to happen globally in another decade. UNICEF in 2018 reported that 22 million Nigerian children aged 0-5 do not have access to early childhood education. According to the report, one of the reasons proffered for the low participation particularly in the Northern part of the country was as a result of insurgency.

Another set-back is early and forced marriages. Nigeria has the highest rates of child marriage in West and Central Africa and the third highest globally, with estimates pegging it at over 20 million child brides as at 2018.

At the regional and international levels, mechanisms and institutions to promote the advancement of women as an integral part of mainstream political, economic, social, and cultural development, and of initiatives on development and human rights, encounter problems emanating from a lack of commitment at the highest levels. Successive international conferences have underscored the need to take gender factors into account in policy and programme planning. However, in many instances, this has not been done.

In 2017, the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) reported that over 2,200 cases of rape and indecent assault were reported. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, 1 in 4 Nigerian girls are sexually abused before the age of 18.

In the space of twenty-five years of enacting the Beijing declaration, there have also been enactments of international treaties, covenants and conventions that aim to promote and protect women in conflict zones and prevent vulnerable women from further violations. Despite the rich pool of policy frameworks, women and girls still account for more than 50% of the world's millions of refugees and other displaced persons, including internally displaced persons. Studies have revealed that sexual exploitation of women in conflict zones are perpetrated by State and non-State Actors, and happen in communities, refugee and IDP camps, and during flights to safety. In Northeast Nigeria, the main non-State actors are members of the Boko Haram terrorist group who have been reported to repeatedly rape their abductees.

Numerous socio-cultural and religious practices contribute to the discrimination and human rights abuse women and girls face in Nigeria. Women face discrimination in occupying local and mainstream positions of authority, accessing land, renting and owning property, and inheritance. Due to early and forced marriage, girls have little or no education, increasing their poverty levels and financial dependence on men. Single women, single mothers, and young girls with early/teenage pregnancies are shamed by society. Forced marriages, conversion practices, and "corrective" rape also disproportionately affect women/girls who are lesbian, bisexual, queer, or transgender.

The impact of COVID-19 on youth unemployment can only be imagined as many of them are into small and medium scale enterprises which were badly hit by the pandemic. The private sector which employs more than the public service also engaged in downsizing and rightsizing to stay afloat during the COVID-19 starting from the first wave. The National Bureau of Statistics (2020) Q3 estimates that about 13.9 million, that is 6.8 million youths were out of jobs and 7.1million were unemployed (NBS, 2020) In terms of age, young people struggle even more to find jobs as 40.8% of unemployed youth were between 15-24 years of age and 30.7% unemployed youth are 25-34 years of age in quarter 3 of 2020. Female stereotypes are still very prevalent in media messaging including reportage, news, and broadcasts. Women and young people remain under-represented in and under-reported by the media. Gender-based discrimination and strongly held cultural beliefs remain limiting factors that prevent marginalised groups from effectively utilising the power of the media. Women are not simply unreported or under-reported but in instances where there is coverage of women issues, it favours boxed or skewed framings which reinforce unflattering and limiting stereotypes.

The case of young women requires greater attention due to their age and vulnerabilities, availability of data on government initiatives will facilitate greater accountability and adoption of good practices. Policy continuity on the part of successive government will also sustain the gains from economic empowerment as it would reduce wastes, adapt and institutionalize sustainable economic development for citizens especially women no matter the age group.

While young activists through this Publication have beamed searchlight on the aspects of challenges that bisect the nation, they have provided clear roadmap that can facilitate recovery from all areas of challenges they have enumerated.



CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN 1

Women and Health



Strategic Objectives for BPfA Goal on Women and Health

- Increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality healthcare, information and related services
- Strengthen preventive programmes that promote women's health
- Undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health issues
- Promote research and disseminate information on women's health

INTRODUCTION

The fourth World Conference on Women was one of the largest meetings held to promote women's rights. 25 years after the political declaration flagged 12 key areas that needed urgent action, Nigeria, a signatory to the Beijing Platform for Action is yet to do justice to the implementation of affirmative actions to move women's health forward. The health needs of women are still being traditionally addressed within the concept of maternal and child health, and are constantly viewed through the lenses of patriarchy and heteronormativity with the assumption that marriage and motherhood are a woman's ultimate achievement. Strategies to address women's sexual and reproductive health needs have not only failed to intersectionalize the identities of all groups of women, but they have also been moralized to exclude marginalized/minority groups of women and there are no progressive structures in place to address new realities of women that have emerged and have been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic. While maternal health is so important, every woman has a right to sexual and reproductive health, regardless of marital status, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, (dis)ability or other intersecting identities.

Young women continue to be excluded from decision-making spaces despite their full grasp of intersectionality, and their ability to articulate issues affecting them and proffer working solutions in the realization of the strategic BPfA objectives. A lack of youth presentation has led to blind spots from colonization of decision-making spaces, misidentification of issue area, and consequently misallocation of resources.

There has been pushback in recent times concerning issues such as society's policing of women's bodies, denial of contraception for unmarried women, religious and cultural conservatism, abortion rights, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of women with disabilities, sex work and comprehensive sexuality education. Social media has been a valuable tool in kick-starting conversations on the marginalization of women and other vulnerable minority groups of women who are constantly left out in public discourse on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights.

NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT EFFORTS AND PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a focus on women's reproductive rights in the newly revised National Health Policy.² This revised National Health Policy (2017) lays emphasis on primary healthcare as the bedrock of the national health system in addition to the provision of financial risk protection to all Nigerians particularly the poor and vulnerable population (FMOH, 2018). The Primary healthcare centers which were established in each of the 774 local government areas in Nigeria continue to operate. According to the 2018 National Demographic Health Survey (NDHS), 47% of the potential demand for family planning is being met.³ There are more programs in place to address gender - based violence (e.g. the Spotlight initiative). The Federal Ministry of Health continues to partner with the Center for Disease Control to support the scale-up of high-quality HIV prevention, interventions including HIV treatment and prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) services. The Ministry is also working to improve and expand HIV counselling, testing, and TB/HIV integrated service delivery.

Specific laboratory capacity-building efforts have included the expansion of laboratory services to support the rapid scale-up of HIV treatment services as well as the establishment of a national reference lab capable of performing diagnostics for TB and other infectious and non-infectious diseases. CDC is also providing support for Phase II field evaluation of HIV rapid test kits.⁴

² https://uneca.org/sites/default/files/Gender/Beijing25/nigeria-beijing25_report.pdf

³ <https://nigeriahealthwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/bsk-pdf-manager/2019/12/NDHS-2018.pdf>

⁴ https://uneca.org/sites/default/files/Gender/Beijing25/nigeria-beijing25_report.pdf

Sexual and reproductive health and rights, according to the Guttmacher-Lancet definition, are an integral part and parcel of the human rights framework.⁵ Girls and young women were faced with significant barriers in accessing essential sexual and reproductive health information and services before the COVID-19. Now, amid a pandemic, the overstretched healthcare systems will further intercept access.⁶

UNFPA COVID-19 impact brief outlines the disruptions in meeting SRHR needs of women. It states that the limited supply chain of contraceptives, the lack of personal protective equipment to provide services safely, closure of several health facilities, restricted movement, among other factors have drastically increased the numbers of unintended pregnancies.⁷ According to the Nigeria DHS 2018 data, contraceptive prevalence rate was as low as 13% in 2003 rose to 15% in 2008 and remained at 15% in 2013. However in 2018 the contraceptive prevalence rate was 17% showing a minimal increase over the years.⁸ With a target of moving contraceptive prevalence rate to 27% by 2020 the pandemic will worsen this index and probably set the country back from the minimal achievements. Studies show that lesbian and bisexual women may be at increased risk for breast, cervical, and ovarian cancer compared to heterosexual women.⁹ Before the emergence of COVID-19, LBT women in Nigeria already faced inconceivably high levels of violence. The laws criminalizing same-sex relations have been used as justification to assault, ostracize and kill them. These forms of discrimination against them are buried in a culture of silence with no societal or government sympathy. Unsurprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated their human rights situation to dangerous new levels of isolation, stigma, abuse and violence. LBT individuals are often mistreated by health care providers; they are often not comfortable to go to hospitals. This history of discrimination presents a fear that LBT women that might have shown symptoms of the infection may hesitate to go to hospitals to get a test done due to the fear that they will be mistreated.¹⁰

⁵ Ann M Starrs et al, 9 May 2018, Accelerate progress—sexual and reproductive health and rights for all: report of the Guttmacher–Lancet Commission

⁶ <https://plan-international.org/sexual-health/how-covid-19-threatens-girls-women>

⁷ https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/COVID-19_impact_brief_for_UNFPA_24_April_2020_1.pdf

⁸ National Population Commission (NPC) [Nigeria], ICF. (2019) Nigeria Demographic Health Survey 2018. DHS Progr ICF Rockville, Maryland, USA, p. 748.

⁹ <https://www.cancer.org/healthy/cancer-facts/cancer-facts-for-lesbian-and-bisexual-women.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.womankind.org.uk/responding-to-covid-19-supporting-the-survival-of-lbt-people-in-nepal/>

Since the start of the pandemic, queer communities in various countries, including Nigeria, Liberia, Uganda and Senegal have been blamed for bringing COVID-19 to their nations as God's revenge for their homosexuality.¹¹ UNAIDS and MPact are also deeply troubled that this discriminatory action is compounding the challenges that queer people already face in accessing their rights, including safe and quality health services.¹² Sex workers in Africa have been known to face high levels of stigma and discrimination, including limited access to healthcare services. Disruption in HIV care and prevention services due to the pandemic among this key population may have negative impacts on the hard-won achievements in HIV response in Africa. In addition, stigma and discrimination toward sex workers could also make contact tracing challenging and limit access to COVID-19 testing among this vulnerable group. Sex work in Africa has always been surrounded by controversies and debates concerning its cultural, legal, and social frameworks. With the stigma and criminalization of the trade-in Africa, sex workers have often had their rights infringed upon, including limited access to healthcare services.^{13 14} Sex workers in Nigeria and Uganda have reported on how exclusion from the government safety net has forced them back to sex work amid COVID-19.¹⁵ Due to the nature of sex work, physical distancing and other precautionary measures are impossible to observe, further compromising COVID-19 response. High levels of stigma and discrimination toward sex workers could also make contact tracing challenging and limit access to COVID-19 testing. Stigma from the health care delivery system remains an important issue for a large proportion of sex workers. Addressing stigma is certainly crucial for connecting marginalized sex workers to vital health services, including antiretroviral therapy for those living with HIV.¹⁶ Sexual and reproductive health needs, including HIV treatment, remains pertinent among the vulnerable groups including sex workers.

¹¹ <http://opiniojuris.org/2020/12/10/covid-19-and-africa-symposium-the-intersection-of-lgbt-rights-in-africa-and-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

¹² https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/pressreleaseandstatementarchive/2020/april/20200427_lgbti-covid

¹³ Baleta A, 2015. Lives on the line: sex work in sub-Saharan Africa. *Lancet* 385: e1–e2 ¹⁴ Ngugi EN, Roth E, Mastin T, Nderitu MG, Yasmin S, 2020. Female sex workers in Africa: epidemiology overview, data gaps, ways forward. *Sahara J* 9: 148–153.

¹⁵ BBC News, 2020. Coronavirus: how sex workers are surviving in Uganda and Nigeria. BBC News. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-africa-53013047/coronavirus-how-sex-workers-are-surviving-in-uganda-and-nigeria>. Accessed August 19, 2020

¹⁶ Nyblade L et al., 2017. The relationship between health worker stigma and uptake of HIV counseling and testing and utilization of non-HIV health services: the experience of male and female sex workers in Kenya. *AIDS Care* 29: 1364–1372

The intersection of gender and disability increases the risk of SRHR inaccessibility for women and girls with disabilities. They often cannot access information on where to seek help and other life-saving services and information, a problem which has been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic due to inaccessibility to health information as well as physical unattainability and communication barriers.^{17 18} Millions of young people around the world lack access to sexual and reproductive health, including family planning. The situation is even more challenging for women and young girls with disabilities, who are often unaware that they, too, have a right to make choices about their own health and sexuality. According to Anisie Byukusenge, a young visually-impaired advocate for SRH & Rights for persons with disabilities, lack of information about SRH is one of the biggest challenges that teenagers and young people with disabilities are facing. Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, persons with disabilities face more discrimination, violence, and barriers to accessing information, education and services related to sexual and reproductive health.¹⁹

RECOMMENDATION

For Donors (The United Nations Agencies, NGOs, and Private Sector Entities Involved in the implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action)

- Ensure inclusive and intersectional SRHR services by engaging young women to understand their needs, foster relationships and provide programming tailored to their realities.
- Be flexible, stay committed, ask the communities what they need, support their immediate priorities and general operations.
- Decolonize philanthropy and shift power to the communities in grant-making decision-making processes to tackle the disenfranchisement of young women, marginalized/minority groups of women, identify the issue area, dismantle the systems of inequalities and lead to desired outcomes by communities.

¹⁷ <https://rwanda.unfpa.org/en/news/covid-19-impact-persons-disabilities>

¹⁸ The Albino Foundation, COVID-19 Disability Inclusion Emergency Response, Disability Inclusion Nigeria, 2020 <https://albinofoundation.org/covid-19-disability-inclusion-emergency-response-by-the-albino-foundation-disability-inclusion-nigeria/>

¹⁹ <https://rwanda.unfpa.org/en/news/covid-19-impact-persons-disabilities>

- When funding large SRHR organizations, hold them accountable for competently addressing SRHR needs of young women and marginalized/minority groups of women.
- Collaborate with young women and marginalized/minority groups of women to develop tailored information that addresses the availability of safe health services and safe spaces, and availability of social support.
- Include young women and marginalized/minority groups of women in describing and addressing the gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Develop global guidance on ensuring an inclusive response to pandemics and other health emergencies.

For Governments at All Levels

- Federal Ministry of Health to scale up cancer treatment and prevention to include marginalized/minority women, especially LBT women who are at a higher risk for cancers.
- Federal Ministry of Health to partner with Centre for Disease Control in the expansion of HIV treatment and prevention programs to include marginalized/minority women.
- Dehomogenize gender-responsive health policies and budgets; HIV/AIDS and other transferrable diseases; need and demand for family planning to include all young women and marginalized/minority groups of women.
- Consult young women in the revision of health policy and ensure implementation of the revised policy at the state levels and develop a framework to monitor and track results.
- Ensure that all data collection plans and systems allow for sex, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, (dis)ability, religion, or any other intersecting identities, and that any data analysis takes these factors into account.

- Decriminalize the Same-sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA) and provide anti-discrimination laws and policies.
- Decriminalize abortion
- Consult LBT communities, Female sex workers communities, Women with disabilities and other marginalized/minority groups in all creation and implementation SRHR policies and provision of SRH materials.
- Consider the different needs of socially marginalized groups. In addition to insufficient resources, women of marginalized/minority groups are at a higher risk for experiencing stigma and may avoid mainstream healthcare delivery systems. Any response plan should be sensitive to these factors and design approaches that will reach and protect vulnerable groups of women.
- Resolve delays and disruptions in access to health care for all groups of women- with long-term health and wellness needs.
- Condemn hate speech against all groups of women, the moralization of medical practice and health-care delivery.
- Ensure the involvement of young women, especially those infected with HIV/AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases or affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic, in all decision-making relating to the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Promote gender-sensitive and women-centered health research, treatment, and technology and link traditional and indigenous knowledge with modern medicine, making information available to women to enable them to make informed and responsible decisions
- Formulate policies favourable to investment in women's health and, where appropriate, increase allocations for such investment

CONCLUSION

From race to ethnicity, sexual orientation to poverty status, rural to urban livelihoods, prioritizing an intersectional approach to gender equality that recognizes women's diverse identities and experiences will drive progress across the global agenda.²⁰

Intersectionality promotes an understanding of human beings as shaped by the interaction of different social locations, e.g., ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, geography, age, disability/ability, religion. These interactions occur within a context of connected systems and structures of power, e.g., law, policies, state governments, religious institutions, media. Through such processes, interdependent systemic bases of privilege and oppression derived from colonialism, homophobia, ableism and patriarchy are created.²¹

The novel virus is a global health emergency that has further aggravated existing vulnerabilities and inequalities around the world, leaving marginalized/minority groups of women disproportionately affected. It has deepened and exposed the human rights violations to which these populations were already subjected. When only impacts on 'women' are considered, there is a risk of homogenizing otherwise diverse experiences and reducing analysis to the simplistic messaging that 'pandemics affect women and men differently.' A narrow gender focus can reinforce binary and competing understandings of the burden posed by COVID-19 on diverse groups of women. A homogenized analysis of COVID-19 can exclude or not adequately account for critical factors such as age, sexual orientation, geography, disability, race/ethnicity, class, and other structural conditions, including precarious housing, employment, and political and environmental stressors. For the 'pandemic era in which we live' a more sophisticated analysis is required. This analysis should indeed capture the experiences of different groups of women, and gender diverse people. It must map pathways through which gender roles, patriarchal norms and relations are reinforced or disrupted throughout the outbreak and its responses. But gender must be recognized as an intersecting component of wider structural inequalities.²²

²⁰ <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Beijing25-Accelerating-progress-for-Women-and-Girls.pdf>

²¹ Hankivsky, O. et al. (2014). An intersectionality-based policy analysis framework: critical reflections on a methodology for advancing equity. *International journal for equity in health*, 13(1), 119

²² https://mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/3334889/Policy-brief_v3.pdf

The pandemic has resulted in new realities, there has to be a profound paradigm shift in how aspects of social and economic life are approached. There should be a renewed energy and commitment to actions to eradicate persistent gender gaps and inequalities. There is also an urgent need to engage youths and bridge generational gaps in the creation of a broad base for advancing the gender equality agenda.

Data disaggregated by sex and other demographic indicators are key to addressing the intersectional challenges facing women. Without more and better gender-specific data, properly tracking the implementation of the gender equality agenda is impossible.²³

To build on the 1995 vision, inclusive and intersectional approaches must be adopted to take stock of progress and track gaps in the realization and full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action framework in a COVID-19 world.



<https://www.who.int/news-room/feature-stories/detail/celebrating-women-leaders-in-science-and-health>

²³ <https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Beijing25-Accelerating-progress-for-Women-and-Girls.pdf>

CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN 2

Women and Poverty



Strategic Objective for BPfA Goal on Women and Poverty

- Review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty.
- Revise laws and administrative practices to ensure women's equal rights and access to economic resources.
- Provide women with access to savings and credit mechanisms and institutions.
- Develop gender-based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminisation of poverty.



INTRODUCTION

On June 12th 2020, the Nigerian President set a 10-year target for Nigeria to lift 100 million people out of poverty. However, this target does not directly acknowledge the gender dimension of poverty. A report by Brookings Institution, an American research group, released in June 2018, named Nigeria with the highest number of impoverished people in the world. By its projections, Nigeria has 87 million out of its 200 million populations living in abject poverty. According to the report, the number of Nigerians in extreme poverty increases by six people every minute.

Another statistics from World Data Lab, Poverty Clock, states that Nigeria has 209,663,872, with about 90 million people (half of Nigeria's population) living in extreme poverty and 42,923,335 females living in poverty. Poverty lies in depriving people of necessities such as food, healthcare and sanitation, education and assets. And the evidence shows that solving these issues generally lifts populations out of extreme poverty.

The Government has set out several poverty alleviation schemes, but Nigeria lacks an intersectional focus in eradicating poverty, leaving young people and other vulnerable groups (such as women, girls and people with disabilities) behind.

NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT EFFORTS AND PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Federal Republic of Nigeria was one of the 189 countries that adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA) in 1995; Twenty-five years later, there are still gaps on multiple fronts, leaving young persons behind. Some government programs are the 'Anchor Borrowers' Programme (ABP), established on November 17th, 2015, to boost farming activities that can result in food security, economic stability, and less dependence on oil. The ABP focused on providing farm inputs in kind and cash, for farm labour, to smallholder farmers to boost production of the targeted commodities and credit access to young female graduates and women-owned micro-businesses.

The 'Livelihood Improvement Family Enterprise' (LIFE) promotes community-based on-farm and off-farm business activities along critical agricultural value chains as a mechanism for job and wealth creation amongst unemployed Youth (FMARD, 2016). In 2018, the Nigerian Government launched the 'Nigeria for Women Project' with support from the World Bank to support improved livelihoods for women in targeted areas of Nigeria.

Amidst all the improvements by the Government, youths, women and girls and people with disability find it hard to access some of the programs; farmers that benefitted from the ABP complained that loans were disbursed after the farming season, reducing their ability to pay back.

Girls drop out of school, start work, and have children as teenagers; this plays a significant role in shaping their vulnerability to poverty and further validates the World Bank statistics that over three-quarters of the poorest women in Nigeria have never been to school, and 94% are illiterate. Women are at the forefront of the workforce, performing multiple roles as mothers, workers, and managers of households, taking care of their husbands, children, and members of their extended families. However, the country's patriarchal system and lack of equal opportunities limit wealth creation for them.

There are many determinants of poverty for young people living in Nigeria; in recent times, the Government has made some efforts to reduce poverty in Nigeria; below are some of these initiatives tagged under different sections, their progress, challenges and other challenges that women, girls and young person's face.

Women and Agriculture

In the last 25 years, policies and laws have remained patriarchal, not promoting equal access to land, finance, equipment, decision-making, and benefit accruing from the agricultural system. This has changed in recent times, as Women's participation within the agriculture sector has gained momentum through targeted support and sustained through programs that aim to improve access to credit and general input support for women in agriculture.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) And Adolescent Fertility

In the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, Only 33% of Nigerians have water systems on their premises, 54.1% obtain water from distances that take less than 30 minutes for one round trip, and 12.8% travel for more than 30 minutes a round trip to get water. That is 66.9% of households that do not have access to water on their premises. Lack of clean water and good sanitation facilities impact the menstrual health of women and girls, with women lacking access to toilets and girls having to skip schools while on their periods because of inadequate hygiene systems in place.

According to the World Bank collection of development indicators, Nigeria's adolescent fertility rate is at 104% (births per 1,000 women ages 15-19); this is a vital poverty indicator because it addresses several Millennium Development Goals at the same time. Adolescent mothers especially those who are poor, are at higher risk than other age groups of significant complications from childbirth. These complications include preterm labor, obstructed labor, and permanent damage to reproductive organs.

Employment and Economy

Gender disparity is a significant cause of unemployment in Nigeria; the National Bureau of Statistics data indicates that women ranked the highest in unemployment. The overall number of persons in the labour force was estimated to be 80 million, out of which males are about 41.6 million while females are 38.6 million. With half of the workforce in Nigeria consisting of female workers, the type of work and the condition under which women work and access opportunities for improvements differ from men. Women are often disadvantaged in access to employment opportunities, access to finance, work conditions, including facing sexual harassment in the workforce with no sexual harassment policies in place.

Before now, the Government empowerment programs focused on youth empowerment without gender consideration; through the skill acquisition programs, women were taught skills related to home management such as tailoring, catering, hairdressing, bead making. Women and girls are becoming self-employed in recent times, taking on jobs like graphics designer, catering, makeup, tailoring, and photography. Most women and girls who have begun entrepreneurship are disadvantaged by not being formally registered, limiting their access to credit and social protection programs. As part of the Federal Government's post-Covid-19 Pandemic survival intervention to support micro and small businesses, they announced free business registration for 250,000 businesses asking people to submit Three (3) Proposed Names, Two (2) Passport-sized photographs, Valid Means of Identification, and Phone Number/Email address. Many women and girls in rural environments did not qualify because they lacked a valid means of identification and email addresses. Women still face Low financial literacy and awareness; when planning to upscale their businesses and access loans, eligibility criteria are often so stringent that they exclude many women from accessing existing opportunities for financial support. And many existing options tend to (directly or indirectly) emphasize formal education within the eligibility criteria, thereby excluding the 36% of Nigerian women without formal schooling but who may otherwise qualify for the available support.

Women earn less than men in nearly every occupation, including occupations dominated by women. When women enter higher-earning industries dominated by men, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, not only do they experience high rates of sexual harassment, but overall pay in the industry decreases. This disparity reflects how undervalued women's work is.

During the lockdown, School closures increased the burden on mothers, and mothers are more likely to lose their job or quit permanently. Women do most of the unpaid care, and household work leads to fewer opportunities to pursue education and paid work careers. Let's not forget that unpaid work fills in the gaps in our economy, yet it is not recognized as "real work."

LABOR MARKET

Employment is often considered one of the main tools for combating poverty and social exclusion. However, paradoxically, the current young generation, while being the best-educated generation ever, familiar with new technologies, more mobile, and open to new opportunities, faces a higher degree of vulnerability in the labour market.

The National Bureau of Statistics reports that Nigeria's youth population eligible to work is about 40 million, out of which only 14.7 million are fully employed, and another 11.2 million are unemployed. A high youth unemployment rate is synonymous with increased insecurity and poverty.

Entering the labour market for youths leads to insufficient and irregular earnings that subsequently prevent them from starting autonomous adult life. A smooth transition from education to the labour market is necessary for young people to live independent lives. However, in Nigeria, it is hindered by several factors, which include: insufficient qualifications, a "mismatch" of skills, a lack of generic skills, precarious working conditions, economic instability, a high level of competition for jobs, and discrimination. This needs to be addressed as such a situation prevents young people from receiving regular and sufficient income, thus outsets them to poverty.

CHALLENGES

Youth is the group that suffers the most from precarious working conditions; women with disabilities face additional employment challenges that put them at higher risk of poverty or social exclusion, with almost one-third of those above 16 years old (31 %) at risk.

The working poor young people (i.e., those in employment but with a low income that keeps them in relative poverty) work for low salaries, insufficient social protection, and precarious working conditions; this does not allow them to lift themselves above the poverty threshold.

There are young women outside the labour market and education structures for different reasons (e.g., care for family members and children), but they need support to not fall into the poverty trap, with these caregiver work not contributing to their income. Furthermore, precarious conditions experienced in the labour market and high youth unemployment rates compromise the possibility for young

people to achieve a fair balance between their professional and private lives.

Despite all, Youths, women and girls in Nigeria still experience discrimination in access to scarce resources. When women are poor, their rights are not protected, and they face double discrimination on account of their gender and economic situation. Women, their families, communities, and economies suffer as a result.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Government should have a robust intersectional focus on the poverty of women and men, and individual data needs to be collected to assess their poverty risks properly.
2. Government and organizations should fund financial Literacy training for women, especially women in rural environments.
3. Loan or Grant scheme accessible to rural women and girls with realistic repayment strategies.
4. Policies that will help women's total representation in the labour market and parliaments should help reposition women for national development.
5. The Government can curb this gap by disbursing money into micro-finance banks to lend to market women, petty traders, and artisans to stimulate economic growth, thereby making these women self-employed.
6. To bridge the unemployment gap among women, the Government should deem it fit to introduce a way to empower women and support their skills. The empowerment of women is the primary factor that promotes economic growth.
7. Nigeria needs to commit itself to raise employment levels and support measures that promote integration in the labour market by recognizing the competencies acquired through formal and non-formal education, vocational training.
8. The Government needs to increase and implement the minimum wage across the country.
9. Government should provide social assistance schemes to support out of school women and girls.
10. Women, Youths and Girls should be involved in the strategic planning of ways to end Youth unemployment.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria remains a dangerous place to be a woman 25 years after Beijing; with women and girls being the face of poverty in Nigeria, the worrisome percentage of women, girls, and young people among the poor are among Nigeria's many challenges to tackle urgently and with resolve.

Poverty is more than just the lack of income and resources; it causes hunger and malnutrition, limited access to education and other essential services. It leads to discrimination, exclusion, and lack of say in the decisions that impact the lives of women and girls. Poor girls are more than twice as likely to marry in childhood as those who are wealthy. They then face potentially life-threatening risks from early pregnancy and often lose the opportunity of an education and a better income. Their poverty becomes a self-sustaining cycle, passing it on to their children.

Investment in young people, women and girls is urgent: in education, in enabling autonomy, in allowing us to enter and remain in the labour market and quality jobs, and in ensuring that women and girls can successfully combine professional and private lives. By supporting young people, women and girls to receive education and skills training, they compete in the labour force. By increasing women's financial literacy, providing them with technology, business, and agricultural skills, the country will make poverty history, leaving no one behind by 2030.



**70% OF THE
WORLD'S POOR
ARE WOMEN.**

CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN 3

The Girl-Child

Strategic Objectives of the BPfA Goals on the Girl Child

- Eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl child
- Eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls
- Promote and protect the right of the girl child and increase awareness of her needs and potential
- Eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development, and training
- Eliminate discrimination against girls in health and nutrition
- Eliminate the economic exploitation of child labour and protect young girls at work
- Eradicate violence against the girl child
- Promote the girl-child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life
- Strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl child

NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT EFFORTS, PROGRESS, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discrimination against the girl child

In 1991, the Federal Republic of Nigeria ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child¹. Twelve years later, the Child's Right Act 2003 was adopted to domesticate the provisions of the Convention as well as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of a Child² in Nigeria. It is disheartening to note that thirty and eighteen years after Nigeria ratified the Convention and domesticated the Act respectively, only twenty-six states have passed the Child Rights Law. Jigawa, Kano, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara, Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, and Yobe states in the country's North West and East geopolitical zones are yet to domesticate the law. Although progress has been slow, it is worthy to note that domestication processes are currently ongoing in some of these states as the Child Protection Bill awaits passage in Kano, Jigawa, Kebbi, and Gombe States^{3,4,5,6}. A draft Child Protection Bill is also being reviewed for presentation to the Zamfara State House of Assembly⁷.

On the other hand, the implementation level in states that have domesticated the Child's Right Act is incredibly low. Domestication is merely on paper for most states as the rights of the girl child are constantly violated in these states. These laws are also disregarded in favour of the criminal/penal and

sharia laws operational in these states. It goes without saying that Nigeria has largely remained ineffective in addressing human rights violations and enforcing the full extent of the law on offenders.

With regards to birth registration, the Nigerian government has proactively taken steps to ensure increased levels of registration such as the establishment of the National Population Commission (NPopC) in 1988, ratification of the Child Rights Act in 1991, enactment of the Births, Deaths, Etc. (Compulsory) registration Decree No. 69 and designation of NPopC as the primary service provider in 1992, and the passage of the Constitution of the Republic of Nigeria Act No. 39 of 1979, which allowed local government areas (LGAs) to continue to register births⁸. The United Nations Children's Fund Nigeria Country Office (UNICEF NCO) has also been supporting NPopC since 2003 to improve birth registration services in the country. The Birth registration Programme implemented from 2012-2016 aimed at accelerating birth registration particularly for children under the age of 5 resulted in a cumulative 11 million children under the age of 1 birth registrations⁹. The proportion of girls under 5 who had completed birth registration rose from 3 in 10 girls (30.9%)⁹ to nearly 5 in 10 girls (46.5%)¹⁰ between 2007 and 2016-17 according to data recorded in the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) conducted in 2007 as stated in an article on the trends in the completeness on birth registration in Nigeria between 2002-2010 by Makinde et al. (2016) and MICS 2016-2017, also known as MICS5. There are, however, disparities in birth registration in Nigeria. MICS5 revealed that 7 out of 10 (69.5%) children under the age of 5 in urban areas are registered as opposed to nearly 4 out of 10 (37%) children in rural areas. Children born to mothers who possess higher education are also more likely to be registered (88.3%) as opposed to children born to mothers with no education (28.5%)¹⁰. Disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have also negatively impacted birth registration. Restricted movements during the lockdown periods affected access to health centres for pregnant women and mobility for data collection officers and civil registrars, especially in rural areas and many children born at home went unregistered^{11,12}. This was further compounded by the fact that civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) was not classified as an essential service until August 2020¹³ due to the low rates of birth registration.

Disparities in birth registration in Nigeria have also stemmed from the manual birth registration and record-keeping systems Nigeria fully operated until August 2020. This approach is prone to "destruction, falsification, alteration, or duplication of birth records" (Oliha et al., 2019)¹⁴. The manual system also has no effective means of checking counterfeit birth certificates or conflicting birth records, and the implication is the reliance on inaccurate data for national resource allocation, planning and immigration control, according to Oliha et al. (2019). Although the automated and digital birth registration

certificate was launched in 2020¹⁵, its effectiveness is yet to be seen or felt.

Negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls

Under Sections 42 and 43 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, a girl child has the right to freedom from discrimination as well as the right to acquire and own property anywhere in Nigeria¹⁶. Despite the reinforcement of this section in a landmark Supreme Court of Nigeria ruling in 2014 against the Igbo customary law excluding female children from inheriting their deceased father's inheritance¹⁷, customary and religious inheritance laws, especially in instances where the father passes on without a valid will in place, still, discriminate against the girl child. Across Nigerian societies, female children are either completely denied of inheritance rights, denied rights to leadership even in instances where they are the first-born children, receive smaller inheritance portions as opposed to male children, or lose inheritance rights should they choose to marry (Itua, P. O. 2012¹⁸; Oni, B. A., 2014¹⁹; Ayodele, J. O., 2016²⁰; Leadwaycapital, 2018²¹). The laxity in implementing Nigeria's federal laws also reflects strongly in inheritance issues as, often, customary/religious laws take precedence over the Constitution even though Section 1 (1) & (3) state that the Constitution is supreme and any law inconsistent with its provisions shall be void²².

Nigeria has one of the highest rates of child marriage in Africa. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF estimate that a total of 22 million child brides live in Nigeria²³. The 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) also revealed that nearly 2 women between the ages of 20-49 and 25-49 were married for the first time at age 15²⁴. More than 23 million girls were married as children, and it is projected that with Nigeria's rapid population growth, Nigeria child brides will increase by more than two million by 2050²⁵. 80% of young women married as children originate from poor and rural communities, and an average of 77% of child brides in Nigeria originate from Northern Nigeria where the poverty rate is the highest²⁶. To address child marriage, a 30-member Technical Working Group on Ending Child Marriage was formed in 2015 to raise awareness, encourage behaviour change and monitor and evaluate laws and policies on child marriage in Nigeria. The Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development also launched a national strategy to end child marriage in Nigeria with the vision of reducing child marriage by 40% by 2020 and end the practice entirely by 2030²⁷. Nigeria has also made several international and regional commitments to ending child marriage such as the commitment to end child, early, and forced marriage by 2030 in line with target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the 2018 Universal Period Review where Nigeria agreed to review

recommendations to intensity actions to end child marriage; and Nigeria's commitment to achieving zero gender-based violence and harmful practices against women, girls and youth at the 2019 Nairobi Summit on the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 2527. As usual, these are all actions that look good on paper but have little to no effect on the realities of potential and existing child brides in Nigeria. Nigeria has also provided leeway for the practice of child marriage with the existence of Sharia law in Northern Nigeria that accords adulthood (and marriage, in turn) to a girl once she starts menstruating and the Marriage Act 1990 Sections 18-20 that provides for consent should a person under the age of 21 seek a marriage licence or certificate in Nigeria²⁸.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened the child marriage epidemic around the world. UNICEF estimates that 10 million more girls will be at risk of becoming child brides over the next ten years because of the pandemic²⁹. The negative economic impact of COVID-19 combined with interrupted education resulting from lockdowns and other precautionary measures have contributed to the spike in child marriages as girls are less likely to return to school and are more likely to be married off to reduce the financial burdens on the family and, in turn, provide financial compensation for the remaining family members. Child marriage puts girls at higher risks of early childbearing and its accompanying dangers including, but not limited to health consequences such as obstetric fistula, eclampsia, death from pregnancy and childbirth complications, systemic infections, and lasting disabilities and health problems^{30,31}.

To eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls, the Nigerian government has become more proactive in supporting the efforts of civil society organisations, national and international donor agencies and partnerships to promote changes in negative attitudes and practices towards girls. This is exemplified by Nigeria's participation in the European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls³²; Osun State government's partnership with Value Female Network to end female genital mutilation/cutting³³; Oyo state government's partnership with HACEY Health Initiative to end female genital mutilation/cutting³⁴; the World Bank Group's alliance with the Ekiti State Government to tackle gender-based violence, rape and female genital mutilation/cutting³⁵; Lagos state's partnership with Mirabel Centre to provide services to sexual assault survivors³⁶; and Nigeria's participation in the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC) Programme funded by the European Union with one of the focus areas on ensuring women, children and people with disabilities have access to justice at the federal level, and specifically in Adamawa,

Anambra, Edo, Kano and Lagos states³⁷.

In general, educational settings in Nigeria do not accommodate the needs of pregnant girls and young mothers although the Child's Right Act stipulates in Section 15(5) that a female child who becomes pregnant before completing her education shall be allowed to continue her education after delivery³⁸. In Ekiti state, the "Operation Keep Girls in School" Policy was also formulated to ensure that girls of school age are not denied educational opportunities irrespective of their circumstances³⁹. Despite these, several social and health factors hamper girls' return to school during pregnancy and/or after childbirth such as stigma, bullying, and the silent treatment, being cast away from social circles by peers, mental health issues, and pregnancy complications. There are also no policies in place to address the re-entry or reintegration of these girls into the educational system, thus rendering the law largely ineffective. It is also difficult to measure effectiveness as there are no official progress reports on the impact of the policy on girl child education in Ekiti state.

Discrimination against girls in education, skills development, and training

Section 15 of the Child's Right Act 2003⁴⁰ clearly defines a child's rights to receive free, compulsory, and universal basic education from the Nigerian government. This is further reinforced by Section 18(3) of the 1999 Constitution which states that the government shall strive to eradicate illiteracy through the provision of free, compulsory, and universal primary education as when practicable⁴¹. As of today, Nigeria has not achieved universal basic education. UNICEF estimates that about 10.5 million children aged 5-14 years in Nigeria are not in school⁴² even though the net intake rate in primary education increased from 35% in 2011⁴¹ to 39.4% between 2016-2017⁴³. MICS5 revealed that there are more female children out of school (27.9%) than male children (26.5%), with the highest concentration of out-of-school girls in the North East (42.4%), North West (29.8%), and North Central (24.8%). There are more female children out of school in rural areas (33.7%) than in urban areas (14.8%), and those from the poorest homes are more likely to be out of school (51.8%) as opposed to those from the richest homes (1.3%). Female children also have lower survival rates to reach the last grade of primary school as an estimated 6% who enter Primary 1 will not reach primary 6⁴⁴.

Several factors contribute to keeping girls out of school in Nigeria. A significant factor across the nation is period poverty – “the lack of access to sanitary products, menstrual hygiene education, toilets, hand-washing facilities, and/or, waste management” (Sánchez & Rodriguez, 2019)⁴⁵. Sanitary products are expensive in Nigeria, no thanks to the added period tax on menstrual products. Local and foreign-made menstrual pads currently cost between ₦350 - ₦1,500 for packs of 7 – 8. Tampons also cost between ₦700 - ₦2,000 depending on quantity and brand. In a country where 53.5% of the population are living below \$1.90 (₦721.05 as of May 10, 2021)⁴⁶ a day and 46.4% are in multidimensional poverty⁴⁷, this presents a serious problem as the average girl would use a minimum of 12 pads throughout a 4-day menstrual period. This equates to a minimum of ₦700 per period. It sounds minute until one realises that a sizeable portion of the population of menstruating girls and/or their parents/guardians cannot afford to spare ₦700 every month. Girls resort to using newspapers, cut pieces of clothes, tissue paper, cotton balls, multiple underwear and clothing, plantain leaves, amongst others as replacements and end up skipping schools on days when they are unable to manage their periods using these methods.

Poor water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities in schools also contribute to period poverty as they directly affect menstrual hygiene management (MHM) for girls. According to findings in 2019 on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Nigeria, only 26% of schools provide access to basic sanitation services - 38% in urban areas and 28% in rural areas. Only 3% of schools have girls’ compartments with provisions for menstrual hygiene management and 14% have basic gender-sensitive water supply and sanitation services⁴⁸. Girls’ inability to effectively manage their menstrual periods in school leads to missing classes and absenteeism. It also leads to missed educational opportunities as it becomes more difficult for girls to catch up when they constantly miss classes. Girls stopping formal education in the North West have also been linked to menstruation⁴⁹.

The poverty level in Nigeria is a major contributor to keeping girls out of school. Although the Universal Basic Education Programme was introduced in 1999 to ensure free access to a 9-year formal basic education for the Nigerian child⁵⁰, public school education in Nigeria is not exactly free. The public schooling system is severely underfunded in Nigeria and, although it is not a justification, school administrations resort to charging illegal fees and levies to cover expenses under the cover of examination fees, textbooks, common entrance, lesson fees, parent-teacher association meetings, electricity, security, amongst others⁵¹.

Although governments have banned the collection of these levies^{52,53,54,55,56,57}, the reality is these fees are still being imposed⁵⁸, making it difficult for girls who live below, and even above, the poverty line in Nigeria to attend school.

In Northern Nigeria, girl child education is often hampered by socio-cultural factors such as gender discrimination, child marriage, parent's perceptions about formal education, and fears about sexual harassment⁵⁹. Fears of kidnapping are also legitimate concerns for keeping girls out of school as the spate of school kidnappings over the past 7 years across the regions are alarmingly high – from the 276 girls abducted by Boko Haram members from Government Secondary School, Chibok, Borno state in 2014⁶⁰ to the 27 students kidnapped from Government Science Secondary School, Kagara, Niger state by unidentified gunmen in 2021⁶¹, and around 315 schoolgirls abducted by unknown gunmen from Government Girls Secondary School, Jangebe, Zamfara state in 2021⁶².

Conversely, the impact of COVID-19 on girl child education cannot be overlooked. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) estimates that 5.2 million girls globally will be at risk of not returning to care centres or schools due to the COVID-19 crisis, with a higher percentage of girls likely to be affected than boys⁶³. Malala Fund estimates that 20 million more secondary school girls could be out of school in low-income countries and lower-middle-income countries after the COVID-19 pandemic passes⁶⁴. A rapid assessment on the state of girls' education during the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria by the Malala Fund revealed that 1 in 4 girls received no learning assistance while at home during the lockdown. The Federal Ministry of Education's guidelines for schools and learning facilities reopening after COVID-19 closures provided insufficient guidance or proven interventions to address the needs of marginalised girls, including "insufficient guidance on how to ensure that girls, students with special needs or disabilities and those in lower socio-economic and conflict-affected states will re-enrol in school when the pandemic is over" (Malala Fund, 2020)⁶⁵.

Discrimination against girls in health and nutrition

According to figures from NDHS 2018, 34% of girls between ages 6-59 months are stunted (short for their age). 6% are wasted (thin for their height), 20% are underweight (thin for their age), and 2% are overweight (heavy for their height)⁶⁶. This shows a marked improvement in the nutritional status of the girl child as opposed to NDHS 2013 which stated that 35% of girls were stunted, 17% were wasted, 27% were underweight, and 4% were overweight⁶⁷.

In 2012, President Good luck Jonathan launched the Saving One Million Lives initiative aimed at “improving child and maternal health through investment in six highly cost-effective areas or pillars: essential medicines, immunization, malaria, maternal-child health (MCH), nutrition, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT)”, according to Results for Development Institute (2014)⁶⁸. The Ministry of Budget and National Planning also launched the National Policy on Food and Nutrition in Nigeria in 2016 to attain optimal nutritional status for all Nigerians, with particular emphasis on the most vulnerable groups such as children, adolescents, women, elderly, and groups with special nutritional needs⁶⁹. Despite these advances and efforts by the government to improve child health, Nigeria accounts for the second-highest burden of stunting in the world⁷⁰.

With regards to child health, the National Action Plan for Advancing the Health and Development of Young People was developed by the Federal Ministry of Health in 2010, of which one of its stipulations was the integration of adolescent and youth-friendly health services (AYFHS) into the primary health care systems⁷¹. The National Guidelines for the Integration of Adolescent and Youth Friendly Services into Primary Health Care Facilities in Nigeria was developed in 2013 to serve as a framework for the integration process⁷². In 2018, the Nigeria National Standards & Minimum Service Package for Adolescent & Youth-Friendly Health Services was developed to ensure that optimal health services were provided to adolescents and young people across health facilities⁷³.

As with a staggering majority of Nigerian plans, full AYFHS integration into primary health facilities has not yet been achieved⁷⁴. Adolescent girls in Nigeria are still barred by lack of privacy and confidentiality in health facilities, stigma, high financial costs, distant health facilities, health workers’ attitudes, lack of financial autonomy, religion, communal laws, health provider turnover and shortages, lack of skilled providers, commodity shortages, amongst others, in their pursuit for optimal health services^{75,76,77,78}.

Economic exploitation of child labour and girls at work

Child labour is one of the worst forms of exploitation the girl child in Nigeria is exposed to. The Nigeria Labour Act 1974 interprets a child as a person under the age of twelve years and specifies in Section 59(1) that “no child be employed or work in any capacity except where he is employed by a member of his family on light work of an agricultural, horticultural or domestic character approved by the Minister”. It also specifies in Section 59(3) that children under the age of fourteen years may be employed only on daily wages, on a day-to-day basis, and should be able to return each night to the residence of the parents or guardians or a residence approved by the parents or guardians. However, this subsection arguably provides leeway for exploitation in child labour as it states that this subsection does not apply to a young person (interpreted in this Act as a person under the age of eighteen years) in domestic service⁷⁹. This indicator ostensibly approves domestic child labour and provided inadequate cover to young persons who are child labourers.

The Labour Act 1974 also contradicts the provisions of the Child’s Right Act 2003 that interprets a child as a person under the age of eighteen years and stipulates in Section 28 that no child shall be subjected to forced or exploitative labour; employed to work in any capacity except in the employment of family members in light agricultural, horticultural, or domestic work; or employed as a domestic help outside of his own home or family environment. The Child’s Rights Act is also complicit as Section 29 upholds the provisions of the Labour Act regarding child labour which is in direct conflict with the provisions of Section 28. There is also no interpretation of what light agricultural, horticultural, or domestic work equates to in either of the laws⁸⁰. These disparities still exist despite Nigeria’s ratification of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973; Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999; Convention of the Rights of the Child 1989; Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, 2000; Optional Protocols to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, 2000; and the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, 2000⁸¹.

To combat the scourge of child labour and exploitation in Nigeria over the years, the government adopted the National Policy on Child Labour 2014, National Action Plan for Elimination of Child Labour (2013-2017), Ogun State Action Plan for Elimination of Child Labour in Nigeria 2014-2017, Oyo State Action Plan for Elimination of Child Labour in Nigeria 2014-2017, National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) 2019 Plan of Action, and the National Action Plan for Preventing and

Countering Violent Extremism 2020.

It also set up a National Steering Committee for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour and Inter-Ministerial Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons. Social programs to address child labour and include, but are not limited to, Accelerating Action for the Elimination of Child Labour in Supply Chains in Africa (ACCEL Africa) (2018-2022); Measurement, Awareness-Raising, and Policy Engagement Project on Child Labour and Forced Labour; and World Bank-funded projects such as the National Social Safety Nets Project (2016–2022), Nigeria Partnership for Education Project (2015–2019), and the Better Education Service Delivery for All (BESDA) (2017–2022) ^{81,82}.

Despite these, Nigeria has made minimal advancements in eliminating child labour. The 2019 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Nigeria revealed that Nigerian children are engaged in agricultural activities; industrial work such as mining and quarrying of granite and gravel; domestic work; street work, including vending, begging, and scavenging; collecting money on public buses, washing cars, and automotive repairs; commercial sexual exploitation, including pornography production; forced labour in begging; and even recruitment by non-state groups for use in armed conflict, non-conflict support roles, suicide bombing, and as concubines. The report also revealed that children from homes in rural Northern Nigeria who are sent to Islamic teachers in urban areas for Koranic education are subjected to street begging⁸³.

Across the country, there have been chilling reports of child labourers burnt, pierced with nails, beaten, and tortured by guardians and supposed “bosses”^{84,85,86,87,88,89}. It is disappointing to note that although 3,937 child labour violations were found in 2019, penalties were imposed on only 147 violations. Regarding criminal law enforcement against child labour, only 285 prosecutions were initiated, and 5 convictions were secured. 2,415 child labour inspections were conducted in 2019, and although 1,263 children were removed from child labour situations, the gap between the number of inspections and the projected number of workers (and workplaces by default) are unbalanced⁹⁰.

Violence against the girl child

Violence against the girl child is one of the most prevalent forms of human rights violations in Nigeria. Girls in Nigeria are at risk of child trafficking, majorly for domestic service, child prostitution, and child pornography^{91,92}. 1 in 4 girls also undergoes female genital mutilation/cutting⁹³. The 2014 Violence against Children in Nigeria survey revealed that 1 in 4 girls experience sexual violence before the age of 18. 2 in 4 girls experience physical violence before the age of 18, and 3 in 20 girls experience emotional violence by a parent, adult caregiver, or other adult relatives before the age of 18. The report also revealed that females with histories of sexual or physical abuse were significantly more likely to have ever had symptoms or diagnoses of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and to engage in sexual risk-taking behaviours such as infrequent condom use and multiple sexual partners⁹⁴.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated violent situations for girls worldwide. Reports show a marked increase in online child sexual exploitation through direct contact by offenders; production and distribution of child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) via social media platforms, peer-to-peer networks, darknet forums and messaging applications/platforms; distribution of self-generated explicit material (SGEM); sexual coercion and extortion; monetisation of CSAM; selling/live streaming recordings of first-hand child sexual abuse; sex trolling; Zoom bombing; sextortion; amongst others^{95,96}.

Several laws, policies, action plans, and frameworks focused on combatting violence against children exist in Nigeria such as the Priority Actions for Preventing and Responding to Violence Against Children launched in 2015; the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc) Act 2015 which classifies online child pornography as an offence; the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act 2015 which classifies abuse, procurement or recruitment of persons under the age of 18 for prostitution, pornography, or other forms of sexual exploitation, as well as employment of children under twelve for domestic work as offences; the Presidential Campaign to End Violence Against Children by 2030 and Road Map for Ending Violence Against Children launched in 2016. Nigeria is also a Pathfinding country in the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children^{97,98,99,100}. Over the years, there has been a steady increase in convictions with stiffer penalties against perpetrators of violence against children, especially sexual violence perpetrators^{101,102,103,104}. Despite these, minimal progress has been made in the fights against sexual violence, as evidenced by statistics published by the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT) which indicated that a total of 1,718 cases of violence against children were reported to them, and violence against the girl child

accounted for 57% (977) of the reported cases¹⁰⁵.

Girl child participation in political life

Most states in Nigeria and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja have provided opportunities for the girl child to participate in the political sphere through the inauguration of the Children's Parliament in 2003. The Parliament has afforded the girl child access to leadership and training opportunities, interaction with high-level political leaders on children's issues, and advocacy for children's rights in Nigeria^{106,107,108}.



<https://www.vitalvoices.org/people/obiageli-ezekwesili/>

<https://ndis.gov.ng/speaker/hon-abike-dabiri-erewa/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ngozi_Okonjo-Iweala

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/dsg/index.shtml> Amina J. Mohammed

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. States yet to domesticate the Child's Right Act should do so in the best interests of the girl child.
2. States that have domesticated the Child's Right Act should ensure the effective implementation of the law to protect the rights of the girl child.
3. Review of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and other child-related laws to uniformly interpret a child as a person under the age of 18 years.
4. Gender responsive review of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.
5. Review of the Marriage Act 1990 to illegalize marriage of persons under the age of 18 and only require consent for persons between the ages of 18-21.
6. Review of the Labour Act 1974 to reflect the International Labour Standards on Child Labour.
7. Perpetrators of violence against children should be prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced to the fullest extent of the law.
8. Adoption of inheritance and succession laws in all states in Nigeria to protect the girl child's rights to claim inheritance and to secure inheritance even after marriage.
9. Manual birth registrations in Nigeria should be completely scrapped in favour of the recently launched automated and digital birth registration system.
10. Implementation of gender responsive policies and strategies to keep girls in school and return girls to school.
11. Development of a national curriculum designed to provide 21st century education and skills in training and development programs for in-school and out-of-school girls.
12. Development of re-entry policies to ensure the rights of pregnant girls and young mothers to education.
13. The Federal Government of Nigeria needs to implement strategic, lasting solutions to the issues of insecurity in the nation
14. Value-added tax should be eliminated from all menstrual products in Nigeria to improve menstrual hygiene management for girls in Nigeria.
15. Legislation mandatorily requiring that menstrual products be made available in school should be passed in Nigeria.
16. International standards for water, sanitation, and hygiene in schools should be adopted and rigorously implemented in schools.
17. Gender sensitive and responsive reviews of the basic education, senior secondary, and tertiary education curricula in Nigeria.

18. Full integration of adolescent and youth-friendly health services into all primary health care centres in Nigeria.
19. The Nigerian government should enhance the capacities of specialised security officials to investigate and track online sexual predators.
20. Child protection policies and strategies in Nigeria should be reviewed to incorporate the realities of the digital age.
21. The government should partner with and fund civil society organisations working to end violence and other forms of discrimination against the girl child in Nigeria.
22. The government should partner with and fund civil society organisations working to promote girl child participation in politics.
23. Review of laws and policies hampering the girl child from accessing optimal health services in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Although progress has been made in protecting, providing for, and promoting the rights and needs of the girl child in Nigeria - notably with massive support from international funds, donor agencies, international and national non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, networks, and groups – Nigeria still has a long way to go. It is of the utmost importance that we look inwards as a nation and recommit to ensuring that Nigeria is a safe space for girls to live and develop in.

CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN 4

Sharing of Power and Decision making at all levels between women and men in Nigeria



Strategic Objectives for BPfA Goals on sharing of power and decision making

- Take measures to ensure equal women's access to and full participation in the power structure and decision making
- Increase women's capacity to participate in decision making and leadership

INTRODUCTION

The effective participation of women and equal leadership opportunities are recognized globally as key drivers to achieving sustainable development. Although much progress has been made to increase women's representation in all areas of public life since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), change has been incremental and slow. Gender equality and women's full and equal participation in all areas of life, especially decision-making, are integral to the Decade of Action and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Young women are under-represented as voters, as well as in leading positions, whether in elected offices, the civil service, the private sector, or academia. This occurs despite their proven abilities as leaders and agents of change, and their right to participate equally in democratic governance.

Nigeria has been recording low participation of women in both elective and appointive positions. This is a growing concern to many Nigerians especially since this has been the case despite concerted efforts by the government, non-governmental organizations, civil society, women's rights activists, and women's group to increase the level of participation of women in politics in line with the declaration made at the fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, which advocated 30% affirmative action. In Nigeria, the extant National Gender Policy (NGP 2006) recommended 35% affirmative action instead and sought for a more inclusive representation of women with at least 35% of both elective political and appointive public service positions respectively.

The national average of women's political participation in Nigeria has remained 4.3 percent in elective and appointive positions, which is far below the Global Average of 22.5 percent, Africa Regional Average of 23.4 percent, and West African Sub Regional Average of 15 percent. Nigerian women have always played a significant role in the democratic process since 1999 when Nigeria returned to democratic rule. Unfortunately, twenty-two years after Nigeria returned to democracy and twenty-five years after the country adopted the Beijing Platform and Declaration for Action, progress made is yet to translate into huge gains on the ground in recent years.

Nigerian Government Efforts and Progress, challenges and recommendations

More than two decades after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA) it is still necessary to assess the Nigerian political landscape in terms of young women's political participation in terms of their participation in governance, measured through women's representation, decision-making, empowerment, and the achievement of equitable conditions for women; especially as it affects young women.

Since the adoption of the BDPfA , several efforts have been made to address the low representation of women in elective and appointive positions in Nigeria; among such efforts were the establishment of the Women's Political empowerment office, the Nigerian Women Trust Fund and Women Lobby Groups, etc. Other efforts include the institutionalization of an INEC gender policy, the national multi-stakeholder dialogues; the initiation of several interventions to actualize affirmative action, and the convening of the Nigeria Women Strategy Conference. National Center for Women Development in collaboration with the National Bureau of Statistics is also making efforts to have evidence-based data. Furthermore, new laws and policies that affirm the BDPfA commitments have emerged at the national level and in the states; institutions responsible for promoting gender justice have been created; the experiences and challenges of women and girls have reflected in some critical policy discussions, and funding support to improve the situation of women and girls in Nigeria has been made available through government budgets and by several international organizations (Beijing +25 Report, 2019:12).

Women and young women's political participation is still a major challenge because Nigeria still does not have a system that protects and promotes the political inclusion of women. The process of ensuring increased young women involvement in governance, power, and decision making is still a work in progress, even though there have been some gains over the past two decades. Nigerian women constitute about half of the population of the country, yet despite their numerical strength and active participation as campaign agents, mobilizers, and most faithful voters at every election, they have always faced challenges and resistance in their effort to be politically empowered. The following highlights some level of progress made so far:

- As of 2015, female Ministers made up 31% of the Federal cabinet.
- At the level of the Judiciary, the Chief Justice of the Federation and the President of the Court of Appeal are women. More women were appointed as career diplomats and Permanent secretaries in Federal Ministries.
- Marginal rise in the number of women judges appointed to appellate courts and courts of the first instance. In 2015 Nigeria had exceeded the 30% threshold for female appointees in the Federal cabinet 45
- 16 out of the 25 recently appointed Judges of the Court of Appeal are also women; while 3 women were appointed justices of the Supreme Court for the first time in the country's history in 2012.
- Also, 6 female judges have been appointed to the National Industrial Court. (Federal Ministerial Platform Report, 2015). Within the past five years, Nigeria has also recorded marginal increments in the numbers of women appointed as ambassadors (10 female Ambassadors) and permanent secretaries (11female Permanent Secretaries)
- As part of efforts to encourage more women to participate in politics, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, in collaboration with the then OSSAP MDGs established a Women Trust Fund to provide support to female politicians bidding for elective offices.

This Fund, which was launched in 2011, remains active to date and continues to support female aspirants with technical and operational assistance in areas such as messaging, leadership skills development, conducting research, and generating information. The fund as well as other women-focused NGOs and groups, continue to advocate for increasing both the numbers and quality of women's political participation.

- Also, in response to ongoing advocacy efforts, many political parties have institutionalized fee waivers for women intending to compete in general elections. (FMWASD Beijing +25 Review 2019:45)
- On April 22, 2021, a bill that sought to alter the provisions of the 1999 Constitution seeking to create 111 additional special seats for women in the National Assembly was read for the first time. The bill which has now passed second reading in the House of Representatives is being sponsored by the Deputy Chief Whip of the House of Representatives, Hon. Nkeiruka Onyejiocha and 85 others. The proposed bill will create 37 additional seats in the Senate and 74 in the House of Representatives for women if passed into law. Furthermore, should the bill be passed into law, the State Houses of Assembly will also get three(3) special seats per state exclusively for women. This invariably will mean that if this bill passes, the Senate will have a guaranteed 25.3% women's representation while the House of Representatives will have a guaranteed 17% representation of women. The bill intends to alter Sections 48, 49, 71, 77, 91, and 117 of the Nigerian Constitution.
- This proposed bill is the right step giving the fact that the Beijing declaration of 30% and the Nigerian Gender Policy of 35% are yet to be implemented. This bill if passed moves Nigeria a niche closer to the desired aim of equitable representation. This is another angle of affirmative action for women in Nigeria.

However, there are still several challenges, especially for young women. In the list of achievements made above, there still exist age disparities in the number of women who have advanced politically. Young women between the ages of 25 – 35 are further marginalised. First, they are lumped in the category of youths and then, merged in the category of women hardly benefit from some of the little gains made. For example, while YIAGA had reported that a total of 22 young candidates benefitted directly from the Not Too Young To Run campaign in the State Houses of Assembly between the ages of 25 – 30 (YIAGA, 2019:9), on face value, one would be tempted to celebrate this increase but when the data

above was gender-disaggregated, it revealed that it was young men that benefitted from the bill. Furthermore, when it comes to scaling through party primaries, due to the absence of internal party democracy and the increasing threat of violence against young women who engage in the electoral process, some young women withdrew before the elections. Since Nigeria's return to civilian rule, the country has conducted 6 general elections; 1999, 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and the 2019 General Elections. The reports from these elections show that young people were massively excluded and marginalized despite their immense contributions to the successful conduct of these elections as electoral officers, INEC ad hoc staff, political party agents, political party candidates, and even voters. This was due to the unfavourable constitution and legal framework which contributed to the low representation of young persons in public office.

A cursory look at women's participation since Nigeria started practicing democracy leaves little to be desired. In the House of Representatives, in 1999, out of 360 seats, women won 12 seats representing 3.3% while in the Senate, of the 109 seats, women occupied only 3 seats representing 2.8%. In 2003, out of 360 seats, women got only 21 seats while men occupied 318, a percentage of 5.8%, while the Senate had only 4 women representing 3.7% as men occupied 105 seats of the 109 seats. The number increased in 2007 as wom occupied a total of 25 seats, a percentage of 6.9%. In 2011 and 2015, there was a significant drop in the number of successful candidates in the House of Representatives. Out of 360 available seats, women won only 19 (5.2%) in 2011 and 2015 respectively. (Uwa, 2018, 34).

Generally, in the last six (6) assemblies, the Nigerian senate has had a total of thirty-six (36) female representatives out of a total of six-hundred and fifty-four (654). This represents 5.5% representation over this period of democratic transitions. At the level of the House of Representatives, it has had a total of one hundred and twelve(112) representatives out of a total of two thousand, one hundred and sixty (2,160) for six assemblies representing a percentage average of 5.2% over these periods of democratic transitions. A comparative analysis of the 2011, 2015, and 2019 elections is apt in an era where persistent gender gaps exist in political leadership despite rigorous policy reforms. Despite the increasing number of women now participating in politics either as voters or candidates, the statistics of women in political leadership are not commensurate. It can be argued that challenges militating against women's emergence in political leadership range from patriarchal values to lack of internal democracy among political parties, gender discrimination, and lack of funds and electoral violence amongst others.

Office	1999		2003		2007		2011		2015		2019	
	Available Seats	Women	Available Seats	Women	Available Seats	Women	Available Seats	Women	Available Seats	Women	Available Seats	Women
President	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0
Senate	109	3(2.8)	109	4 (3.7)	109	9(8.3)	109	7 (6.4)	109	8(7.3)	109	8(7.3)
House of Reps.	360	7(1.9)	360	21 (5.8)	360	27 (6.9)	360	19 (5.3)	360	19(5.3)	360	11 (3.1)
Governor	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0	36	0
D – Gov.	36	1 (2.8)	36	2 (5.5)	36	6 (16.7)	36	3 (8.3)	36	4 (11.5)	36	4 (11.5)
State House Assembly	990	24(2.4)	990	40(3.9)	990	57(5.8)	990	69(7)	990	50(5.1)	990	40
LGA Chair	710	13(1.8)	774	15(1.9)	740	27(3.6)	740	-	774	0	774	N/A
Councilors	6368	69(1.1)	6368	267(4.2)	6368	235(3.7)	6368	-	6368	0	6368	N/A
Ministers	47	7 (14.9)	47	7 (14.9)	27	7 (25.9)	42	12 (28.9)	30	6 (20)	43	7 (16.3)

Table of Women's Representation at all levels of Governance from 1999 – 2019. Source: NWTF

The table above provides information on the number of women elected to public office from 1999 to 2019. From the analysis shown in the table above, there was no remarkable departure from the tradition of circumscribing women's role in the political process and the benefits accruing to them for their efforts. Gender sentiments to a large extent dictate winners and losers of elections. Trends in women's marginalization have also shown a persistent regression in some of the gains women have made in recent electoral cycles. This trend of losing gains in some women elected into positions was seen in 2015 and was repeated in the 2019 elections. Women are underrepresented in political positions despite the percentage of women in the voting population of Nigeria. Women occupy about 5.8% of the political offices in Nigeria while men occupy about 94.2% of the political offices. (INEC: 2019).

However, before the 2019 elections, with efforts of YIAGA Africa and other CSOs which led the Not Too Young To Run (NTYTR) Campaign, on May 31, 2018, President Muhammadu Buhari signed into law a bill amending the 1999 Constitution, the implementation of which will lower the minimum age requirements for competing for and holding key elected offices both at federal and state levels. The law effectively lowered the age for contestants to stand in presidential elections from the age of 40 to 35 years and 30 to 25 years for the Presidential and National House of Representatives seats respectively. This enabled the emergence of more young women as aspirants to public office and as party candidates in the 2019 general elections. During the 2019 General Elections, in total, there were 91 registered political parties, all of which nominated at least one candidate. There were 73 candidates for the presidency, 1,899 for 109 Senate seats, and 4,680 for the 360 House of Representative seats. For the state elections, there were 1,046 candidates for the 29 governorships, and 14,609 candidates for the 991 state assembly seats. More young women participated in the 2019 General Elections as candidates, voters, party agents, and election observers/monitors. This is in line with a more general trend post - BDPfA which indicates that more women have, within this period, become politically active in Nigeria and have participated at different stages in the electoral process.

Despite these high numbers, there was an evident lack of gender and age diversity in the candidates nominated. The proportion of female candidates was less than 12.8 percent in all races (Nigeria 2019 European Union Election Observation Monitoring Final Report n.d.). Similarly, there was a lack of young women, especially those nominated by parties. For example, following the reduction of the minimum age requirement to 25 for state assembly seats, only 0.1 percent of APC or PDP candidates were under the age of 30. A team of EU experts observed multiple problems in the primaries relating to financial barriers and procedures followed. Primaries involve prohibitive financial costs, with party fees for running in primaries as high as NGN 45 million for the incumbent APC presidential primary. This is well beyond the reach of the vast majority of Nigerians, with an estimated 50 percent living on less than US\$1.90 a day (World Bank 2019) and worse still for young women who are gradually coming out of the old system of patriarchy and creating a niche for themselves. They do not have the financial backing to wrestle power from the men who due to the structure of the society either have these funds or are easily able to access loans due to collaterals.

For all parties, selling forms for expression of interest and nomination is a significant source of income with, for example, the APC's sale of forms reportedly generating over NGN 13.5 billion. While the main parties gave reductions for women, there were additional costs associated with running in primaries, such as informal payments made to voting delegates. Procedural problems included the late publication of party guidelines for the holding of primaries and an overall lack of transparency. (NWTF VE Report 2019: 5)

Furthermore, some of the social norms and structural factors that resist gender equality and the empowerment of women are still as strong as they were twenty-five years ago. This makes it more challenging to close existing gender gaps. It also makes it particularly challenging for young women to get into leadership, as well as to swiftly respond to the emerging millennial challenges which are multifaceted but have a significant impact on the livelihoods and wellbeing of women and girls.

These prevailing social norms and "cultural attitudes discourage girls' and young women's political activism, which in turn limits their willingness and agency to take political action" (NDI, 2017:6). Culturally, men are more economically stable than women. Campaigns cost a lot of money at various stages of the electoral process. A young woman needs a lot of finances to run for office. This is a huge barrier as the men expect her to come to them to request funding. In Southern Nigeria, women are more educated than their Northern counterparts. Yet, they need to beg for political offices. Most Nigerian men are most likely not to support a 22 years old woman to represent them in an office. They feel it is the man's birth right. Young women in Nigeria struggle a lot to be accepted in the Nigerian political terrain unless they have a "godfather" who has strong influence on traditional and religious gatekeepers.

Another key challenge is the issue of insecurity and political violence associated with elections in Nigeria. Nigerian women, especially young women have, over the years, become targets of violence of diverse forms based on their positions in promoting transformative politics (Agbla-jaobi, 2010). The political terrain in Nigeria is extremely dangerous for both men and women. It is a "do-or-die affair fraught with violence" (Nwabunkeonye, 2014:287). It is a political atmosphere where assassinations, blackmail, intimidation, threats, humiliation, and sort of violence is the order of the day and as a result, scare women away from active participation in Nigerian politics (Agbla-jaobi, 2010; Luka, 2011; Kolawal et al., 2012; Ngara et al., 2013).

However, although the latest bill appears to enjoy significant support among members of the House of Representatives, it still has a long way to go to become law. Previous attempts to pass the 35 percent affirmative action failed in the House. In the 8th Assembly, the constitution alteration bill to ensure 35 percent of political offices were reserved for women was rejected by the National Assembly.

According to Section 9 (1, 2) of the Nigerian Constitution, constitutional amendment bills must garner two-thirds of support in both chambers of the National Assembly. Also, 24 of the 36 State Houses of Assembly must approve the amendment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the trends and happenings around the political environment in Nigeria, it is becoming clearer that women; especially young women may never achieve the mandated 30% affirmation as enshrined in the Beijing plan of action except the following recommendations are adhered to:

Evidence from countries where female representation was met and exceeded the Beijing Benchmark shows that proportional representation is a sure way to getting it right. Nordic countries and other African countries have had significant increases in the number of elected women to the legislature depending on proportional representation rather than a first past the post type electoral system, as found in Nigeria. The legislative agenda for the creation of special /reserved seats for women is a welcome development that should be supported by all. There should however be an addition to the proposed bill to be specific about the percentage that must go to young women in the gender quota so that we can be sure that there will be more young women in leadership positions and not end up having the same challenges that young women had with the age reduction bill.

There is an urgent need for Political party and electoral system reforms. The current way in which most political parties are structured in Nigeria will hardly result in a positive representation of young women. Furthermore, political parties should create support networks for prospective aspirants by pairing them with established women politicians who will be playing key roles as mentors and provide capacity building for young or aspiring female politicians to enhance and develop them ahead of subsequent elections.

Reforming the culture and practices of political parties so that they can attract and mobilize more young women to join as members, volunteers, and aspirants is another key to improving young women's participation. The development of strong young women's wings could redefine the stereotypical images of parties as masculine and the 'male dominated' nature of politics.

Agitating for equal opportunity to run for office is not enough to mobilize young women to aspire and run for political leadership or win elections when they run for office. This is because there are various factors such as gender, religion, cultural norms among others that are peculiar obstacles to young women which need to be addressed to enable them to realize their potentials. Therefore, there is a need for stakeholders including CSOs, political parties, and INEC to focus on building the capability and capacity of young secondary school girls to prepare them for future political leadership. This is especially critical given the socially constructed gender roles that young girls hold on to as well as the socialization that associate politics with masculine values.

The mass media plays a particularly crucial role. There should be practical and constant discourse by women leaders and the news media to draw attention to young women's leadership as well as to ensure that there are news reports on programs and initiatives to address gender imbalance. For women in general and young women, in particular, to succeed in politics, the media must focus on engaging them in all kinds of discourse and not just the stereotypical 'soft issues.' The Beijing platform recommended that the media should:

....refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities, rather than presenting them as creative human beings, key actors and contributors to and beneficiaries of the process of development... (UN, 1996)

Targeting young women for mentorship and grooming for political office is a sure way to get more young women into decision-making processes. The importance of mentorship for young women cannot be overemphasized as mentoring and role modelling is a known way to help young women and girls in developing the knowledge and skills required for leadership as well as assisting in an understanding of gender barriers concerning leadership roles in the country.

It is also critical to raise awareness among young women aspiring politicians and other members of the community to promote understanding and address the age-old stereotypes that have continued to ensure few women succeed in the political arena despite there being evidence that they could make better leaders.

Building mass coalition of young women support and advocacy groups using NGOs and Grassroots women associations to coordinate support and advocacy for fellow women aspirants as well as the continuous development of leadership training programmes designed to provide appropriate skills and experience to young women who wish to participate in electoral or appointive office. Such skills could include campaign strategies, public speaking, public relations, fundraising, and financial management, the constitution, and policymaking.

Efforts need to be put in place to enable young women politicians receive training in some areas that directly affect their aspirations. These should include training on how to penetrate the gatekeepers in politics, culture, social systems that hinder the penetration of young women leaders, campaigning and fundraising strategies; all of which should enable them to shed the tag of being poor organizers or afraid to speak in rallies, press conferences or interact with media.

To create enabling environment that allows women to engage meaningfully in the decision-making process sustainably and effectively that is free from violence and harassment of any kind. There is need to establish legal funds to assist young women politicians to challenge electoral malpractices of any form at all levels of political processes.

CONCLUSION

Increased young women's participation is crucial. Politically, women have been relegated to the background, despite the tremendous effort put forward by non-governmental organizations following the declaration made at the fourth World Conference on women in Beijing, which advocated 30% affirmative action and National Gender Policy (NGP) recommendation of 35% affirmative action for a more inclusive representation of young women both in elective and appointive positions. There is still a need to create and expand opportunities for young women to enable them to become more active and effective participants in national and local political activities. One of the necessary measures may be to proactively address the barriers that deter and frustrate them from benefitting from the expanded political space related to gender equity. Thus, serious recommendations must be made for women's political participation that might begin with the demand for enacting/supporting the bill for special seats for women.

We must look to other African countries that have successfully increased the numbers of young women in public office and legislatures. However, we must do so with the idea that it is possible to improve on these experiences. One key factor that contributed to the success in most of the African countries is that there was serious organizing for change. Most of these countries could be said to have built sustainable and progressive women's movements, and Nigeria needs to do likewise.



Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka pounds the table for women and girls.
<https://www.iknowpolitics.org/en/learn/knowledge-resources/key-inclusive-recovery-putting-women-decision-making-roles>

CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN 5

Women and the Environment



Strategic Objectives for BPfA Goals on Women and the Environment

- Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels
- Integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development
- Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional, and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women



INTRODUCTION

There are number of things negatively affecting women around the world; poverty, limited education, violence, discrimination and what makes all of these things worse is climate change.

In various communities, women manage food, water, forests and agricultural terrain. Therefore, their perspectives and experiences are crucial to sustainable development and policy making at different levels in order to have a healthy planet. However, this has not been the case in many countries including Nigeria.

With women being responsible for 70 to 80 percent of all agricultural labour in the country, one would expect that they would be an equal amount of control of the agricultural terrain.

We will be looking at the role of women in agriculture in Nigeria, especially that of young women. The focus will be on Land Ownership, Climate Change and Access to information and training.

NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT EFFORTS, PROGRESS, AND CHALLENGES

Evidence abound to show that several negative aspects of gender relations, such as gender-based division of labour, disparities between males and female's access to power and resources, and gender biases in rights and entitlements, remain pervasive in Nigeria.

Despite an obligation to be non-discriminatory according to Section 2 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the country is nowhere near giving women and girls' equal chance to advance economically, socially, physically, educationally, and politically. There are different pieces of evidence in different sectors that prove that gender relations like division of labour, access to power and resources, and biases in rights and privileges is pervasive in the country.

The National Policy on Women of 2000 put together detailed guidelines for encouraging gender equality in every sector of the economy. The policy was revised into a National Gender Policy by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development in 2006.(<2015) This was to echo the new move towards gender and development. The vision of the National Gender Policy is to achieve a just and gender-equitable society and economy where women contribute their quota to the development at all levels of governance and has control over and benefit from all development interventions. The National Gender Policy for Nigeria set policies to promote gender equity and sustainable human and economic development in Nigeria and will be discussed according to the issues highlighted below.

Access to Land

Though Nigerian women play a critical and important role in environmental conservation, there is still a limit to how much land, capital, and labour they can control. The acquisition of land by both men and women is mostly through inheritance, and inheritance rights are highly influenced by the dominant norms and customs in the different parts of the country. Despite the provisions of prohibitive laws, the patrilineal system of land inheritance provides men with a greater chance of inheriting land than women. With customary law, women hardly inherit land and usually cannot obtain land rights by themselves.

Therefore, there is an enormous gap in land ownership in Nigeria, and 10 percent of women own lands despite being responsible for 70 to 80 percent of all agricultural labour. It is essential to recognize the little influence formal law has on the lives of women living in rural areas. In the bid to ensure women's rights to land, there must be proper enforcement of these laws.

The advantage of women having more ownership of the land they work on is obvious. In 2017, unpredictable amounts of rainfall and a disturbing flood hit different parts of Nigeria and disturbed farmers and their crops. In Ogun State, a southwestern area in the country, Ekaite Monday's crops were largely affected. Just like other small-scale farmers, she was looking for ways of dealing with the effects of climate change. After losing a large number of her crops earlier in the year, she decided to strategize by scattering her cultivated farmland. This was to ensure that not all her crops are in danger when flooding reoccurs in one area but does not in another. This was possible because she owned the land she worked on. This is not a decision that can be carried out by many other women in Nigeria and Africa as a whole.

One of the objectives of The National Gender Policy for Agricultural and Rural Development was to remove all gender-based barriers to women's participation in agricultural production and marketing and the strategies for implementation include:

- a. Remove all barriers to women's access to critical resources needed for successful agricultural production (i.e. land, capital, credit, farm inputs, technology, water, and agricultural extension services, etc.)
- b. Government to strengthen its agricultural policies, especially in the food crop sector to reverse decades of bias in favor of cash crop production.
- c. Involve women in agricultural policies, planning, and implementation of programmes and activities at all levels - Federal, State, and Local Governments.
- d. Provide farmers, especially females, with accessible and affordable technologies in all areas of agricultural activities

e. Government and relevant agencies to introduce environmentally friendly technology to promote sustainable agriculture e.g. biogas and organic fertilizers, and make the distribution to farmers gender-responsive, and equitable.

f. Link women farmers to local, national, and international markets, and build their skills to remain competitive

g. Ensure active participation of women in policy, planning, and implementation of programmes and activities in the agricultural sector

h. • Women to form strong cooperatives, and act as groups to break traditional barriers in agriculture, especially in the area of land acquisition

How Climate Change Worsens Gender Inequality

Human beings in general do not want to destroy nature or the environment. However, we inadvertently do this. In many cases, there is a connection between women and the environment in the way that they collect from these two groups without remorse, ignoring the negative impact that it is causing. From misuse of the environmental resources, human beings go from order to disorder and this leads to scarcity in environmental goods; for instance, water.

Deforestation happens as a result of biodiversity loss. Women and girls are forced to travel further for food when this happens and this leads to them being too tired to perform other tasks and vulnerable to sexual harassment and assault. They also have less time to pursue other sources of income, which prevents them from becoming economically independent. The lower a woman's place is in the socio-economic ladder, the severer the consequences they face as soon as natural disasters strike.

Other than water being very important when it comes to menstrual hygiene, in the absence of safe drinking water, non-hygiene facilities at work, school, or the home, in-sufficient sanitation, it becomes excessively tougher for girls and women to lead safe, productive, and healthy lives.

In the Niger Delta, the role and position of women in the environment and development is essential as they hinge on the environment for their daily requirements like fuel, food, and water. They not only bear a lot of the environmental degradation but they play a critical role in the management of the environment. The pollution issues in the Niger Delta are worrisome as they shrink the quality of life of these women and the whole population at large.

As most local communities and urban slums have no proper health facilities, there is an increase in maternal and infant mortality as well as miscarriages. A lot of these women in these communities bear the burden of caring for their families and protecting them from the harsh pollution that affects them. The number of cases of infertility, cancer, asthma, bronchitis, still-births, deformation and other pollution-related illnesses is unexpectedly high in these regions. With the impact of environmental changes on women in the Niger Delta region, serious policy and program interventions are needed.

Two other objectives of The National Gender Policy for Environment and Natural Resources were to ensure gender equity in the use and management of the national ecosystem and strengthen policy response in the area of women-focused environmental concerns and the strategies for implementation include:

- a. • Involve women and men (equitably) in policy, planning, and programme implementation on all matters relating to the use and management of the environment, for example, reforestation.
- b. • Eliminate all traditional practices which deny women, access and control over natural resources
- c. • Carry out an impact assessment of environmental programmes and projects to ascertain the impact on women and men, boys and girls, young and the elderly etc.
- d. • Make environmental resources and management gender-responsive

- e. • Involve women in task forces to deal with natural disasters, resettlement of displaced people, and victims of communal clashes. Improve sanitary conditions and safe water supply in rural and urban slums

- f. • Provide appropriate and safe waste disposal facilities in the rural and urban slums

- g. • Enact laws against environmental pollutions and ensure environmental protection

- h. • Eliminate environmental practices that affect women's health negatively (environmental pollution, oil spillage, telephone radiation, erection of telephone masts in residential areas etc)

- i. • Develop appropriate alternative and environmental-friendly sources of energy.

- j. • Regular health check-ups against effects of environmental pollutions especially in the oil-producing areas of the Niger Delta.

- k. • Monitor regularly the implementation of development and environmental policies and programmes on women and evaluate their impact.

- l. • Make gender issues a core part of EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) studies.

Access to Information/Training

Every state in Nigeria has a form of environmental problem they are suffering from. The urban towns are gradually being threatened by air and water pollution and rural areas are battling deforestation, bush burning, and soil erosion.

Environmental degradation leads to poverty and illiteracy. Due to the high poverty and illiteracy level in Africa, the level of environmental pollution in the continent is correspondingly high. There is a greater interest in matters that relate to daily survival than proper environmental management by members of these two groups and the absence of interest and adequate education every so often leads to reckless environmental behavior. This results in additional environmental complications; the brutal cycle ends in poverty.

The right of access to environmental information should be given freely to the public, this is necessary for achieving sustainable development. This is to ensure people have complete knowledge of the consequences of their actions and can play a part fully and more meritoriously in decision-making processes that affect the environment.

In 1999 The Federal Ministry of Environment (FME) took over the function of administering and enforcing environmental laws in Nigeria from the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (FEPA), which was formed under the FEPA Act. Various guidelines were published by the FME so that the Acts of both the FEPA and EIA would be administered and there would be a procedure for evaluating environmental impact assessment reports.



According to Ajing Ntan, an environmental enthusiast who lives in Lagos, Nigeria who has been a part of Recycling Scheme for Women and Youth Empowerment (RESWAYE) project, providing information and giving women the necessary tools to recycle or participate in sustainable development activities is more impactful as they are always up to the task and work meticulously to get the job done. Projects like this educate women on the dangers of plastic in coastal communities and provide them with job opportunities that help them support their families.

The National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) Programme came into place due to the development challenges Nigeria was facing. The Government of Nigeria during the Chief Olusegun Obasanjo regime taught it was sagacious to create the NEEDS programme in order to deal with the problems of the nation which made it difficult to compete in the International environmental sphere. Its key focus was on: poverty reduction, employment generation, wealth creation and value re-orientation. NEEDS provided help to agriculture, industry, small and medium scale enterprises and oil and gas. It presented farmers with improved irrigation, machinery and crop varieties which would help increase agricultural productivity and tackle poverty as half of the poor people in Nigeria participated in farming activities.

NEEDS as a public policy was headed in the direction of fulfilment of the responsibilities of the government to the citizens with the goal to maintain law and order: provide necessary social and economic activities desirable for a better standard of living of the citizens over a protracted period of time but the policy did not take into account the needs of young women in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government should:

- A. Incorporate Environmental focused education (recycling, upcycling) when teaching young people about menstruation hygiene in school curriculums.
- B. Incorporate gender issues when framing any environmental policies and forming sustainable development strategies.

- C. Incorporate women in their diversities in decision making with regards to environmental management
- D. Ensure that clean water is available to rural communities and conservation plans are created and implemented in order to provide young girls the water they need for sanitation and personal hygiene related activities.
- E. Establish and implement policies that protect girls from menstrual restrictions when it comes to school attendance. Provide sustainable menstrual materials that remove the focus on periods and focus on ending period poverty (formal or informal)
- F. Integrate environmental conservation strategies in young women's health and family planning programming.
- G. Implement policies that ensure young women have as much right to properties and agricultural inheritance as young men in the families and society as large.
- H. Improve climate-related vulnerability assessment through population and health data
- I. Integrate environmental education into school curriculum of both formal education and skill acquisition development schemes at all levels to form a generation of environmentally conscious citizens and endorse the education of girls in STEM so that they can have adequate knowledge to make choices and contribute to the management and proper use of resources that are made available locally.
- J. Make available sufficient funding for agencies that focus on environmental management.
- K. Include the knowledge and practices of women in the rural areas as regards sustainable resource management while creating or developing environmental management programs.
- L. Disaggregate and expose the gender differences for better-focused interventions to eliminate every hindrance to young women's complete participation in sustainable development decision making and equal right to use and regulate resources.

CONCLUSION

There are several things negatively affecting women around the world; poverty, limited education, violence, discrimination, and what makes all of these things worse is climate change. Climate change is not gender-neutral and neither are the solutions. The government needs to put as much effort as environmentalists, which are mostly civilians, to make sure that we get to a place where we not only admit that environmental changes are happening but make sure that the laws set in place to protect everyone affected, especially women who have been side-lined for so long.



CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN 6

Unequal Access to Education and Training of women and girls



<https://www.one.org/international/blog/6-facts-that-will-make-you-think-differently-about-girls-education/>



Strategic Objectives for BPfA on education and training of women and girls:

- Ensure equal access to education
- Eradicate illiteracy among women
- Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education
- Develop non-discriminatory education and training
- Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of education reforms
- Promote life-long education and training for girls and women

INTRODUCTION

The current reality of Nigerian society and also of most African society is a patriarchal one. Patriarchy is the system of society or government in which men hold power and women are largely excluded from it. In Nigeria, women and girls are discriminated against from acquiring formal education and holding decision-making positions. Women are seen as domestic hence, the perpetual mistreat and abuse. Adolescent girls and Young women are expected to aspire to lesser positions than men and girls are discouraged from pursuing formal education.

Malala Fund reported that girls account for 60% of Nigeria's 10 million out-of-school children with barriers such as child marriage, poverty, and discriminatory social norms. Education for girls and women is becoming the most viable and effective solution for gender equality, economic independence, and growth in developing countries including Nigeria.

To put it in context, Nigeria is regarded as a society where gender roles are distinct and evident and gender relations are formed by the dynamics of power. According to UNICEF, one in every five of the world's out-of-school children is in Nigeria. Also, 30% of girls aged 9-12 have never been to school at all. In Nigeria, programmes such as Universal Basic Education (UBE), Education for All (EFA) Goals by 2015, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Literacy Decade goals, UNESCO (LIFE) goals, UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD)-women must be educated and the subsequent Nigeria vision 2020, have been put in place to ensure that substantial educational opportunities is extended to all without exception. But despite these, available data shows that a large segment of the Nigerian population (about 18.7 million), comprising mostly women are yet to have unhindered access to education.

This inability to get an unhindered formal or informal education or be trained for a vocation means that girls and women cannot contribute their quotas to self and societal development.

Nigerian Government Efforts and Progress challenges and recommendations

There have been some significant efforts made by the government both at the Federal and State levels to ensure educational opportunities for girls and access to vocational skills for young women. The establishment of the National Commission for Women Affairs, Ministry of Women Affairs, Women Education Centers, both at the National and State levels are actions initiated to improve the educational status of women and girls. The Nigerian constitution stipulates that every child, boy or girl, has the right to education. It also stipulates a free and compulsory education for children between ages 6 through 15 years.

Other efforts made by the government include:

- **Improvement in Enrolment and Completion of Primary School:** According to the World Bank's Education Data, the number of girls enrolled in primary school increased from 79 percent to 92.3 percent between 2008 and 2013. Although Nigeria continues to face struggles getting girls to enter and remain in school, the nation has made considerable progress in recent years.
- **Financing Education:** Currently, education in Nigeria is free and mandatory for all children, both boys and girls, between the ages of 6, and 15. According to the Compulsory, Free, Universal Basic Education Act of 2004, in addition to tuition, the services that will be provided free of charge include books, instructional materials, classrooms, furniture, and lunch. This clarification on what a governmental free education program means gave some perspective as to what citizens should expect from the government in the free education package.
- **Secondary Education Policy:** the policy is a 3-3 aspect of the national education policy which was initiated to guarantee functional education after the American model.
- **Education for Change; A Ministerial Strategic Plan (2015-2019):** the E4C was established during the Buhari administration and according to the Minister of Education, Malam Adamu Adamu, the draft is to prepare Nigerian children for responsibilities of citizenship and national development with emphasis on radical change in education delivery for 21st Century knowledge-driven economy. The draft focused on few aspects of the education sector and they included out-of-school children, basic education, teacher education, adult literacy, curriculum and policy matters on basic and secondary education, technical and vocational education, education data planning, library services, and ICT in education.
- **Increase in national Net Enrolment Rate (NET):** the current administration in its plan proposed to enrol 2,875,000 pupils annually for the next four years as well as renovate schools destroyed by the Boko Haram insurgency and construct additional 71, 874 classrooms annually for the next four years. Also, the government planned to provide an additional 71, 875 qualified teachers through the deployment of 14% of the new teachers to be recruited annually and raise the enrolment of girls in basic education schools by 1.5 million girls annually for the next four years.

- Ministry of Education Covid-19 Response Plan (2020-2021): With support from UNICEF, the Ministry of Education developed a COVID-19 Education Sector Strategic Framework available on its online portal, enabling states to adapt materials and develop specific response strategies. The project covered 16 states, representing 63% of schools and nearly 70% of children enrolled in school. The GPE grant of US\$140,000 helps provide psychosocial support to children and teachers, provision of wash and hygiene supplies to schools, and prepare a comprehensive back-to-school campaign and social mobilization to initiate safe school reopening. Efforts are underway to establish a remote monitoring system to measure the progress in learning and effectiveness of the education delivery system.

- The Nigeria Skills Training and Vocational Education (STVE) Project: The project assists the Federal Government of Nigeria to restructure its present supply-driven vocational and technical education (VTE) system into a demand-driven system that responds to the country's growing private sector. The project is a direct response to address the mismatch in training, labour market requirements, and employer involvement in VTE. The project comprises four components: improving access to skills training and vocational education; enhancing quality and efficiency of skills training and vocational education; strengthening public-private partnership, and project management. The project was implemented for 5 years, from January 2006 to December 2010. Its total cost is estimated at UA 33.71 million.

- Industrial Skills Training Centre (ISTC): The Industrial Skills Training Centers (ISTC) was established in 1983 as "Vocational Training Centre" (VTC). The ITF in a bid to introduce into the National economy an effective and systematic technical and Vocational training system changed the Centre to Industrial Skills Training Centre (ISTC) in 1997. The Industrial Training Fund as a Human Resource Development Organization has its core mandate to be that of training to improve the performance of the industrial workforce in the economy by training for skills acquisition and improvement of work processes.



Challenges and Root Causes of Unequal Access to Education and training of women and girls

-Unequal development among regions: Nigeria is a state with diverse ethnic groups comprising North, South, West, and East. The large systematic inequalities in the country are therefore related to religion, ethnicity, and regions of which many girls suffer multiple layers of oppression when it comes to educational inequality. Educational inequalities in Nigeria have been increasing over the years and girls have been bearing the brunt. The Education Data, Research and Evaluation in Nigeria (EDOREN) study in 2016 reported that the North East and North West regions have the highest predicted probability of being out of school. The North Central region comes second. On the other hand, the Southern regions have the lowest predicted probability of being out of school. As a way of providing a solution to this problem, Nigeria embraced the idea of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) in 2012 and made it a national agenda by incorporating it into the national policy. The essence of the policy is to establish access and equality for children all over the country, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, and socio-economic considerations. Looking at the trend or the status of the ECCE for some years, it is as if there are lapses in the provision of early childhood education in the country. The prevalence of social inequalities and the variation levels at different regions continue to put girls in a disadvantaged position.



<https://nigeopolis.com/girl-child-education-a-central-key-to-the-drive-for-nigerias-development-a0955c62dc74>

-Insecurity: UNICEF in 2018 reported that 22 million Nigerian children aged 0-5 do not have access to early childhood education. According to the report, one of the reasons proffered for the low participation particularly in the Northern part of the country was as a result of insurgency. April 14, 2014, Boko Haram, whose name translates to “Western education is forbidden,” forced 276 girls from their dormitory into trucks and drove toward the lawless cover of the Sambisa forest, a nature reserve the jihadist group had taken over to wage a bloody war against the government. Today, 112 of the young women remain missing. On Friday, 26 February 2021, police said 317 girls were abducted in the raid by more than 100 gunmen at Government Girls Secondary School in remote Jangebe village in Zamfara state. Although all the girls were reported to have been released, the government is yet to have a strategy to stop this from recurring. Presently, 10 boarding schools in Kano are closed down till further notice. Of the 10, 4 schools are only girls while the rest are mixed. The outcome of this is that more girls are currently out of school than boys.



<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/13/nigeria-boko-haram-releases-21-chibok-girls>

-Inadequate Menstrual Hygiene Management: In Nigeria, the majority of the citizens are living in poverty with regards to the state of the economy and the living standard of the populace. The economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic have increased the poverty level and cost of living. Access to essential products for women and girls such as sanitary pads has been greatly affected due to the financial crisis. Before Covid-19, girls in low-income communities faced the challenge of staying in school when they started menstruation because they could not afford to buy sanitary pads every month. Nigeria is one of the many countries where menstrual products are taxed, putting further strain on women and girls from underprivileged communities; a situation that has worsened since the pandemic. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in its 2015 study in three Nigerian states—Katsina, Anambra, and Osun—revealed that menstruating school girls face great discomfort during their menstrual period. They often experience anxiety, abdominal pain and cramps, nausea and vomiting, dizziness, and a loss of appetite. As a result, many of the girls miss classes, and even when they manage to attend, they are distracted. The research also revealed that school Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities were inadequate for menstrual hygiene management; up to 41.7% of toilets had functional locks with just 25% of the schools having hand-washing basins and soaps. Most of the toilets or latrines were dirty with broken doors and poor ventilation, and none of the schools met the World Health Organization (WHO) standard of the pupil to toilet ratio. Adequate menstrual management where good water, free sanitary pads, good meals, and relief medications are provided will keep girls in school. In Kenya, the government in 2017 enacted menstrual health into its educational program. The policy states that menstrual health should be part of the curriculum, and there has to be a distribution of period products to primary school girls of menstruating age, with access to water, hygienic and suitable sanitation facilities.



-Poverty: In 2004, the Nigerian government enacted the Free Universal Basic Education to provide free and compulsory education for children of primary and junior secondary school age in Nigeria. However, despite the introduction of Free Universal Basic Education, school attendance status remains closely related to household wealth. Poverty manifests in lack of books to read, students overburdened with domestic chores, and by cultural norms, girls bear the larger burden of domestic chores, home environment not conducive or safe for learning, and inability to afford to pay for extra-moral classes. In comparison, in the North-Eastern/North Western region the probability of staying out of school for the poorest 20% has stagnated but remains high.

Gender Gap in Education

	Women	Men
Literacy rate	41.4	61.3
Primary Education Attainment (%)	65.8	82.7
Secondary Education Attainment	48.5	64.1
Tertiary Education Attainment (%)	10.3	19.7

Source: World Economic Forum (2018) Global Gender Gap Report

Low-Quality Training Programs: There is serious mismatch between the qualifications of job seekers and the skill requirements of employers, mainly because vocational and technical schools teach skills not relevant to market needs. To support women empowerment schemes, International organizations such as UNICEF, the UN, the World Bank, and the Nigerian government have created programs and schemes to support education and empowerment of women. However, the fact remains that a large number of women especially in the rural areas are not realizing their full potentials and cannot contribute to societal development because of the lack of basic education and vocational skills with which they can become economically independent. The question is not if vocational training are available, the question is the vocational training available progressive enough to match the skills needed in a digitalized post-covid-19 world? Are the training provided for women current enough to enable them to contribute to societal development and ultimately become economically independent? Also, are the in-demand skills accessible enough to learn by women and girls? Lastly, are there sustainable measures in place in the form of grants and loans to establish women who learn vocational skills, and how accessible are these measures?

Poor Planning and Administration/Corruption: The planning and administration of Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) in Nigeria suffer from series of problems; the operation of existing programs and the development of new ones. The potential employers of VTE graduates are not sufficiently involved in planning, formulating, and evaluating training programs, as the VTE system was developed without adequate attention to labour market requirements. The administration of vocational and technical schools is also constrained by budgeting and accounting systems that do not permit users to determine the total costs or unit costs of specific training programs; estimate the most cost-effective means of meeting identified training needs, and make medium-term plans based on available resources.

With all the factors listed above, girls and young women still work hard to provide food for their children and families, provide essential products, and have an income that is sustainable but not enough to be financially independent. Even with the advancement in technology and free trade markets, women are still provided with training and skill acquisition schemes that allow them to take little or nothing home. As stated earlier, poverty and gender inequality are some of the problems facing Nigerian society and the most affected groups are women and girls especially women and girls with disabilities, women, and girls living in rural and low-income communities, and women and girls living in displaced areas. These women who are exposed to all forms of violence and rape without access to reproductive healthcare mostly end up being teenage mothers, school dropouts, tied to early marriages, and domestic and diverse responsibilities. This ultimately hinders them from attending face-to-face learning institutions. Many adult women are illiterates and cannot fulfil their dreams of acquiring education or preferred vocational skill in a conventional school setting because of responsibilities saddled on them. They end up enrolling in available and accessible vocational and skills acquisition programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The government needs to take into account the complex patterns of educational inequalities when planning interventions and budgeting to make sure that they target girls most especially in low income communities and high insecurity environment to reduce the most severe education gaps in Nigeria.
- Expand the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) mandate to include 12 years of free, safe, and quality education with special attention to target most marginalized girls.
- Improve security and value of life in the country most especially in states with high occurrence of insurgency to reduce out-of-school girls in Nigeria.
- Every state of the nation should be made to comply with the National Policy on Education and domestication of laws such as the Child Rights Act 2007, Violence against Persons Prohibition Act 2015 so that girls in states without these policies and laws would not be backward or left behind.

- Various departments of the Ministry of Education should develop implementation strategies to end the policy on paper tradition and provide services in the implementation of effective monitoring, supervising, and inspecting of school facilities.
- Adequate menstrual hygiene management where good water, free sanitary pads, good meals, and relief medications are provided will keep girls in school.
- Education should not be limited to formal education, it should reflect a multifaceted approach, enabling women and girls to acquire skills in a variety of formal and informal contexts (at home, in school, in their communities, and the workplace). Interventions should also include digital skills programmes that enable women and girls to gain digital skills, upskills, and re-skill throughout their lifetimes.
- There should be collaborative approach with community and religious leaders in the Northern region to campaign for funding and improvement of the educational system in the region most especially in areas where girls are affected.
- The programmes for the rural women should be those that can be economically useful for them. Programmes should be designed to take advantage of the resources available to them and not resources available to those bringing the intervention.
- The Federal Ministry of Finance and the National Assembly should increase access to finance for women entrepreneurs by requiring banks to simplify and streamline the loan application process. This access should also be extended to women living in rural areas.
- The Central Bank of Nigeria and other financial institutions should facilitate capacity-building workshops to ensure women entrepreneurs understand how to apply for loans to start or upscale a business.
- Investing in comprehensive and disaggregated data allows for proper analysis of gaps and ensures that commitments are met.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that increased access to safe and quality education and vocational training for girls and young women will improve not only the economy, but it is also an effective way to ending poverty. Girls and young women deserve equal treatment in education and financial independence vocational schemes as much as boys do. All stakeholders especially the government and the Ministry of Education must ensure policies are implemented across states and public institutions follow effective process and strategies in a non-discriminatory manner.

CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN 7

Insufficient Mechanism at all levels to promote the Advancement of Women



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR BPfA GOALS TO PROMOTE THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

- Create or strengthen national machinery and other governmental bodies
- Integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes, and projects
- Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation.



INTRODUCTION

The Beijing Platform for Action, still forward-looking at 25, offers an important focus in rallying people around gender equality and women's empowerment across all levels, sectors, and the world at large. It is said that its promises are ambitious and evolving and with consistency and determination with the accumulating energy of new generations, the achievement of gender parity is not so far from achievable.

Since Beijing, governments, civil society and the public have translated the Platform for Action's promises into concrete changes in individual countries. These have ushered in enormous improvements in women's lives. More women and girls than at any previous point in time serve in political offices, are protected by laws against gender-based violence, and live under constitutions guaranteeing gender equality. Regular five-year reviews of progress on fulfilling Beijing commitments have sustained the momentum.

NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT EFFORTS, PROGRESS, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development Beijing+25 Review published in May 2019 ²⁴, it was reported that concrete steps were taken by Nigeria to ensure there was enabling institutional environment for the advancement of women. These include progressive judicial decisions, the development of a National Gender Policy, the passage of the Violence Against Persons Bill by the National Assembly as well as the passage of different gender equality laws by some states.

Apart from ongoing law and policy reforms, the Federal Executive Council, in 2011 approved the establishment of Gender Units in all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), and the appointment of the Directorate Cadre to head such units. Another laudable effort is the passage of the Childs Rights Act into Federal law in 2003 and its subsequent domestication by 24 states. Also, the coming into effect of the Universal Basic Education and other related matters Ac of 2004 has ensured that access to primary education by the girl child will remain a national development priority.

There is visible and improved coordination of gender equality and women's rights initiatives to ensure coordination and monitoring of gender thematic programs and project implementation in several African countries. Several mechanisms have been strengthened such as Ministries responsible for gender, National Women parliamentary caucuses, Gender Technical Committees made up of gender focal points from other ministries

A careful look at the above-stated government efforts can be traced to 7 to 10 years back and these cannot be referred to as recent efforts by the government as the question arising from these will be what recent efforts has the government taken especially in line with our current realities?

²⁴ https://uneca.org/sites/default/files/Gender/Beijing25/nigeria-beijing25_report.pdf

In recent times, the CSOs efforts can be seen notably with their supporting role to the government as this is evident in the agitation for the review of the National Gender Policy 2007 with the lifespan of 5 years(this review is anticipated to capture the recent happenings of gender and emerging issues), the passage of gender equality laws by some states of the Federation, some prohibitive laws criminalizing offences such as street trading, child labour, withdrawal of girl children from school among others, harmful traditional practices, child marriage, and girl-child dis-inheritance among others.

Between 1995 and now, there has been an increase in the challenges facing women and girls, new and emerging realities, generational differences, the intersectionality of women and girls' issues, technology-induced crimes against girls and women, criminalization of life-saving procedures, lack of appropriate laws to respond to emerging issues, the outbreak of diseases and pandemic that affects women and girls the most, intra-country wars and insurgencies with women and girls worst hit, lack of preparedness to level up with new challenges among others.

All these above listed are hinged on a number of factors which revolves around three-issue

1. Lack of political will
2. Patriarchal nature of Nigeria
3. Culture and religion as enshrined within the Nigerian legal system.

It is safe to say that a sizeable number of the above-listed challenges that have evolved between 1995 and 2021 affects majorly young women and girls, it is then safe to say that we need to begin to look at alternative ways of doing things in addressing the challenges facing young women and girls. The world is evolving and this evolution requires today's means of responding to it.

Within this area, the BDPfA emphasizes the establishment of a central coordinating unit on gender within government, to be led by a Cabinet Minister and the institutionalization of gender analysis processes as part of government policymaking. This below states the progress made so far:

1. The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in Nigeria's central coordinating unit on gender issues within the government.

2.The Ministry is managed by a Federal Cabinet-level Minister at the federal level and in the states by Commissioners of Women Affairs who also have state-level cabinet status(some of these positions are occupied by men in some states of the federation due to culture and religious bias).

3.Gender units and gender focal point system sustained in all Ministries, Departments, and Agencies at Federal and State levels, “though the functionality is what needs a critical look and evaluation”.

4.Over twenty states have passed and are currently implementing various gender-specific laws.²⁵

5.Government and CSOs are gradually accepting each other as partners in progress and this can be seen in the acceptance and ownership of donor-funded activities being implemented in partnership with CSOs and state governments.

6.The government now designs citizen-driven projects based on the advocacy of CSOs.

7.Some states are progressive concerning enacting gender-specific laws addressing issues of gender discrimination and creating effective mechanisms to drive them.

It is worthy of note that some gender-related legislations are also in place, they are

National Laws	State Laws	Regional/International Instruments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Rights Act 2003 • The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) • Trafficking in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Law to Prohibit Domestic Violence against Women and Maltreatment of Widows. No.10 of 2004 by the Cross-River State Government. • A Law to Prohibit Girl-Child Marriages and Female Circumcision No.2 of 2000 by the Cross Rivers State Government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) • African Union Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child: ratified 23/7/82 • African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights: signed

²⁵ https://uneca.org/sites/default/files/Gender/Beiina25/nigeria-beiina25_report.pdf

<p>Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act 2003</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admin of Estate (Small Payments) Law Lagos State 2004 • Anambra State Malpractices against Widows and Widowers (Prohibition) Law 2004 • Bauchi State Prohibition of Withdrawal of Girls from School for Marriage Law. • Child Rights Laws passed in Anambra, Imo, <u>Ebonyi</u>, <u>Nasarawa</u>, Plateau, Ogun, <u>Ekiti</u>, <u>Abia</u>, <u>Sokoto</u>, Benue, Edo, Cross River (May 2009), Rivers (Not signed), <u>Kogi</u>, and Taraba States between 2004 and 2009. • Cross River State HIV/AIDS Anti-Discrimination, Stigma & Protection Law 2007. • Delta State Law on Female Genital Mutilation • <u>Ebonyi</u> State Abolition of Harmful Traditional Practices Against Women and Children Law No. 10 of 2001 • <u>Ebonyi</u> State Protection against Domestic Violence Law No. 003 of 2005. • Edo State Female Circumcision and Genital Mutilation (Prohibition) Law NO. 4 of 1999 • Edo State Inhuman Treatment of Widows (Prohibition) Law 2004. • Edo State Law against Trafficking. • Edo State Law on Safe 	<p>31/8/82 and ratified 22/6/83</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OAU Refugee Convention: signed 10/9/69 and ratified 23/5/86 • Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights Relating to the Rights of Women in Africa: signed 11/7/03 and ratified 16/12/04 • United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
--	--	--

Motherhood,

- Ekiti State Equal Opportunities Act
- Ekiti State Malpractices against Widows & Widowers Law.
- Ekiti State Violence against Women Law
- Enugu State HIV/AIDS Anti-Discrimination, Stigma & Protection Law 2007.
- Enugu State of Nigeria, Prohibition of Infringement of a Widow's and Widower's Fundamental Rights Law No.3, 2001
- Gender and Equal Opportunities Law (Anambra State) 2007(passed by parliament, awaiting governor's assented)
- Gender and Equal Opportunities Law (Imo State) 2007
- Gender and Equal Opportunities Law (Kogi State) 2013
- Harmful Traditional Practices Law of 2003, Rivers State.
- Imo State Violence against the Persons Law No. 2 2012
- Legislations prohibiting early marriage (Kebbi and Niger States);
- Ogun State Female Circumcision and Genital Mutilation (Prohibition) Law 2000
- Oyo State Widows' Empowerment Law, 2002
- Retention in schools and Against withdrawal of Girls from schools (Kano, Borno, Gombe and Bauchi

	<p>States);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rivers State Abolition of Female Circumcision Law No. 2, 2001 • Rivers State Law on Reproductive Health 2003 17 • Schools Rights (Parents, Children and Teachers) Law, No 2, 2005, Rivers State. • Street Trading Restriction Law, 2004, Anambra State • Women’s Reproductive Rights Law of Anambra State 2005 	
--	--	--

One of the key challenges to achieving gender equality in Nigeria is the existence of a tripartite legal system that accommodates civil, religious, and customary laws and this has been one major impediment in the achievement of gender equality. This legal system has made it difficult to checkmate religious and cultural practices that enhance discriminatory practices.

The National gender machineries are yet to function as effectively as they had been envisioned. In some countries they are yet to wield sufficient power within the decision-making hierarchy [and authority] to influence government policy; in some cases, they lack clarity of mandate and functional responsibility, and in others there links with civil society groups supportive of the advancement of women’s rights and enhancement of women’s status is weak; and are perennially saddled with limited human and financial resources.

Another challenge is the country’s tripartite system of government viz a viz Federal, State and Local government, this has also slowed down the achievement especially with legislations which allows for a law made at the Federal level to be binding in any state, such law has to be domesticated (passed by the state Assembly) hence though a law made in Nigeria, its applicability is still subject to state adoption. A typical example is the VAPP Act and the Child Rights Act, the result of this is that some states due to their religious and cultural beliefs will either not domesticate or have the choice to expunge some important sections that run contrary to their belief thereby rendering the laws toothless and ineffective.

The lack of enforcement of the existing laws- it is no gainsaying that the judicial system of Nigeria is compressed in terms of structure, manpower, resources, and autonomy hence the non/lack of enforcement of discriminatory laws and practices such as violence, dis-inheritance, trafficking, child marriage and labour, unequal access among others. Some laws are archaic and require review to capture current realities, enforceability of laws and court pronouncements need to be given priority such that victims can see justice as served and timeously too.

Lack of specificity of language, terms, description, uniformity, and definitions also affects the application of these legislations that advance the cause of women and girls.

There should be precedents on landmark decisions around issues of women and girls.

The regionalization of applicable laws is another impediment as this is aggravated by unhealthy religious and cultural bias where a region can unilaterally decide on what law suits their religion/culture.

The rigidity of the system whereby the legal system is fixated on a particular process and practice leaving no room for the adoption of best practices and flexibility of alternatives should be reconsidered.



RECOMMENDATIONS

GOVERNMENT

- Government should strengthen National machineries and other Government bodies to ensure the implementation of National laws
- Government should integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes, and projects

- Government should grant the Judiciary Autonomy which will, in turn, enable the judiciary to create specialized courts to hear gender-related issues.
- Government should serve as the resource and information hub to generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning for evaluation such as the Mirabel Center monthly/annual statistics as well as other service providers as the case may be
- CEDAW & Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa Domestication Bill should be passed into law by the National Assembly and accepted as the benchmark for other gender-related laws
- The government at the National and state-level should harmonize and review archaic and obsolete laws/policies to capture recent realities and emerging issues of gender.
- The need to grant autonomy to the National Human Rights Commission for maximum effectiveness and efficiency.
- Government should allocate more budget to health (women's health) and justice sector as these two areas are key to the achievement of gender equality.
- Ensure that statistics related to individuals are collected, compiled, analysed and presented by sex and age and reflect problems, issues and questions related to women and men in society



Empower by Andreas Wikström

CSOs

- Advocate on the importance of data and periodic evaluation as this will help in terms of tracking progress or decline
- Strengthen the partnership with the government with technical supports especially in the area of gender discrimination and processes to bridge the gap
- Recommend the importance of specialized courts to addressing gender violations and discriminations across the federation
- Be the mouthpiece of the minority groups especially on emerging gender issues advocate for the adoption of best practice
- Older generation feminists should strengthen the mentoring process and be deliberate in raising a younger generation of feminists
- Youth-led organizations that have a sound understanding of the emerging issues need to join the struggle

TRADITIONAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

- Positively using their platforms for advancing the rights of women and girls
- Demystifying the gender stereotypes through their pronouncements and teachings
- Being the closest to the people, gradually phase out cultural practices that support gender inequality
- Establish and strengthen practices that support a level playing ground for men and women

YOUNG FEMINIST

- Continually utilize the technology to advance the cause of women and engage all relevant bodies.
- Using best practices globally to advocate on emerging issues such as LGBTQ, Safe Sex, access to contraceptives by young people, sexuality education, discussion on choice, bodily autonomy and consensual sex among others.
- Resist every form of suppression of their voice on topical National discussions especially as it relates with youths
- Advocate for the review, enactment and passage of laws according to global standards
- Set up platforms, groups, coalitions and bodies strictly for youths and young women for the purpose of having a united front and voice on issues that pertains to them.
- Wherever possible, young feminists should lobby for rights and privileges for young people without any hesitation.

CONCLUSION

There is no gainsaying that more issues have evolved since the first-ever sitting of the BPfA thereby leading to emerging issues of discrimination against young people who are changing the narratives and dynamics of addressing issues as it affects them. These issues range from the rights of sex workers and people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identity. It is therefore imperative to take into cognizance the issues of the young people in their diversities and supports their rights as equal citizens. The 20th anniversary of Beijing opens new opportunities to reconnect, regenerate commitment, charge up political will and mobilize the public. Everyone has a role to play—for our common good.

CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN 8

Violence against Women



Strategic Objectives of BPfA Goals on Violence against Women

- Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women.
- Study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures.
- Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking.

INTRODUCTION

Before the world was confronted with the realities of COVID-19 and the distinctive ways it altered the lives and ways of living of different people across the globe and specifically in Nigeria, women and girls have had to grapple with the often-life-threatening effects of the different forms of gender-based violence. The reality of the pandemic only served to add the dangerous layers to what was already a major problem in many cities across the country.

In April 2021, Iniobong Umoren, a 26-year-old graduate was raped, murdered, and hastily buried after being lured with the fake promise of a job. In June 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Uwaila Omozuwa, a 22-year-old student of the University of Benin was raped and subsequently murdered while studying in a church. In 2019, women in the Federal Capital Territory who were arrested during a raid by the Nigerian Police accused members of the force of raping them and using empty sachets of pure water as protection. In 2018, 13-year-old Ochanya Ogbanje died from injuries sustained from 5 years of being brutally raped by her aunt's husband and her cousin, his son. 11-year-old Favour Okechukwu had reportedly been running errands for her mother when she was waylaid and gang-raped to death. In 2016, Lekan Shonde beat his wife, Ronke Shonde, a banker and mother of two, to death. All of these victims were young and women and girls.

These cases, as gruesome as they are, are only a tip of what is an iceberg of an incessant war on the bodies and body-politic of young women and girls in Nigeria, a legacy of being born in a patriarchal society where the existence of a girl child is criminalized from birth, where her body is treated constantly as a tool for 'sin', 'damnation, and 'discipline', and where men are indoctrinated with a false sense of superiority from boyhood that precludes the importance of consent and body autonomy in dealing with other members of our shared society, especially women and girls. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, 1 in 4 Nigerian girls are sexually abused before the age of 18.

According to a report from the United Nations, 28% of Nigerian women aged 25-29 have experienced some form of physical violence since they were aged 15. The organization, the Girls Not Brides, reports that 43% of girls in Nigeria are married off before they are 18 and in fact, 17% of those marriages happen before they are 15.

Nigeria has the highest rates of child marriage in West and Central Africa and the third-highest globally, with estimates pegging it at over 20 million child brides as of 2018. With the drawbacks of progress made with girls' education due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations Population Fund predicts that an additional 13 million child marriages can be expected to happen globally in another decade.

The incidences of rape and other forms of violence against women peaked at such an alarming rate during the lockdown necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic, that it was labeled as the 'Shadow Pandemic' by the United Nations.

In a report published by Premium Times, the Inspector-General of Police, Mohammed Adamu, said that 717 cases of rape were reported between January and May 2020. The Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT) in Lagos reported receiving an average of 13 new cases daily at the height of the lockdown, totalling 390 reports in March 2020 alone. According to the coordinator of DSVRT, the organization recorded a 60% increase in domestic violence cases during the pandemic, a 30% increase in sexual violence cases, and a 10% increase in child abuse cases.

NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT EFFORTS AND PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The need for legal frameworks and reviews, in particular, cannot be over-emphasized in the drive to end violence against women and girls. Concerning this, Nigeria can be said to have done relatively well with specific reference to national and continental policies like the AU Gender Policy, the National Gender Policy of 2006 and 2014, the ECOWAS Gender Policy, and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the rights of women, to mention some.

In 2015, the Federal Government of Nigeria adopted the Violence against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act 2015 which prescribes a range of penalties from imprisonment term and fine for different expressions of gender-based violence including rape, physical violence, female genital mutilation, harmful widowhood, and traditional practices, abandonment, spousal battery, and so on.

At the state level, the VAPP Act has been domesticated by 22 states and the Federal Capital Territory. States like Lagos and Ekiti have specific state laws on gender-based violence, with both states recognizing economic violence, often made practical in the form of financial abuse, as a form of gender-based violence. In 2017, Nigeria's first DNA forensics lab was established in Lagos state. In 2013, as part of a state-wide measure to curb the occurrence of sexual violence, Ekiti also opened a State Sex Offenders Register. In November 2019, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) launched a National Sex Offenders Register to enable members of the public to carry out background checks on prospective employees, especially those who will be working closely with children.

In January 2019, the government also ratified the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, specifically targeted at addressing the needs of people with disabilities, protecting them from stigma, and removing the barriers to their access to basic social services.

Some state governments, Lagos State, in particular, should also be lauded for their sustained partnerships with Civil Society Organizations that are major players in the Sexual and Gender-Based Violence space.

The Lagos State Government-run Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT) works closely with sexual assault referral centres in Lagos to provide holistic services to survivors of sexual and domestic violence, ensuring that they have access to the machinery of the state in their quest for justice.

The partnership of state actors across different regions of the country is also responsible for the uptick in the training of police officers and other personnel across reporting pathways on how to work with survivors of sexual violence. These capacity-building programs are geared towards ensuring that survivors are not re-traumatized in their quest for justice.

Through partnerships with global organizations like the United Nations and European Union, conversations that center the experiences of sexual violence survivors have been placed on the front burner of public discourse. Away from the shadows, these topics have been demystified, thereby empowering survivors and providing them with language and resources to seek the right help.

Violence against women and girls is a sustained crisis of the past that has somehow managed to bleed into the present, and is finding its way as a staple into the vision of a new future we're building as a collective for ourselves and others.



The different expressions of violence against women and girls do not exist in isolation. Instead, they are propped up and maintained by cultural norms and religious interpretations that impede the human rights of women and girls in Nigeria. And although Nigeria has laws specifically targeted at cases of violence against women and girls, laws are only one piece of this complex pie with multiple moving parts.

Below are a few other snags to ending VAWG;

- RAPE CULTURE IS ALIVE AND WELL

Inibong Umoren has not even been gone a month, and her alleged murderer is already slut-shaming her, banking on the complicity of a society that always asks what she was doing there instead of holding him accountable for the crime committed.

Rape culture means that people do not ask the right questions. Because of the hurdles involved in getting justice in cases of violence, most victims have found the internet and social media platforms to be a viable springboard for the propagation of their stories. When this happens, the questions that are posed to the survivor stand out; questions like, "What did you wear?" "Why didn't you fight him?" "Why are you just reporting?" "How can you say your boyfriend raped you?" "Were you a virgin? And other related cringe-worthy questions that tell the survivor without mincing words that they are deemed responsible for a crime that was committed against them.

Rape culture also imposes an idea of the type of woman that can be raped, one that is rooted in purity culture and the need to punish women who appear to have stepped out of the image that society consistently imposes on women and girls.

What this does is reinforce an already dangerous culture of silence where other survivors keep silent about their experiences and abusers live to abuse someone else another day, a vicious cycle.

- INADEQUATE FUNDING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON VAWG

Nigeria has a population of over 200 million people, and about half of those are women and girls. For civil society organizations to continue providing support services at no cost to survivors of violence, thereby removing one of the important barriers to seeking help, these organizations must have access to a continuous stream of funding that allows them to do the work they do.

- LACK OF INCLUSIVE MEASURES TO TACKLE ISSUES AT THE ROOT FOR DIFFERENT SECTIONS OF SOCIETY

Solutions are not co-created and do not center the needs of women and girls who have been placed at the fringe of society for so long.

How does a woman who with hearing impairment access help at a sexual assault referral centre when she cannot hear what is being said? What social measures exist to ensure that a person who has no use of their legs can have access to a centre that can provide help in cases of abuse? Is there adequate employment of personnel who are trained to work with children with mental impairments and act as a bridge for them to get the help they need?

A lot of these safety structures do not exist, which unfortunately leaves a sizable number of individuals who need support without it.

- HARMFUL REGIONAL LAWS

Nigeria has 6 geopolitical zones whose state laws are influenced to no small extent by the predominant cultural and religious norms in that region.

For example, the provision under Section 55 (1) (d) of the Penal Code applicable in Northern Nigeria dilutes the serious nature of wife battery by reducing it to chastisement, as long as grievous bodily harm isn't done to the woman.

This law is in direct contrast to best practices on the subject of violence against women and girls.

- NON-IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING LAWS

Nigeria has ratified multiple international treaties on the subject of violence against women including the convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, but unless these laws are supported by local structures of implementation, they are simply words on paper and do not do a lot to end violence against women and girls.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Government must create youth groups**

Government must create diverse youth groups, and not as appendages to tick some required boxes. These groups must be assimilated into decision-making processes at the local, regional, and international levels to ensure that the perspectives and ideas of young people on ending violence against women and girls are taken into consideration.

- **Young people must leverage technology to co-create solutions to end violence against women and girls**

In recent times, there have been test applications like the Aabo app which were developed to ensure that women and girls in danger could access help. However, most of them are in their pilot phases and not fully operational. Young people must leverage their knowledge of technology to co-create solutions that help us prevent violence and provide support to survivors.

- **Applicable existing laws on gender-based violence must be implemented**

The government must immediately prioritize the building of structures that support the implementation of laws on different forms of gender-based violence, ensuring that survivors are protected and receive adequate care and that perpetrators are made to face the full extent of the law. Where there is no accountability and recourse to justice, there are few extrinsic motivators for criminals and would-be criminals to desist from committing crimes.

- **Civil Society Organizations must engage boys and young men**

There is an immediate need to engage boys and young men towards ending violence against women and girls. Harmful religious beliefs and cultural conditioning contribute in no small measure to the epidemic of violence against women, in addition to the toxic definitions of masculinity that are taught to young boys.

- Adequate funding must be provided to existing sexual assault referral centres

Every state of the federation should have at least one sexual assault referral centre, but state governments and international organizations must not simply tick points off a mental list by creating one. Instead, sustainability measures for the existing sexual assault referral organizations and other civil society organizations working to end violence against women and girls must be at the fore.

- Information-sharing must be prioritized by civil society organizations

Violence against women and girls is a national scourge that cuts across differences like tribe, religion, or socioeconomic status. Civil society organizations must resist the urge to work in silos and instead create systems that allow for sharing best practices to improve the overall quality of services provided to survivors. If an organization in Abuja implements a change to their process that ensures that survivors experience shorter wait-time at their centre, for example, that information should be shared with other organizations working in the space. Ultimately, the goal is to provide excellent services and provide the best support to survivors.

- Designed solutions must prioritize the lived experiences of young People living with Disabilities and Queer people

According to a World Bank publication of 2012, children with disabilities are four times more likely to experience violence than their non-disabled peers, over three times more likely to be victims of physical violence, and about three times more likely than their non-disabled peers to experience sexual violence. For children with mental impairments, the risk ratio increases even further, and they are almost five times as likely as their peers to experience sexual violence.

Queer women and girls, on the other hand, have to contend with threats of being outed by people who are aware of their sexuality and are subject to exploitation and abuse based on this. It is not unusual to hear cases of young queer women and girls being raped as a means to alter their sexuality and convert them into heterosexuals.

- Partnership and Resource Mobilization

Partnership and Resource Mobilization is a holistic approach to addressing violence against women that encourages multi-sectoral collaboration and avoids the design and implementation of policies in isolation from relevant stakeholders. Violence against women is a multifaceted issue with interlinks with other public health issues like HIV/AIDS, maternal health, conflict, climate, and other sexual and reproductive health and rights issues, hence, the importance of partnership building and the mobilization of resources to not only create responsive policies but effective implementation of programs and policies to ending violence against women and girls. Resource Mobilization will work effectively to care for victims and facilitate the creation of emergency medical response for victims of violence that will require urgent medical care which includes but is not limited to post-exposure prophylaxis to prevent HIV/AIDS, emergency contraceptives to prevent unwanted pregnancy, post-abortion care to prevent pregnancy complications. These services can also help in corroboration to get justice for victims.

CONCLUSION

The trajectory of gender-based violence cases in Nigeria has been far from perfect and there is undoubtedly still a lot of work to be done by government, civil society organizations, individuals, international organizations, and other players in the space. However, there have been clear improvements made across sectors to prioritize survivor support and ensure accountability on the part of the perpetrators. While it is slow progress, we can celebrate the fact that it is, at least, progress.

To sustain the hard-won progress and build on it to create a society where women and girls are free from all forms of gender-based violence, there is an urgent need for a multi-sectoral approach that includes government, civil society organizations, survivors, media, and other stakeholders.

CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN 9

Effect of armed conflict on Women

Strategic Objectives for BPfA Goals on Women in Armed Conflict

- Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation
- Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments
- Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations
- Promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace
- Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women
- Provide assistance to the women of the colonies and non-self-governing territories



INTRODUCTION

Women and girls by socialization and not by default are less likely to own weapons or start wars but are more likely to feel the impact of wars than their male counterparts. A major reason for this is that women and girls are made vulnerable by cultural and religious interpretation and therefore would have their situations worsened during conflict.

It has been twenty-five years since 189 countries endorsed the declaration, in this space of twenty-five years, there has also been the adoption of international treaties, covenants, and conventions that aim to promote and protect women in conflict zones and prevent vulnerable women from further violations.

Despite the rich pool of policy framework, women and girls still account for more than 50% of the world's millions of refugees and other displaced persons, including internally displaced persons.

In Syria alone, women and children are most often the fatal victims of airstrikes and other assaults. This is the same for the Israeli-Palestine conflict, and in Sudan, Rwanda, Nigeria, and in several other conflict zones.

The BPFA (1995) described how women, especially young women are affected by armed conflict because of their unequal status in society and their sex. Examples of experiences women of all ages go through as a result of conflict often include, but not limited to displacement, family separation, and disintegration, involuntary disappearance of close relatives, loss of home and property, poverty, victimization through acts of terrorism, murder, torture, sexual slavery, rape, and separation from their children. These actions are inhumane and have long-lasting effects not only for the victims, but the country at large (Seifert, 1993).

NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT EFFORTS AND PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Women in Nigeria have borne the unequal burden of conflict that has plagued the country for over two decades. In recognition of this, the Nigerian government is a signatory to a series of international treaties and has domesticated some of these treaties. In the year 2000, without reservation, the federal government signed the CEDAW Optional Protocol and ratified it in 2004. In addition to CEDAW, the Nigerian Government ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa also known as the Maputo Protocol, which seeks to address the underrepresentation of women in socio-political and economic leadership in Africa. The protocol also provides remedies and channels for women who have had their rights violated.

In response to the abysmal and alarming percentage of small and light weapons in Nigeria, the Federal Government in 2013 ratified the Arms Trade Treaty and ECOWAS convention on Small arms. Though ratified, these treaties are yet to be domesticated in the country. This is appalling because researches have shown that 70% of illicit small and light weapons in West Africa are located in the country and this has been having a grave impact on women both in non-conflict and conflict zone.

In 2012, the Federal Government kicked off the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Program (NSRP). The program was intended to address the major factors of conflict areas of Nigeria that have been ravaged by Boko Haram attacks. In addressing this, the program identified; inclusive dialogue platform, addressing drivers of conflict, providing an enabling environment for women and girls to participate in and influence peacebuilding, and using research for conflict-sensitive communication and advocacy for change.

Nigeria launched its second National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and related resolutions (NAP) on 9 May 2017; the NAP covers the span between 2017 and 2020. The action plan is designed to address pressing issues in Nigeria which include armed conflicts and other types of violent extremism. However, like the ATT (Arms Trade Treaty), domestication and implementation of the National plan are fraught with several challenges.



NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

Sexual exploitation and gender-based violence (Boko Haram rape victims to rape victims of some elements of Nigerian army)

In times of armed conflict, all forms of abuse increase, especially sexual violence against women and girls. Typically, such acts include rape, forced oral sex, mutilation of sexual organs, forced pregnancy, and prostitution. According to Wilbers (1994), such cruel acts are historically used as an extension of the battlefield intentionally carried out to weaken the morale, humiliate and terrorize the target population.

Studies have revealed that sexual exploitation of women in conflict zones is perpetrated by State and non-State Actors, and happens: in the community, in refugee and IDP camps, and during flights to safety. In Northeast Nigeria, the main non-State actors are members of the Boko Haram terrorist group who have been reported to repeatedly rape their abductees. Although this group has also been known to kidnap boys from schools, they are more known to abduct young women and girls. Examples are the Chibok girls, Dapchi Girls, Jangebe Girls, and other cases. In a 2016 news story by the Washington Post, the experiences of some victims of Boko Haram abductees were shared; some escaped victims reported that members of the terrorist group took turns raping them in small thatched sheds in the forest when they were not being raped, victims revealed how they waited in fear for their rapists to return. Some of these victims were prepubescent. In a similar 2019 post by BBC News, escaped victims reported how they have been sexually molested, impregnated, and married off to their abductors.

Fleeing Boko Haram camps did not mark the end of sexual molestation for most of these girls, as members of the armed forces have been reported to continue the abuses in IDP camps (Alufoge and Duruji, 2020). Reports have it that these violations happen in the camps and outside the camps. Outside the camps, members of the JTF have been indicted with wanton killings and destruction of properties. Also, 2017 expository by the New York Times, titled "They Fled Boko Haram, Only to Be Raped by Nigeria's Security Forces", reveals how Boko Haram rape victims became rape victims of some elements of the Nigerian army.

Women who are not victims of sexual violence but are caught in the crossfire of armed conflict are at high risk of contracting infections which will negatively impact their overall health, while women who experience sexual violence are at a higher risk of contracting infections which will affect their sexual reproductive health and overall health. In times of war, access to public health is usually an essential need but a daunting task to fulfill. Over 100 terrorist attacks have been perpetrated at health centers globally, wounding 1,217 and killing 775 people. Ganor and Wernli (2013) opine that the members of staff, clients, and visitors in hospitals make them soft and attractive targets because of the possibility of large casualties.

In parts of Northeast Nigeria that have been ravaged by insurgency, accessing health services is a challenge, actions by State and non-State actors have focused on security, shelter, food, and water, while access to reproductive health has often not been prioritized (Amodu, Salami, Richter, and Okeke-Ihejirika, 2020). A study published in *Lancet* analyses about national health sector performance to ascertain the impact of insurgent activities on HIV response in the Northeastern part of the country. The survey revealed a stark drop in HIV intervention programs, centers that provide HIV testing, and prevention of mother-to-child transmission dropped by 57%. Other negative effects of sexual abuse that could occur are; pain and rectal bleeding from forced anal intercourse and sometimes; throat irritation from being forced to perform oral sex. With health centers constantly under attack, and the few available ones being understaffed, infected persons stand the chance of staying unattended for a long time, which increases their risks of further infections and death.

Women by nature require more access to water, sanitation, and hygiene. However, during armed conflict, sanitation becomes a luxury. It is usually harder for young women of reproductive age during their menstrual cycle. Stories from girls who fled Sudan for safety reported how they have had to use leaves as sanitary pads, and wash their parts with stagnant and visibly unhygienic bodies of water, exposing them to the possibility of such illnesses as bilharzia, cervical cancer, and others.

Military occupation, displacement, rape, impregnation, and other events that may arise as a result of armed conflict have been identified to also have a negative psychological impact on its victims. Past studies have indicated that female adolescents are up to six times more likely than male adolescents to develop PTSD symptomatology. A major reason for this is the sense of losing control over one's body during forced intercourse. Victims contend with the anguish, shame, and humiliation given rise to by their experiences. In an account narrated to the United Nations Security Council by Joy Bishara; a survivor of Boko Haram Chibok girls' abduction, she described how she is still hunted by the words of members of the jihadist group in which she and other abductees were told to never go back to school, and how they would find them if they ever return to school. Gruesome flashbacks, difficulty breathing, difficulty in rehabilitation, constant fear often describe the lives of most victims.

There are several schemes established by the Federal Government to help ex-militant reintegrate into society. The most popular of this scheme is the Operation Safe Corridor which is male-centred. The plan to help women integrate remains unclear. According to a post by relief web, women released by the armed forces have reported that they did not go through reintegration and rehabilitation programs. According to the report, only about 20 of the interviewed ladies went through reintegration and rehabilitation programs at the Bulumkutu Rehabilitation Centre for women and children in Borno State, others were just directly released into the society. The long-term psychosocial effects of rape are difficult to resolve and often are ignored as post-conflict communities focus upon reconstruction.

The actual amount of internally displaced persons is unknown, however internal-displacement website there are over twenty-one million internally displaced women and girls globally. In such living conditions, their access to water, food, privacy, and health care are usually limited and sometimes ignored. Displaced women have their fundamental human rights violated regularly, and their status quo compels them to adapt to such incessant violations. Despite being the most affected, they are often sidelined in the decision-making process of their camps which do have impact on their lives and their children's lives.

Armed conflict, displacement, and deprivation of privacy, food, water, and medicine can lead to high mortality rates. Amongst the set of vulnerable women, is even another subset of women in need of more care. These are pregnant and lactating mothers and their children who have had their childhood ripped from them. These women who need to feed to breastfeed their young are in some camps often as a secondary priority, as men in some camps are usually fed first before women.

With the talk of the second wave and several strains of the COVID-19, fear is heightened for people in IDP camps and refugee camps. Before the outbreak, sanitation was a major concern, in studies carried out after the outbreak, it was found that sanitation remains a major concern.

Following the outbreak of the virus, three situation analyses were to ascertain the impact of the outbreak on the living condition of people in IDP camps. The surveys also aimed to gauge the level of knowledge of participants of the pandemic and practices -post-outbreak. The third survey was carried out in conflict-affected towns in the North West and North Central geopolitical zones.

Findings from the survey were answered under four themes which are; Covid-19 Awareness, Mitigation Measures and Preparedness, Eviction Threats /Access To Service, Access To Handwashing Stations.

With regards to COVID19 awareness, the survey revealed that knowledge of the outbreak was popular as a result of sensitization efforts carried out repeatedly in the camps. The sensitizations efforts have been impactful, participants are aware of the risk, preventive measures, and means of transmission. In all of the surveyed States, Nasarawa had the highest level of information with 100%, with Sokoto having the least, at 44%.

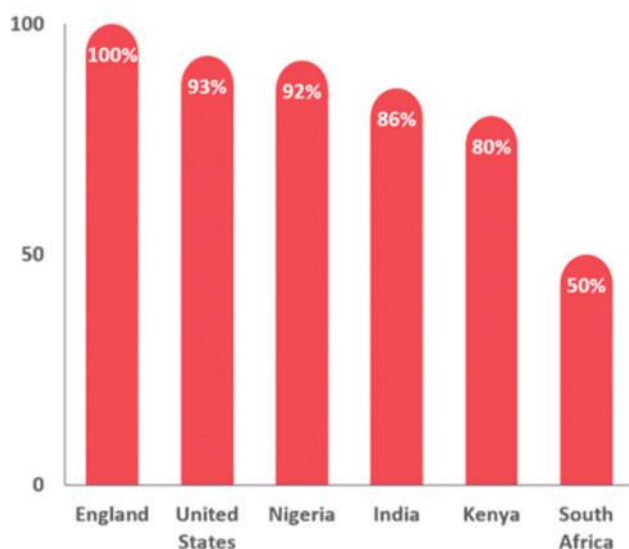
With regards to mitigation measures and preparedness, the survey revealed that Plateau and Kano were the States most protected and prepared against the virus with mitigation measures placed in 58 and 46 percent of the locations assessed. In Sokoto, mitigation measures were established in only 5 percent of locations.

In addition, 84% of respondents believed that the health care providers in the camps were not qualified to respond to the outbreak. This was a shared belief from respondents across the survey, but predominantly from Kaduna (98%) and Benue (99%) States.

Following the outbreak of the novel virus, only a few persons of 6% to 8% feared they would be asked to leave their settlements because of the outbreak. However, 67% shared that access to services dropped following the outbreak. With regards to access to handwashing stations, the survey revealed that the availability of handwashing stations is an important determinant of whether communities are equipped with basic hygienic facilities to prevent the spread of COVID-19. During the third round of assessments in North Central and North West Nigeria, respondents reported that no handwashing station filled with water and soap was available on-site, in 90 percent of the locations assessed.

With the outbreak of COVID 19 and the discovery of new strain humanitarian interventions have become of greater essence than they used to be, and such humanitarian interventions must take into cognizance the active involvement of key stakeholders who are directly affected by the crises and the decisions made to mitigate them.

Figure 1: Percentage of men in COVID-19 response decision-making bodies in the six countries



Source: The Missing Perspectives of Women in COVID-19 News

Despite women being disproportionately affected by the outbreak, women are not given the agencies to institute the very many schemes that would address the effect of the outbreak. Of the twelve individuals that make up the Nigerian Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 Response Team (Nigeria), ten are men. This is not unique to Nigeria alone as depicted in the chart above. Of the sixteen individuals that make up the Trump administration's coronavirus response team, thirteen are white males. A recent study by CARE surveyed 30 countries to ascertain; if women are listened to on COVID19 mitigation; if policies are implemented to address issues on SRH, GBV, or women-specific economic assistance; whether countries with more involvement of women in political leadership addressed the outbreak in ways that reflect the gender disparity; and whether women community-based organizations are supported by governments of their countries to lead responses to COVID-19.

The study found that; on average, in committees formed to ameliorate the impact of COVID-19, women make up for 24% of the committees; In seven countries, in nearly 25% of the sample, CARE could not find evidence that the government had made funding or policy commitments for GBV, SRH services, or women-specific economic assistance; 54% of the surveyed countries were yet to include GBV in their response, 33% were yet to address the difficulty in access to SHR; policy commitments towards support for women were yet to be paid in 76% of the countries studied; Countries with high involvement of women in political leadership have been able to deliver COVID-19 responses that are gender-specific of the needs of women and girls.



<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2021/03/05/putting-girls-at-the-center-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-response-in-africa/>

RECOMMENDATION

- Counter insurgency strategies should be population-centric rather than enemy-centric which allocates all resources towards defeating the enemy at all cost at the detriment of non-combatants caught in the crossfire.
- Fund IDP camps and deploy medical health professionals to provide sexual, reproductive maternal and adolescents health services and care for adolescent girls and women of reproductive age.
- The Federal government is to commence the immediate investigation of reported violations perpetrated by members of the armed forces IDP camps, in armed conflict zones and other parts of Nigeria where such as been reported like Choba and in Odi.
- The Federal government should commission a neutral third party to carry out the investigation stated above
- Ensure state and non-State actors who found guilty serve the punishment stipulated in the constitution
- The Federal government is to make compulsory “gender, diversity and equality training for every member of the police and armed force.
- Psychosocial services are to be made available to victims of gender-based violence and other human rights violations.
- Encourage the training of women and girls on rendering first aid to physically and psychologically affected persons.
- The federal government is to make the curbing of Small and light weapons in Nigeria a priority
- Encourage the participation of women in political leadership at the three tiers of government.

- The Federal government is to allocate funding to setup skills and vocational centers in IDPCs and refugee camps
- To get more (5 States: 20% increase) Nigerian States (besides the 11 that already have) to localize the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) Agenda with State Action Plan (SAP) and Local Government Plan (LGP) in their Local Government Areas. Prioritize LGAs with conflict.

CONCLUSION

Armed conflict affects livelihood in different ways. They lead to the death of combatants and non combatants directly, but there are also indirect effects that usually go undiscussed. These indirect effects mostly affect the civilian population, and from the foregoing, we have argued that women, particularly young girls suffer from these indirect effects more than men despite the fact that men naturally are the main direct victims of war. The indirect ways in which armed conflict affect wome more than men that this work has discussed include; sexual exploitation, inability to access SRHR services, loss of homes leading to rise in IDPs and refugee women and psychological effects that disrupt the quality of their lives.

CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN 10

Human Rights of Women



Strategic Objectives for BPfA Goals on Human Rights of Women from Young Women's Perspective

- Promote and protect the human rights of women, through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
- Ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice
- Achieve legal literacy

INTRODUCTION

Human rights are not given or awarded and cannot be taken away. They are inherent in all human beings; and are interdependent and indivisible. But too often, women's human rights have been subjected to derogation, violation, neglect, and negative debate. These have made it critical to restate that "women's rights are human rights". It has also made it necessary to provide mechanisms to ensure the promotion, protection, and fulfilment of women's rights. In 1993, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action stated that "the human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life, at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community." Prioritising women's rights in this way helped increase attention to women's rights in the international community. 2 years later, during the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted. This document is the most comprehensive expression of States' commitments to the human rights of women.

NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT EFFORTS AND PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Nigerian government enacted a few laws and formulated policies for protecting women's rights. The most salient of these is the Violence against Persons (Prohibition) Act of 2015 (VAPPA), which protects women from violent acts in public and private spaces and recognises different forms of violence. The National Assembly also passed the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act to address the crime of trafficking. Human trafficking disproportionately affects women, especially young women and girls, as Nigeria is an origin, transit, and destination country trafficking. The Child Rights Act domesticated provisions of the Child Rights Convention and protects girls' rights against harmful traditional and socio-cultural practices. Both the VAPPA and CRA do not have nationwide application as several states have not adopted them.

The Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act of 2018 was passed in 2009 but not signed into law until 2018 amidst pressure from activists and protesters. The Act prohibits discrimination based on disability, following the United Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) ratified in 2007. There are punishments of fines and imprisonment for contravening this law. The Act also fixes a five-year transitional period for modifying public buildings, structures, and automobiles to make them accessible and usable for people with disabilities. Despite the existence of this law, people living with disabilities face continued discrimination without redress because it is poorly implemented. Women and girls with disabilities face additional levels of harassment and violations of their human rights.



In 2006, a National Gender Policy was adopted through the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development. The policy is to aid in eradicating discrimination, harness the full potentials of everyone, promote the enjoyment of fundamental rights, and protect the wellbeing of everyone to achieve equitable rapid economic growth. 14 years later, the implementation of the objectives under the Gender Policy is underwhelming. None of the objectives has been met or advanced. For instance, an objective seeks to “achieve minimum threshold of representation for women in order to promote equal opportunity in all areas of political, social, economic life of the country for women, as well as for men.” This has not been achieved in practice. Not even a woman was a member of the Presidential Task Force for response to COVID-19 in Nigeria. There are fewer women in the 9th session of the National than they were in the 8th session. The National Assembly has now introduced a bill to create 111 seats exclusively for women in the Senate and House of Representatives. This attempt seeks to solve a problem without addressing its root causes, such as barriers that prevent women, including young women, from political participation and the gender biases that women in politics face. Importantly, its sponsors fail to recognise that while women’s rights involve political participation, these tokenisms will not accord women the respect they deserve, and the status needed to be actual partakers in the effective decision-making processes.

Several laws in Nigeria take away women’s rights and prevent women and girls from reaching their full potentials. In 2019, Nigeria ranked 131 out of 187 countries where the legal environment is disadvantageous to women, with Belgium scoring 100. The Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act of 2015 (SSMPA) and other provisions in Nigerian criminal laws that penalise same-sexual behaviour are derogatory of the rights to life, dignity, privacy, and freedom of association and expression. The effect of homophobia legally sanctioned through the SSMPA and these other provisions on women and girls in Nigeria who are lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and or intersex, is horrendous. It exposes this class of women to increased violence, hatred, and discrimination, including the discrimination they face for just being women/girls.

Sexual assault laws in Nigeria, except the VAPP Act, are gender discriminatory. No law expressly recognises marital rape in Nigeria. The Criminal Code expressly removes marital rape from criminalisation by stating in section 6 that 'unlawful carnal knowledge' means 'carnal connection which takes place otherwise than between husband and wife.' The Penal Code, on its part, sanctions domestic violence (physical abuse in particular). Section 55 of the Penal Code says that an action that is done by a husband to "correct" or "discipline" his wife is not an offence. This means that coupled with socio-cultural practices that vest ownership of a married woman's body on her husband, women in Nigeria are not protected from these forms of violence. When they occur, women cannot easily seek redress. Only the VAPPA may be used for marital rape because it covers violence done in the private sphere. The impediments to adopting this law to protect women from marital rape and intimate partner violence are that even police investigators, prosecutors, judges, and court officials hold patriarchal beliefs and adopt them while carrying out their duties. This is a continued derogation of women's rights to their bodies, dignity, and protection from violence.

The culture of blaming victims for suffering sexual assault and rape is so deeply entrenched in Nigerian society that it is legalised through the Evidence Act of 2011. Section 11 of the Act allows a man being prosecuted for rape, attempted rape, or indecent assault to bring evidence against the accuser, the victim. Such evidence is to show that the victim has a "generally immoral character", and the woman can be asked if she has a "connection with other men" or a "connection on other occasions with the man presently accused. These laws and practices seek to shame women, deny that consent can be withdrawn, and are used to sanction sexual violence against sex workers.

The human rights of female sex workers are constantly abused in Nigeria due to the laws against sex work and brothel-keeping in various parts of Nigeria. Beyond these laws, people's attitudes learnt through suppressive cultural practices, and religious beliefs contribute the most to the abuse and discrimination of sex workers by their clients, intimate partners, the public, and law enforcement officers, particularly the police and soldiers. Female sex workers in Nigeria find it difficult to report violations because those who they ought to report to violate them as well.

Some practices that contravene women's rights are not laws but can supersede laws and be used to create new laws or interpret existing laws. No laws make it compulsory for children to be named after their fathers or that married women must change their surnames to their husbands' names, but women face barriers in this regard in practice. Women are asked to obtain their husbands' permissions before travelling with their children, making it more difficult for women fleeing abusive relationships to do so successfully. Women's rights to their children are violated in this way.

The absence of laws eradicating discrimination and guaranteeing women's rights in Nigeria is a human rights violation. One of the most important ways this is felt is through the failure of the Nigerian government to domesticate the Maputo Protocol, a law that provides for women's sexual and reproductive health rights, much needed in the country. Nigeria has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in the world. Millions of illegal abortions are carried out, putting girls and women at risk of avoidable deaths. Sexual health and reproductive health education for girls is very poor. Fulfilling women's rights includes ascertaining their bodily autonomy, sexual and reproductive health rights in the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Federal and state governments

- Allocate adequate funding to women's rights issues, including women's health and the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development.
- Strengthen the judiciary to protect women's rights, hear and determine cases on women's rights progressively.
- Implement the objectives of the National Gender Policy in its entirety.
- Ensure gender balance and adequate representation of underrepresented groups of people, including people living with disabilities in the cabinet, task forces, boards, and other decision-making bodies.

- Facilitate holistic training of members of the Nigeria Police Force, the Nigerian Army, Civil Defence, and other law enforcement bodies on women's rights protection and promotion.
- Swiftly punish members of law enforcement bodies who discriminate against women and violate women's and girls' rights in Nigeria.
- Facilitate the implementation of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act within 2 years.
- Facilitate the independence of and adequate funding for the National Human Rights Commission and other similar bodies.
- Develop a comprehensive human rights education programme to raise awareness among women and the public on women's human rights.
- Work actively towards ratification of or accession to and implement international and regional human rights treaties on women's rights.

National assembly

- Fully domesticate the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol).
- Enact laws banning gender discrimination in Nigeria with appropriate punishments.
- Review the Constitutional provisions that sanction discrimination against women, particularly sections 26(2), 29(4), and 42(3), and include gender-neutral and gender positive language in the Constitution.
- Include the prohibition of discrimination against people based on sexual orientation, gender identity and or expression, and sex characteristics in the Constitution.

- Review the Evidence Act 2011 by removing section 11, which sanctions victim-shaming.
- Review the Criminal Code Act, particularly provisions on sexual assault and the Penal Code Act on sexual assault, section 55, and prostitution.
- Decriminalise sex work in Nigeria.
- Decriminalise same-sex relationships, associations, and same-sexual behaviours.
- Repeal the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act 2014 and other discriminatory laws and provisions of laws that punish people for their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or expression.
- Amend the Labour Act to remove gender discriminatory provisions and barriers against women working in specific industries and at certain times.
- Criminalise intersex genital mutilation and female genital mutilation in Nigeria.
- Criminalise conversion therapy practices in Nigeria.

States' houses of assembly

- Domesticate the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 and the Child Rights Act 2003.
- Review criminal laws, including Sharia laws, to protect women's and girls' rights.

The judiciary

- Adopt a progressive and gender-sensitive approach in interpreting human and women's rights provisions, in hearing cases of sexual and intimate partner violence and in safeguarding women's rights as fundamental human rights.

Ministries of Women affairs and Social development

- Facilitate the swift implementation of the National Gender Policy in the 36 states of the country and the Federal Capital Territory.
- Include continued advocacy for underrepresented women, including lesbian, bisexual, queer, trans, and intersex women, female sex workers, and women living with disabilities in advocacy movements, policy formulation, and implementation.

Mainstream women's rights and other human rights organisations

- Work with sexual minority rights organisations to adopt an intersectional feminist approach to women's rights advocacy in Nigeria.
- CSOs should continually engage with and sensitise the media, religious leaders, traditional leaders, and the public on women's rights and gender equality.
- Use global and regional consensus on women's rights as advocacy and accountability measures.
- Collaborate with young feminist voices in creating intergenerational advocacy strategies in order to leave no woman or girl behind.

Conclusion

Too often, the Nigerian governments rely on civil society organisations to achieve women's rights. On the contrary, promoting women's rights in Nigeria requires the active involvement of all arms of government at all government levels. This can only be done if women's rights are seen as a priority in Nigeria. Importantly, we must look beyond religious and cultural practices that inhibit women and girls if we wish to move forward collectively as a society. From this review of women's human rights, Nigeria is clearly failing in its duties of protecting, promoting, and fulfilling women's rights. Human rights laws and policies, especially the CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol are not implemented. There is widespread inequality and discrimination both under the law and in practice, and we have not achieved legal literacy for women and girls.

CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN 11

Women and the economy



BEIJING +25 REVIEW OF CRITICAL AREAS - WOMEN AND ECONOMY FROM YOUNG WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE

The strategic objectives of BPfA goals on Women and the Economy

- Promote women's economic rights and independence including access to employment, appropriate working condition, and control over economic resources
- Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, market, and trade
- Provide business services, training, and access to markets, information, and technology, particularly to low-income women
- Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks
- Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination
- Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men.



Reuters/ Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, WTO Director General

INTRODUCTION

The Beijing Declaration affirms national commitment to the inalienable rights of women and girls and their empowerment and equal participation in all spheres of life including the economic domain. Also, Goal 8, Target 8.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets the achievement of full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men (including young people and persons with disabilities), as well as equal pay for work of equal value by 2030, (National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Although women have become increasingly engaged in economic activities including wage labor, the Agricultural sector, and entrepreneurship but not much has changed in women's ownership of the economic sector. According to UN Women (2020), at least fifty percent of the world's women are in paid employment, an increase from 40% in the 1990s but women earn 10-30% less than men based on a study of 83 countries including Nigeria.

Twenty-five years after the World Conference on Women in Beijing and fifteen years after the National Gender Policy adoption in Nigeria, reports on gender shows that women are still largely underrepresented and are generally not inclusively participating in the productive sectors that affect their day-to-day survival and development. Nigeria's gender development index ranking stands at 123 out of 140 countries and 145 out of 162 countries in gender empowerment measures linked to access and ownership of land and gender pay gap. On land ownership, 60-79% of the rural workforce is women but men are 5 times more likely to own land. Women own 4% of land in the North-East, and just over 10% in the South-East and South-South. It is reported that 80% of the 100 million Nigerians living in poverty are women (UNDP, 2016)



<https://www.faiobserver.com/region/africa/african-women-entrepreneurship-news-headlines-africa-this-week-32490/>

In a Gender Development Index conducted for some African countries – (GDI measures gender inequalities in achievement in three basic dimensions of human development: health, education, and command over economic resources. The 2019 female HDI value for Nigeria was 0.504 in contrast with 0.572 for males, resulting in a GDI value of 0.881 (UNDP, 2020)

Population of Young People in Nigeria

The year 2017	Female		Male	
	Number	Percentage of total population	Number	Percentage of the total male population
10-14	11,638,646	12.4	12,105,188	12.5
15-19	9,760,292	10.4	10,093,419	10.4
20-24	8,132,862	8.6	8,372,446	8.7

Source: GLOBAL_Revision of the World Population Prospects 2017
<https://www.unfpa.org/data/adolescent-youth/NG>



<https://thestateofwomen.com/women-economic-empowerment-add-30-percent-gdp/>

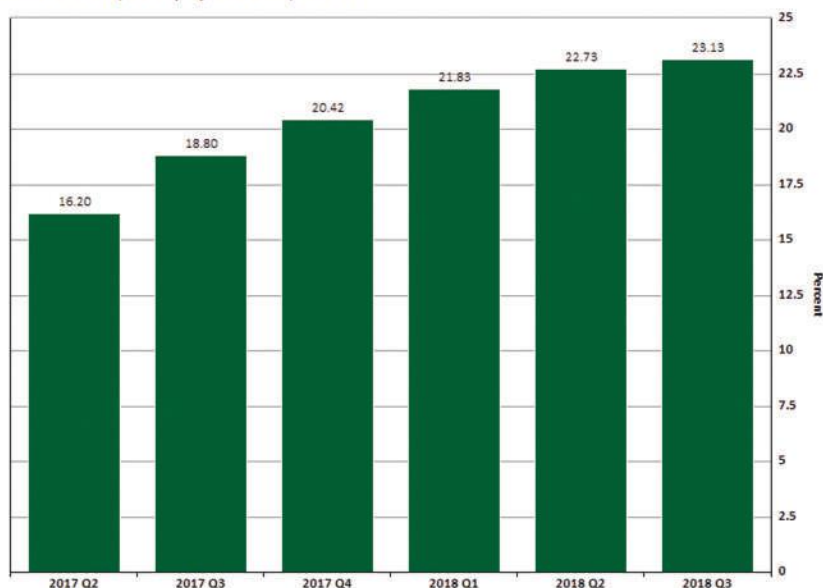
ECONOMIC CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUNG WOMEN

a. Unemployment

The National Population Commission (NPC, 2013) about half of the population is made up of youth defined as individuals between 15 and 34 years of age. Unfortunately, as the youth grows, so does the unemployment rate. In terms of gender, available statistics show that a majority of unemployed youth are female (Akande Tunji, 2014).

The 1995 Beijing Conference on Women proposes that government recognize that girls face peculiar discrimination due to their sex and age (Beijing Policy Brief, 2015). This peculiarity is further exacerbated by other factors such as early and or forced marriage and reproductive role According to the Nigeria Social and Economic Research Council (NISER, 2013) 55.42 percent of unemployed youth 15-34 years were female. The economically active population in Nigeria age 15-64 years was 115.5 million but only 69.5 million were in employment in Q3 2018. During the same quarter, 26.6% of women within the labour force (aged 16-64 and willing, able, and actively seeking work) were unemployed, compared with 20.3% of men within the same period (National Bureau of Statistics, Dec 2018 Report)

Labor Markets, Unemployment Rate, Percent



Source: National Bureau of Statistics December, 2018.

The impact of COVID-19 on youth unemployment can only be imagined as many of them are into small and medium scale enterprises that were badly hit by the pandemic. The private sector which employs more than the public service also engaged in downsizing and rightsizing to stay afloat during the COVID-19 starting from the first wave. The National Bureau of Statistics (2020) Q3 estimates that about 13.9 million, that is 6.8 million youths were out of jobs and 7.1million were unemployed (NBS, 2020) In terms of age, younger youth struggle even more to find jobs, as 40.8% of unemployed youth were between 15-24 years of age and 30.7% unemployed youth are 25-34 years of age in quarter 3 of 2020.

b. Early and or Forced Marriage

Another challenge faced by young women in Nigeria that are impacting their participation in the productive economic sector is early and or forced marriage. When girls are married off early, they are unable to complete their education and become mothers very early, and have little or no chance to participate in the productive economic sector. Nigerian women marry much earlier than men. More than 4 in 10 Nigerian women are married by age 18 (NDHS, 2018). In the northern part of Nigeria, 48% of girls are married by the age of 15 and 78% are married by the age of 18. As a result, millions of girls end up dropping out of school. Whereas when women are educated, they can participate effectively in productive formal employment and are more likely to spend their earnings on their households and support the education of their children.

c. Lack of Access to Finance or Loans

Other gendered inhibiting factors for young women's access to loan is level of income which affect the level of savings and investment and asset ownership. Culturally, women are expected to earn lower than their male counterparts in the labor force whilst the low level of educational attainment or the fact that women are fewer in Science and technological field where the income is higher are gendered factors that affect their level of income. Early or forced marriage also limits women's ability to access loans or finance to support entrepreneurial ventures they may want to engage in.

According to a study conducted by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) and EFINA and its partners in 2019, it discovered that the most important drivers of gender gap in financial inclusion are lack of income, low-level education, and low level of trust in Financial Service Providers. Thus, to overcome the gender gap in financial inclusion, these gendered drivers should be understood and tackled as the core binding constraints. (CBN, 2019)

d. Gender-Based Discriminatory Laws and Practices in the Work Place

The Nigeria Labour Act Section 55(1) prohibits a woman from being employed on night jobs in public or any agricultural undertaking (with the exception in Section 55(7) of female nurses and women in management positions who are not engaged in manual labour).

Section 56(1) prevents women from engaging in any underground work in any mine.

Police Act

Section 127 prevents married women from seeking enlistment in the Nigerian Police Force.

When an unmarried policewoman is pregnant, she would be discharged from the police force and can only be re-instated on the approval of the Inspector-General of Police.

Nigerian Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) Act

Article 5(1) of the NDLEA Order, 2002, "All female applicants shall be unmarried at the point of entry, and shall upon enlistment remain unmarried for a period not less than two years.". Many young girls are also given the unwritten condition that they cannot get married or get pregnant until after some time by some employees. Gender wage gap, sexual harassment, abuse and discriminatory policies- maternity leave, violence and sexual violence, murder, etc.

e. Inability to own assets

Women are less likely than men to own a house or land, alone or jointly in Nigeria. Merely 11% of women own a house, alone or jointly, compared to 37% of men. Twelve percent of women and 38% of men own land, alone or jointly. (NDHS, 2018) Most cultures in Nigeria deny wives and daughters access to family land either as assets or Agricultural cultivation. As long as the majority of women are in the lowest rung of income earnings jobs and businesses coupled with gender wage pay gap and other socio-cultural practices which discourages women's equal access to inheritance, it may be impossible for women to ever bridge the gap in command and ownership of the economy.

NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT EFFORTS AND PROGRESS CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the huge youth unemployment that has become a scourge in Nigeria, the government in 2011 came up with series of employment targeted programs for women and the youth including

1. "YOU WIN" 2011- 2016- the Youth Enterprise with Innovation in Nigeria program was a large-scale national business plan competition for young entrepreneurs in Nigeria. The Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Communication Technology, and the Ministry of Youth and Social Development with support from Department for International Development (DFID) and the World Bank collaborated with US\$36 million grant funding with an average of US\$50,000 grant for randomly selected winners. The goal of the program was to encourage innovation and job creation through the establishment of new businesses and the expansion of existing businesses among the youth. It was reported that over 51% of the total number of entrepreneurs that benefited from the grants were women.

At the state level, some governments also established various forms of employment-creation programs. The most prominent was the Osun Youth Empowerment Scheme (OYES) by the Osun state government which provided series of employment opportunities for the youth in traffic control, sanitation and environmental officials, security personnel, and others.

2. GIS- The Graduate Internship Scheme was launched in October, 2012 as a social safety net component of the Federal Government Subsidy Reinvestment and Empowerment Programme, SURE –P, scheme, to create an opportunity for Nigerian graduates to be attached to reputable public/private establishment to be trained and mentored for one year on a monthly Federal Government stipend of N18, 000. The scheme was implemented by the Federal Ministry of Finance and provided fresh graduates short term employment opportunity to sharpen their skills and gain some working experience and enhance their employability, the internship was targeted at youth aged 18-40 years

3. G-WIN Growing Girls and Women (G-WIN) program from 2013-2015. The programme was initiated to provide women and girls with employment and create income opportunities in the rural areas. The Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development trained over a hundred thousand women farmers on cassava, rice processing, and tomatoes and plantain processing. About 1000 young women were trained on ICT and some were also trained on fish production and processing. The scheme registered 2.4million women on the E-wallet Agro database through which women received subsidized agricultural inputs.

4. Business Development Fund for Women (BUDFOW) The Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social development collaborated with the Bank of Industry to establish the scheme in 2012 to support women entrepreneur with viable businesses who could not access loans from the banks. It was reported that the fund was established to facilitate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals 2015. There are no data on how many young women benefited from the scheme.

5. Women’s Fund for Economic Empowerment (WOFEE) was part of the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs credit facility established to provide credit opportunities for Women Cooperative groups in the rural areas in 2012. The scheme was targeted at providing easy funding for women entrepreneurs, women farmers, and other economic empowerment ventures. There’s a paucity of data on the number of young women that benefited from the scheme.

6. Agricultural Credit Guarantee Scheme Fund (2012-2015) The fund was established to assist women farmers and women agro-allied processors to access loans from banks. The take-off grant was N100 million provided by the Federal Government and CBN in 60-40 ratio respectively. No available data on the number of young women beneficiaries of the fund.

The years 2012-2015 was a watershed in the number of women and youth-targeted empowerment schemes at the federal level and most states government also established skill acquisition centers for women and youth. Several Microfinance banks also sprang up to participate in the array of government empowerment schemes at federal and state levels. Some state governors even leased farmland for women and some provided tractors and fertilizers. During the period, the government also launched a new Agricultural policy with a strategy targeting poverty reduction, Agricultural transformation Agenda and gender perspectives were also introduced to the policy for the first time. Several jobs were created for women and youth and many youths went into farming during the period but there are no available data on the number of young women that benefited from the schemes.

7. GEEP: 2015-2020 - Rather than continuing the several laudable empowerment initiatives of the previous administration, the current administration started another empowerment scheme called Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP), it was launched in 2016 to provide interest and collateral-free credit to millions of Micro Small and Medium-scale Enterprises (MSMEs) operating at the bottom of the Nigerian economic pyramid. The scheme has three main loan products which are: Market-Moni, TraderMoni, and FarmerMoni. According to the report on the GEEP website, it was reported that the scheme has been able to properly target, document, profile, and deliver credit to 2.3million people across the country, although there is no available data on the number of young women that has benefited from the programme.

8. N-POWER - 2016-2020 the programme is a social investment scheme of the current government established in 2016 and targets youth (18-35 years) unemployment. Even though a lot has been written about the programme, there is not enough information on the actual number of young people that have benefited from the scheme but the selection of beneficiaries was pegged at 60% female and 40% male

Gender-Sensitive Acts or laws to promote inheritance rights of women

National and sub-national governments have made some progress in terms of gender-sensitive laws that promote women's economic empowerment in the last 5 years. The violence against Persons Prohibition Act was passed in 2015 which also outlaws denial of widow's inheritance rights. At the state level, the following are targeted laws on women's inheritance right

- The Enugu State of Nigeria, Prohibition of Infringement of a Widow's and Widower's Fundamental Rights Law No.3, 2001
- Oyo State Widows' Empowerment Law, 2002
- Anambra State Malpractices against Widows and Widowers Prohibition Law 2004
- Bauchi State Prohibition of Withdrawal of Girls from School for Marriage Law.
- Gender and Equal Opportunities Law (Kogi State) 2013
- Imo State Violence against Persons Law No. 2 2012

RECOMMENDATIONS

Gender discrimination in Labour law and practice is still rife in every sector of the Nigerian economy coupled with socio-cultural challenges which have been highlighted above. Analysis has shown that younger women are at more risk to suffer economically because of their age and sex and the fact that they are often sidelined in the scheme of things. Even though the country is economically unsound at this time, it is recommended that women targeted empowerment initiative should be classified according to the age group to monitor actual beneficiaries and the impact of such projects. The several temporary empowerment programs should be studied and streamlined and the most impactful should be adopted and backed by law so that it can be budgeted annually. Regular evaluation and production of reports are essential and must be institutionalized in order to account for actual beneficiaries

Gender and Equal Opportunity Bill should be worked on and presented for enactment at the National Assembly so that gender-discriminatory labour laws and practices can be removed completely from the Nigerian economic sector

CONCLUSION

As no one can clap with one hand so also no sustainable development can be achieved when almost half of the population are economically poor. The case of young women also needs greater attention due to their age and vulnerabilities, availability of data on government initiatives will facilitate greater accountability and adoption of good practices. Policy continuity on the part of successive government will also sustain the gains from economic empowerment as it would reduce wastes easier to review, adapt and institutionalize sustainable economic development for citizens especially women no matter the age group.

CRITICAL AREA OF CONCERN 12

Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially media



Strategic Objectives for BPfA Goals on Women and the Media

- Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication.
- Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

INTRODUCTION

Stereotypes are depictions and representations which are attributable to groups. Positive application of stereotypes can help in identification, inclusion, and proper representation of groups while negative application of stereotypes can often reinforce discrimination and exclusion of marginalised groups. In Nigeria, stereotypes of women have a firm root in social and cultural norms as they are often seen as the weaker gender, responsible for the care of the home, with no capacity for making tough decisions thus excluded from leadership roles.



Stereotypes are reinforced through constant messaging with the mainstream media playing a role in the dissemination of such messages either overtly or covertly. Thus, within society and for the proliferation of messaging and ideology, the media remains a strong agenda-setting actor. The extent to which the women agenda receives adequate attention is dependent to a large extent on the messages created and disseminated through media platforms.

NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT EFFORTS AND PROGRESS

There have been some, albeit limited, progress made by the Nigerian government to tackle some of the challenges faced by women which are underscored by negative stereotyping of women. Some of the efforts made by the Nigerian government to centre issues affecting women including the following:

- The passage of the Sexual Harassment Bill 2020 which aims to prevent, prohibit, and address the sexual harassment of students in tertiary education institutions in Nigeria. The bill serves to address the blaming of women for sexual harassment episodes by shifting blame from female students (as is often the case in issues of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and rape) onto the education official and perpetrator.
- The passage of the VAPP Act into law in 2015. Since the passage into law, it has been domesticated by 50% of states in Nigeria as 18 of the 36 states, including the Federal Capital Territory have adopted it.
- The first national sexual offenders register was launched in Nigeria serving as a repository for convicted sexual offenders and a database of those convicted for sexual violence.
- The Nigerian Government through the Ministry of Youth and Sports launched the Nigeria Youth Investment Fund (NYIF) to support youth entrepreneurship in Nigeria. The NYIF is a 75 billion Naira loan fund created to support entrepreneurship and innovation in Nigeria. The fund also makes special provisions for women entrepreneurs to get adequate support and funding for their business ideas.

- The Nigerian technology industry has seen important growth in the past decade, providing jobs for Nigeria's teeming youth population and supporting innovation. To support the industry, the Nigerian government has included tech firms in new guidelines for the application of "pioneer status" by the Nigerian Investment Promotion Council (NIPC). The benefits accruable from pioneer status include a three-year tax holiday (possible extension for up to two years), and exemption from the deduction of a statutory 10% withholding tax from dividends to shareholders.

Challenges and Gaps

As argued in the literature, female stereotypes are still very prevalent in media messaging including reportage, news, and broadcasts. Women and young people remain under-represented in and under-reported by the media. Gender-based discrimination and strongly held cultural beliefs remain limiting factors that prevent marginalised groups from effectively utilising the power of the media. The different inequalities surrounding women's access to and participation in communication systems in Nigeria (including media) can be reviewed under different headings:

- Coverage and inclusion in the news
- The portrayal of women and youth issues
- Message crafting and the power for developing messages.
- Sub-marginalisation of excluded groups
- Freedom of media

Coverage and inclusion in the news:

For the most part, women and women's issues continue to be relegated to the back burner as such topics remain largely under-represented in the media. Research by Ifeoma et al (2018) showed that women were largely invisible in the media as a result of getting fewer stories than men as well as fewer bylines in print media. The implication of this is forced invisibility of women as a direct result of the way the media treats and handles issues that centre women or could help to advance the campaign for gender equality in Nigeria.

Furthermore, women are not simply unreported or under-reported but in instances where there is coverage of women issues, it favours boxed or skewed framings which reinforce unflattering and limiting stereotypes. As Jonah and Nnanyelugo (2020) posited, women's significant contributions in all aspects and sectors should receive adequate coverage rather than selective reportage of women.

The portrayal of women and youth issues:

At any given time, society's cues on any subject are drawn heavily from the media's portrayal of an issue. The way a subject is reported or discussed in the media can either elicit support or disapproval. Thus, it remains pertinent that women and issues facing women as well as young people are reported accurately to help the public or society to understand the challenges properly. Accordingly, how the media represents women will most likely have a corresponding impact on society's perceptions concerning gender mainstreaming.

One can argue that the media's portrayal of women in Nigeria leaves a lot to be desired. Gender-stereotypical representation remains highly persistent in Nollywood films, where women are often portrayed in roles that depict them as the weaker sex, less powerful, and dependent on men. Men, on the other hand, are portrayed as highly successful, independent, and heads of home. This persistent portrayal of women in only domesticated roles shapes attitudes, perceptions of, and behaviors toward women in society in problematic ways (Alola and Alola, 2020) including exclusion from decision-making process and exposure to gender-based violence.

Another challenge of reinforced stereotypical depiction of women in media is an attempted retelling of the stories of historical women. As seen in the different retellings of the story of Efunsetan Aniwura of Ibadan where she is depicted as power-hungry rather than a strong leader (Adeboye, 2018). There is also the non-prioritisation of women's agenda by the media where women's issues are not investigated, or background information is not provided. According to Jonah and Nnanyelugo (2020), newspaper representation of women in the news in the last three years in Nigeria has been significantly determined by the nature of news story featured. It seemed that in an overwhelming number of cases when stories that positioned women positively were reported, these stories were given less prominence and volume. In contrast, where stories that positioned women in a negative light were reported, they were given banner headlines with high prominence and volume.

Message crafting and the power for developing messages:

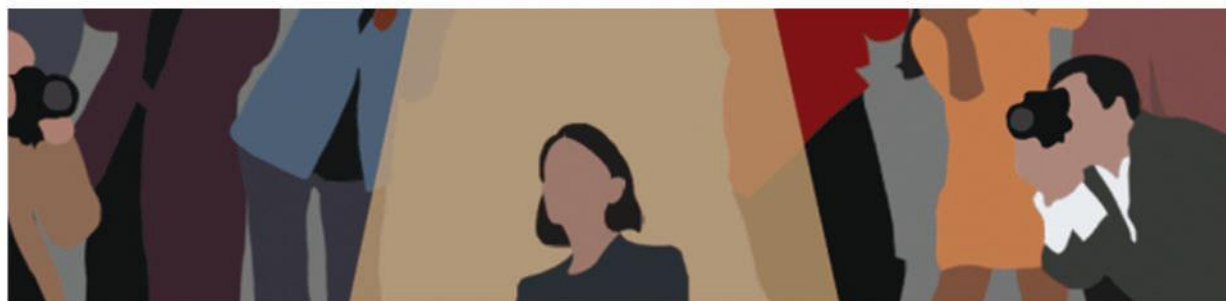
The theory of agenda-setting explains that what the media finds important will eventually mirror what members of society will come to regard as important. The power for creating and shaping the news often rests in the hands of those who own the news houses. In Nigeria, this presents a problem as the major media houses are either owned by men or the government. To centre the agenda of women, more women need to own media platforms.

Additionally, findings show that there are fewer female journalists as women continue to experience different inequalities in the news industry such as pay gap, nepotism, sexual harassment, and sexism. Many media organisations do not have a gender policy or a dedicated process for handling issues women face in the workplace (Tijani-Adenle, 2019).

Sub-marginalisation of excluded groups:

In discussing issues of access and marginalisation, it is pertinent to also unpack the marginalised groups that require attention. For instance, sex workers who face severe stigmatisation and multiple forms of discrimination in Nigeria are yet to receive adequate attention. According to a report presented by the Nigeria Sex Workers (2017), issues faced by sex workers in Nigeria include institutionalized discrimination, limited access to medical and social services, criminalization of sex work, brutality by law enforcement agents, among others.

While Nigeria has signed on to Article 2 of CEDAW which addresses discrimination against women, norms of the Article which relate to sex workers' rights have not been implemented fully in Nigeria (National Association of Sex workers, 2017) thus limiting access to redress mechanisms for sex workers in the country.



<https://yakatuon.com/2020/10/22/what-gladys-berejiklians-media-attention-tells-us-about-the-lack-of-women-in-power/>

Freedom of media

The freedom of the press in Nigeria is severely curtailed. A heavy-handed government through the regulatory body of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) routinely fines media houses in Nigeria over trivial issues. During the 2020 End Sars protests by young Nigerians in the country, several media houses reported that they received warnings from NBC not to cover the protests or report it. Nigerians thus relied heavily on International media platforms and social media. These fines as well as threats of license withdrawal serve as an effective leash for the media in Nigeria.

Social media as an effective disruptor

One of the biggest game changers in advancing issues of marginalised groups in Nigeria including women, youth, and sex workers, has been social media. Young people and women have successfully navigated the limitations of traditional media platforms by leveraging digital technology.

This was evident during the 2020 End SARS Protests where young people were able to organise effectively, amassing resources in millions of Naira to sustain daily marches and sit-outs in numerous states of the country for approximately two weeks. The protests which were led and organised by youths and women demonstrated the truly disruptive power of social media.

Furthermore, in recent conversations, there have been increasing awareness of women's issues and challenges. This positioning of women's issues on the front burner can be largely attributed to the power of social media and the rise of feminist influencers who amass significant followership by focusing on and discussing women's challenges in the country. Where electronic and print media face sanctions from the government and their owners and are thus forced to discuss only "safe" topics, social media offers a liberating tool that Nigeria's marginalised groups have adopted en masse. Online activism as it is tagged, affords feminists unique opportunities to tell their stories, discuss the issues, and practice leadership (Gadzekpoand Smith, 2020).

With women continually under-represented in the media, social media affords a unique opportunity for the voices of women from a diverse array of backgrounds and countries, with or without traditional power, to be amplified (Powell, 2018). Evidence from literature shows that women are already taking advantage of this opportunity with women more likely to have a larger online presence while the numbers of women with a presence on social media increasing in highly discriminatory countries.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Encourage gender-sensitive training for media professionals, including media owners and managers, to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotyped, balanced and diverse images of women in the media.
2. Media houses should operationalise gender units within their organisations to chart the gender policy for the organisation and incorporate it into operations and content.
3. Board memberships of existing media organisations should be liberalised to allow for more women and youth representation.
4. Civil society and international donors should support and fund independent media organisations run by women and young people to ensure that youth and women voices are amplified and issues affecting marginalised groups are properly reported.
5. Civil society and human rights activists should jointly advocate for decriminalisation of sex work in Nigeria.
6. Adequate redress should be taken against law enforcement officers that trample on the rights of marginalised groups, women, and youths.
7. Gender activists should continue to engage the Nigerian police on gender issues, and support the Nigerian law enforcement agencies in setting up active gender desks.

8. Promote research and implementation of a strategy of information, education and communication aimed at promoting a balanced portrayal of women and girls and their multiple roles.

CONCLUSION

Overall, some efforts have been made by the Nigerian government to address the varied inequalities which limit women and young people's access to, and participation in all communication systems. Efforts made thus far are concerning the passage of important laws such as the VAPP Act and the Sexual Harassment Bill which seek to provide protection for women and reduce discrimination against women. However, more needs to be done to domesticate these laws at the state level.

For media platforms, there have been little or no efforts made to actively reduce discriminatory reportage and provide balanced reporting on issues affecting women. Less women are reporting on hard-hitting issues and women have limited opportunity to drive the narrative as few media houses are owned and controlled by women. All of these are compounded by the government's muzzling of media in the country.

As a citizen's tool, social media has proven to be an effective disruptor to the challenges posed by traditional media. More women and young people have cultivated social media to centre women's issues, drive conversations and report challenges. This has proven effective, to an extent in mainstreaming gender and youth issues. However, institutional support is still paramount and civil society should continue to advocate for the elimination of discriminatory practices in women's access to communication systems in the country.

REFERENCES

Adeboye, O. (2018). Framing Female Leadership on Stage and Screen in Yorubaland: EfunsetanAni-wura Revisited. *Gender & History*, 30(3), 666-681. doi: 10.1111/1468-0424.12396

Adegbite, K. (2017, November 3). Lagos state: Pioneering the fight against domestic and sexual offences. *Premium Times*. <https://opinion.premiumtimesng.com/2017/11/03/lagos-state-pioneering-the-fight-against-domestic-and-sexual-offences-by-kehinde-adegbite/>

Afolabi, A. (2020, August 16). Ekiti warns against collection of illegal fees from students. *The Guardian*. <https://guardian.ng/news/ekiti-warns-against-collection-of-illegal-fees-from-students/>

Afolabi, Babatunde and Abatan, S. Matthew, Early Marriage and Its Implications on the Nigerian Economy (November 19, 2014). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2528255> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2528255>

Agbedo, O., & Diamond, M. (2020, July18). Rising brutality: Weighing the potency of Nigeria's child rights laws. *The Guardian*. <https://m.guardian.ng/saturday-magazine/rising-brutality-weighing-the-potency-of-nigerias-child-rights-laws/>

Agbo, D. (2020, July 4). Woman drills nails, hot iron on 10 yrs old domestic help's head. *Vanguard*. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/07/woman-drills-nails-hot-iron-on-10-yrs-old-domestic-helps-head/>

Agency Report. (2020, August 22). Oyo govt partners NGO to end female genital mutilation. *Independent*. <https://independent.ng/oyo-govt-partners-ngo-to-end-female-genital-mutilation/>

Ajala, Taiwo. "Gender Discrimination in Land Ownership and the Alleviation of Women's Poverty in Nigeria: A Call for New Equities." *International Journal of Discrimination and the Law*, vol. 17, no. 1, Mar. 2017, pp. 51–66. SAGE Journals, doi:10.1177/1358229117700028.

Alola, M., & Alola, U. (2020). Gender stereotypes in Nigerian films as a portrayal of the African womanhood: A feminist perspective. *Journal Of Labor And Society*, 23(2), 221-243. doi: 10.1111/wusa.12465

Alufoge, O., & Duruji, M. (2020). Human Rights and Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. *Human Rights and Development in Nigeria's Fourth Republic*, 1(2), 102-120.

Amodu OC, Salami BO, Richter S, Okeke-Ihejirika P. Reproductive healthcare for women in IDP camps in Nigeria: An analysis of structural gaps. *Glob Public Health*. 2021 Apr;16(4):563-577. doi: 10.1080/17441692.2020.1810296. Epub 2020 Sep 22. PMID: 32960742.

An assessment of menstrual hygiene management in secondary schools: <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/1256/file/Assessment-menstrual-hygiene-management-in-secondary-schools-2.jpg.pdf>

Aniete Ewang 'Nigeria Passes Disability Rights Law: Offers Hope of Inclusion, Improved Access'
Human Rights Watch 25 January 2019 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/01/25/nigeria-passes-disability-rights-law#:~:text=Nigeria%20ratified%20the%20United%20Nations,its%20Optional%20Protocol%20in%202010.&text=The%20law%20prohibits%20discrimination%20on,on%20those%20who%20contravene%20it>

Asishana, J. (2020, July 25). How COVID-19 is affecting birth registration - NPC. *The Nation*. <https://www.thenationonline.ng/how-covid-19-is-affecting-birth-registration-npc/>

Assessment of Women's Financial Inclusion (December, 2019) - Exec Summary.pdf (cbn.gov.ng)

Ayodele, J. O. (2016). Widows and inheritance hijacking practices in Ilara Mokin, Ondo state, Nigeria.

African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies: AJCJS, 9(1), 116-139. https://www.umes.edu/uploadedFiles/_WEBSITES/AJCJS/Content/VOL9.%20AYODELE%20%20FINAL.pdf

BBC. (n.d.). Dem rape me and marry me out three times to Boko Haram members - victim - BBC News Pidgin. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/tori-48804979>.

Beijing + 20 Country Report (2015). Abuja: Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

Beijing + 25 Country Report (2019). Abuja: Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development

Beijing platform and Declaration for Action https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf

Belo-Osagie, K. (2021, May 13). 'Don't pay illegal fees to register in Lagos schools'. Grand Citizen Federal Republic of Nigeria. <https://gcfng.com/2021/05/13/dont-pay-illegal-fees-to-register-in-lagos-schools/>

BraveHeart Initiative – BHI. [@bhinigeria]. (2019, August 1). BREAKING NEWS!!! Jacob Alonge has been sentenced to 21 consecutive years in prison!!!! 5 years for the first count possession. [Post]. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/B0nnxESAxKr/>

British Council. (n.d.). The Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC). <https://www.justice-security.ng/programmes/rolac>

Busari, S. (2021, February 27). Hundreds of schoolgirls abducted in Nigeria, government official says. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/02/26/africa/schoolgirls-abducted-nigeria-intl/index.html>

Busari, S. (2021, January 29). Several remaining missing Chibok schoolgirls escape from Boko Haram. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/01/29/africa/nigeria-chibok-girls-escape-intl/index.html>

Celestina, Ihayere, et al. "The Effects of the Niger Delta Oil Crisis on Women Folks." *Journal of African Studies and Development*, vol. 6, no. 1, Jan. 2014, pp. 14–21. DOI.org (Crossref), doi:10.5897/-JASD11.078.

Center for Global Development. (2019). *The New Economy of Africa: Opportunities for Nigeria's Emerging Technology Sector* (p. 34). Center for Global Development. Retrieved from <https://www.cgdev.org/reader/new-economy-africa-opportunities-nigerias-emerging-technology-sector?page=0>

Central Bank of Nigeria. (n.d.). CBN exchange rates. <https://www.cbn.gov.ng/rates/ExchRateByCurrency.asp>

Channels Television, 'PDP increases the cost of governorship form from N5m to N20m' <https://www.channelstv.com> 20th June 2019 (accessed 5 May 2021).

Child marriage in West and Central Africa: <https://www.unicef.org/wca/media/2596/file>

Children with disabilities more likely to experience violence: https://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2012/child_disabilities_violence_20120712/en/

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Knowledge Center. (2016). Nigeria: Marriage Act. <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/vitalstatkb/Attachment814.aspx?AttachmentType=1>

Closing the Digital Gender Gap in Nigeria: What Must Be Done: <https://aspilosfoundation.org.ng/2021/02/01/closing-the-digital-gender-gap-in-nigeria-what-must-be-done/>

Corporate Affairs Commission
Criminal Code Act, CAP C38. LFN 2004.

Cynthia Igodo, "Nigeria's Missing Multipliers: Vision 2020 and Nigeria's Legal Blindspot (2020) The Republic <https://republic.com.ng/april-may-2020/nigerias-missing-multipliers-women-vision-2020/>

Dachen, I. (2017, May 2). Woman arrested for burning nephew with hot iron in Kano (Video). Pulse NG. <https://www.pulse.ng/gist/child-abuse-woman-arrested-for-burning-nephew-with-hot-iron-in-kano-video/msbwk10>

Dada, A. (2021, April 13). Couple arrested for torturing 12-year-old boy with hot pressing iron in Kogi. Within Nigeria. <https://www.withinnigeria.com/news/2021/04/13/couple-arrested-for-torturing-12-year-old-boy-with-hot-pressing-iron-in-kogi/>

Denham, L., Fry, L., & Souza, S. (2020). Girls' education and COVID-19 in Nigeria. Malala Fund. https://assets.ctfassets.net/0oan5gk9rgbh/4SoYwXYgLMilWPqv-dikb0W/4d2ebc3b8289b2beaae33867d79af698/Nigeria_Report_22.pdf

Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension, Landmark University, P.M.B. 1001, Omu-Aran, Kwara State Nigeria, et al. "Enterprise Combinations in Cassava Based Food Crop Farming System in Nigeria: Evidence from Ogun State." *Greener Journal of Agricultural Sciences*, vol. 2, no. 1, Jan. 2012, pp. 013–20. DOI.org (Crossref), doi:10.15580/GJAS.2013.3.1216.

Deutsche Welle. (n.d.). People who make a difference: Children-Parliament (Nigeria). https://r-search.yahoo.com/_ylt=A0geKeNMpqNgtEgAplpXNyoA;_ylu=Y29sbwNiZjEEcG9zAzMEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3Ny/RV=2/RE=1621366476/RO=10/RU=https%3a%2f%2fwww.dw.com%2fdownloads%2f26640778%2fpeo-05nigeria-children-parliamentnigeriafinal.pdf/RK=2/RS=_Ul.e.KgJBA8n.3tCtWD4u0joNI-

Digital Skills in Sub-Saharan Africa: https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/ed6362b3-aa34-42ac-ae9f-c739904951b1/Digital+Skills_Final_WEB_5-7-19.pdf?MOD=AJPERES

Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities Act, 2018 <https://laws.lawnigeria.com/2019/04/02/-discrimination-against-persons-with-disabilities-prohibition-act-2019/>

DSVRT cases in March 2020: <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/amidst-covid-19-lock-down-nigeria-sees-increased-sexual-and-gender-violence>

DSVRT. [@dsvrt]. (2021, February 4). 1718 cases were reported for children with 977 female children accounting for 57% of reported cases while 741 male children. [Post]. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CK4MKekl9Kv/>

Education In Nigeria: <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/education>

Emordi, P. J., Nwamaka, P. I., Nnamani, V. S., & Augusta, C. O. (2020). Re-evaluating the Factors Confronting Quality Education in Secondary Schools in Delta State. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Applied Science (IJRIAS)*, 5(9), 124-132. &EXT=pdf&INDEX=TRUE

Empowerment: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Empowerment>

Environment Law In Nigeria - Energy and Natural Resources - Nigeria. <https://www.mondaq.com/nigeria/energy-law/53804/environment-law-in-nigeria>. Accessed 18 May 2021.

ESRC-Net. (2018, July 16). Mrs. Lois Chituru Ukeje and Enyinaya Lazarus Ukeje v. Mrs. Gladys Ada Ukeje, Supreme Court of Nigeria, SC. 224/2004. <https://www.esrc-net.org/caselaw/2018/mrs-lois-chituru-ukeje-and-enyinaya-lazarus-ukeje-v-mrs-gladys-ada-ukeje-supreme-court>

Federal Ministry of Health. (2013). National action plan for advancing the health and development of young people in Nigeria: 2010 -2014. <https://www.health.gov.ng/doc/IntegrationGuidelinesAYF-HS.pdf>

Federal Ministry of Health. (n.d.). Nigeria national standards & minimum service package for adolescent & youth-friendly health services (2018). <https://www.prb.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Nigeria-National-Standards-Minimum-Service-Package-for-Adolescent-Youth-Friendly-Health-Services-2018.pdf>

Federal Ministry of Water Resources (FMWR), Government of Nigeria, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), & UNICEF. (2020). Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: National Outcome Routine Mapping (WASH NORM) 2019: A Report of Findings. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/3576/-file/WASH%20NORM%20Report%202019.pdf>

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA NATIONAL BEIJING + 25 REVIEW PRODUCED BY THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF WOMEN AFFAIRS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Female Boko Haram members need tailor-made rehabilitation - Nigeria. ReliefWeb. (n.d.). <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/female-boko-haram-members-need-tailor-made-rehabilitation>.

FG takes action to improve education quality: <https://www.nelexnigeria.com/fg-takes-action-improve-education-quality>

Four strategies for helping women in fragile settings succeed in the digital economy: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/digital-development/four-strategies-helping-women-fragile-settings-succeed-digital-economy>

Fry, L., & Lei, P. (2020). Girls' education and COVID-19: What past shocks can teach us about mitigating the impact of pandemics. Malala Fund. https://downloads.ctfassets.net/0oan5gk9rgbh/6TMYLY-AcUpjhQpX-LDgmdla/3e1c12d8d827985ef2b4e815a3a6da1f/COVID19_GirlsEducation_corrected_071420.pdf

Gadzekpo, A.S. & Smith, M.S. (2020). Gender and Media. In Companion to Women's and Gender Studies, N.A. Naples (Ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119315063.ch13>
Demand-Contraceptive-Services-Northeast-Nigeria-Report.pdf

Ganor, B., & Wernli, M. (2013). (Rep.). International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT). Retrieved May 12, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09457>

Gbigbi, Theophilus Miebi. "Female Fish Farmers: How Technically Efficient Are They? Evidence from Delta State Nigeria." *Aquatic Research*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2021, pp. 250–59. DOI.org (Crossref), doi:10.3153/AR21019.

Gender Discriminatory Laws in Nigeria (2020) – ElectHer (elect-her.org)

GirlsNotBrides. (n.d.). Nigeria. <https://atlas.girlsnotbrides.org/map/nigeria/>

Harrington-Edmans, F. (2018, May 4). HIV response in Nigeria buckles under pressure of continued conflict with Boko Haram. *Avert*. <https://www.avert.org/news/hiv-response-nigeria-buckles-under-pressure-continued-conflict-boko-haram>.

Hazzad, A., & Muhammad, G. (2021, February 17). Gunmen kill student, kidnap 42 in attack on Nigerian school. *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-security-kidnap-ping-idUSKBN2AH14Y>

Hecht, R., Makinen, M., Wilson, P., Saxenian, H., Frankel, S., Ishtiaq, A., Thomas, M., Roland, M., Ohiri, K., & Filani, O. (2014). Spending to save: Challenges and opportunities for financing Nigeria's Saving One Million Lives Initiative. Results for Development Institute

<https://iwhc.org/2020/02/beijing25-young-feminists-set-agenda-at-africa-regional-meeting/>

https://mspgh.unimelb.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/3334889/Policy-brief_v3.pdf

<https://qz.com/africa/1926334/endsars-nigerian-government-looks-to-regulate-social-media/>

https://uneca.org/sites/default/files/Gender/Beijing25/nigeria-beijing25_report.pdf

https://uneca.org/sites/default/files/Gender/Beijing25/nigeria-beijing25_report.pdf

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/feminist-coalition-damilola-odufuwa-nigeria-women/>

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/feminist-coalition-nigeria-women-power-equality/>

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/feminist-coalition-odunayo-eweniyi-gender-nigeria/>

https://www.google.com/search?q=law+on+social+media+in+nigeria&rlz=1C1CHBD_enNG889NG889&oq=law+on+social+media+in+nigeria&aqs=chrome..69i57j0i22i30.8632j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8

<https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/>

https://www.oecd.org/dev/development-gender/BeijingPolicyBrief_Final_wreferences.pdf

<https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Beijing25-Accelerating-progress-for-Women-and-Girls.pdf>

https://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Beijing_Declaration_and_Platform_for_Action.pdf

Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 28, Article 3 (the equality of rights between men and women) UN Doc HRI/GEN/1/Rev.9 (Vol. I), 29 March 2000 https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/C-CPR/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/CCPR_C_21_Rev-1_Add-10_6619_E.pdf

Human Rights of Women - Humanities Libre Texts. https://human.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Gender_Studies/-Book%3A_Global_Women's_Issues_-_Women_in_the_World_Today/01%3A_Chapters/1.09%3A_Human_Rights_of_Women

ICT Policy Africa. (n.d.). Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc) Act, 2015. <https://ictpolicyafrica.org/en/document/h52z5b28pjr?page=1>

Idris, A. B. (2021). Kebbi: CSOs accuse lawmakers of frustrating Child Protection Bill. The Guardian. <https://www.guardian.ng/news/kebbi-csos-accuse-lawmakers-of-frustrating-child-protection-bill/>

Ifeoma, O., Adeline, N., & Tubo, V. (2018). Portrayal Of Women In Nigerian News Magazine. *Advances In Social Sciences Research Journal*, 5(4). doi: 10.14738/assrj.54.4387

Ijeoma Nkolika Aniekwu “The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Status of Implementation on the Right to Health Care in Nigeria” <https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1279&context=hrbrief#:~:text=NIGERIA'S%20FEDERAL%20GOVERNMENT%20ratified%20CEDAW%20in%201985%20without%20reservation.&text=Section%2012%20of%20the%20Constitution,they%20can%20be%20legally%20enforced>

Implementing vocational skills training among rural women for equal access to qualitative education. <http://www.bluepenjournals.org/ijrre/pdf/2014/April/Adeyemo.pdf>

Inclusive News Network. (2021, April 21). Lagos State Children’s Parliament remains a model in Nigeria – Permanent Secretary. <https://inclusivenews.com.ng/2021/04/21/10896-2/>

Industrial Skills Training Centre (ISTC), Ikeja: https://www.itf.gov.ng/skill_centres.php?centres=istc-ikeja

Integrating, collaborating, and building capacity for menstrual hygiene management: <https://www.ircwash.org/news/integrate-collaborate-build-capacity-%E2%80%93-kenyans-advise-mhm>

International Justice Resource Center “Women’s Human Rights” https://ijrcenter.org/thematic-research-guides/womens-human-rights/#MONITORING_ENFORCEMENT

International Labour Organization. (2014, August 26). ILO and Nigeria Launch National Child Labour Policy. https://www.ilo.org/africa/whats-new/WCMS_305200/lang--en/index.htm

Interpol. (2020). Threats and trends child sexual exploitation and abuse: COVID-19 impact. [file:///C:/Users/ADMIN/Downloads/COVID19%20-%20Child%20Sexual%20Exploitation%20and%20Abuse%20threats%20and%20trends%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/ADMIN/Downloads/COVID19%20-%20Child%20Sexual%20Exploitation%20and%20Abuse%20threats%20and%20trends%20(1).pdf)

IPU (2020). “Women in Parliaments-1995 - 2020”. Inter-Parliamentary Union. Accessed May 5, 2021. <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2020-03/-women-in-parliament-1995-2020-25-years-in-review>

IPU (2020). “Women in Parliaments”. Inter-Parliamentary Union. Accessed May 5, 2021. <https://www.ipu.org/women-in-parliament-2020>

IPU (2020). New IPU Maps Shows Women's Representation in Politics Stagnates. Accessed May 2021. <https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2017-03/new-ipu-and-un-women-map-shows-womens-representation-in-politics-stagnates>.

IPU (2021). "Women in Politics". Inter-Parliamentary Union. Accessed May 5, 2021. <https://www.ipu.org/news/women-in-politics-2021>

Itua, P. O. (2012). Legitimacy, legitimation and succession in Nigeria: An appraisal of Section 42(2) of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended on the rights of inheritance. *Journal of Law and Conflict Resolution*, 4(3), 31-44. <https://doi.org/10.5897/JLCR11.051>

Jonah, Aladi Alice and Nnanyelugo, Okoro M.(2020).Print Media Representation of Nigerian Women in the News: A Study of Four Selected National Newspapers.*Library Philosophy andPractice*. 3962

Leadwaycapital. (2018, October 31). Inheritance and customary laws in Nigeria. <https://www.leadwaycapital.com/inheritance-and-customary-laws-in-nigeria/#:~:text=Northern%20Nigeria%20largely%20operates%20using%20Sharia%20law.%20Under,of%20the%20deceased%20property%20is%20shared%20between%20them>.

Legal Information and Capacity Development on Land Rights | Gender and Land Rights Database | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/country-profiles/countries-list/civil-society-organizations/legal-information-and-capacity-development-on-land-rights/en/?country_iso3=NGA. Accessed 18 May 2021.

Maishana, A. A. (2020, September 8). Eight years after, Jigawa Assembly reintroduces repealed child protection law. *Premium Times*. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/n-west/413198-eight-years-after-jigawa-assembly-reintroduces-repealed-child-protection-law.html>

Makinde, O. A., Olapeju, B., Ogbuoji, O., & Babalola, S. (2016). Trends in the completeness of birth registration in Nigeria: 2002-2010. *Demographic Research*, 35(12), 315-338. <https://doi.org/10.4054/DemRes.2016.35.12>

McKay, S. (1998). The effects of armed conflict on girls and women. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 4(4), 381–392. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327949pac0404_6

Michael, D. (2021, February 23). Katsina children's parliament decries sexual abuse, molestation. The Guardian. <https://guardian.ng/news/katsina-childrens-parliament-decries-sexual-abuse-molestation/>

MirabelCentreNG. [@mirabelcentreng]. (2021, January 13). A family court in Cross River state sentenced Emmanuel Thompson Udo to 22 years imprisonment without the option of a. [Post]. Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/p/CJ_A-wfINjR/

MirabelCentreNG. [@mirabelcentreng]. (2021, January 21). Akwa Ibom State High Court sitting in Uyo has sentenced a 23 year old man, Iniobong Moses, to life imprisonment. [Post]. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CKTgT7eFr1g/>

MirabelCentreNG. [@mirabelcentreng]. (2021, January 28). Swipe! As one of our team members said, we hope Nura Asumoge enjoys his quarter of a century in prison. [Post]. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CKTgT7eFr1g/>

National Population Commission. [@natpopcom]. (2020, August 10). The Acting Chairman, Director-General and Honourable Federal Commissioners of @natpopcom in photo session with the first baby to be issued [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/natpopcom/status/1292952862385942529?s=19>

National Population Commission. [@natpopcom]. (2020, August 11). In response to the call by the UN Task Force, Nigerian Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 has on behalf of [Tweet]. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/natpopcom/status/1292961603495886848?s=19>

News Agency of Nigeria. (2018, November 21). Kwara bans public schools from collecting illegal fees. The Nation. <https://thenationonlineng.net/kwara-bans-public-schools-from-collecting-illegal-fees>

News Agency of Nigeria. (2019, September 16). Just in: 10,000 Nigerian girls forced into prostitution in Burkina Faso – Ambassador. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/09/just-in-10000-nigerian-girls-forced-into-prostitution-in-burkina-faso-ambassador/>

Nigeria - Skills Training and Vocational Education Project: <https://projectsportal.afdb.org/dataportal/VProject/show/P-NG-IA0-001>

National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) Sex Offenders Register:
<https://nsod.naptip.gov.ng/#>

National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking In Persons (NAPTIP). (n.d.). NAPTIP-Re-enactment-Act-1-GAZETTE-10001. <https://www.naptip.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/NAPTIP-Re-enactment-Act-1-GAZETTE-10001-1.pdf>

National Bureau of Statistics, Dec 2018 (Labor Force Statistics - Volume I: Unemployment and Under-employment Report)

National Bureau of Statistics, United nations Children's Fund. (2018). Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2016-2017. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/1406/file/Nigeria-MICS-2016-17.pdf.pdf>

National Bureau of Statistics, United nations Children's Fund. (2018). Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2016-2017. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/1406/file/Nigeria-MICS-2016-17.pdf.pdf>

National Gender Policy of Nigeria, 2006 <https://nigerianwomentrustfund.org/wp-content/uploads/National-Gender-PolicySituation-Analysis.pdf>

National Legal Framework | Gender and Land Rights Database | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/country-profiles/countries-list/national-legal-framework/en/?country_iso3=NGA. Accessed 18 May 2021.

National Population Commission (NPC), & ICF. (2019). Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2018. NPC and ICF. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR359/FR359.pdf>

National Population Commission (NPC), & ICF. (2019). Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2018. NPC and ICF. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR359/FR359.pdf>

National Population Commission (NPC). (2014). Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2013: Preliminary report. NPC. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/PR41/PR41.pdf>

National Population Commission of Nigeria, UNICEF Nigeria, & the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2014). Violence Against Children in Nigeria: Findings from a National Survey 2014. http://www.togetherforgirls.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2014_Nigeria_Findings-from-a-Violence-Against-Children-Survey_fullreport.pdf

Nigeria IOM NIGERIA COVID-19 SITUATION ANALYSIS 3. (n.d.). <https://displacement.iom.int/system/tdf/reports/-COVID%20-%2019%20Situation%20Report%20-%20North%20Central%20and%20North%20West%20Nigeria%203.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=11215>.

Nigeria launches first national sex offenders register. (2019). Retrieved 17 May 2021, from <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/11/26/nigeria-launches-first-national-sex-offenders-register#:~:text=Nigeria%20has%20launched%20its%20first,for%20sexual%20violence%20since%202015>

Nigeria Law. (n.d.). Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999. http://www.nigeria-law.org/ConstitutionOfTheFederalRepublicOfNigeria.htm#Chapter_1

Nigeria Law. (n.d.). Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999. http://www.nigeria-law.org/ConstitutionOfTheFederalRepublicOfNigeria.htm#Chapter_2

Nigeria Law. (n.d.). Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999. http://www.nigeria-law.org/ConstitutionOfTheFederalRepublicOfNigeria.htm#Chapter_4

NIGERIA SEX WORKERS ASSOCIATION. (2017). Shadow Report: On the situation of Sex Workers in Nigeria. Abuja: NIGERIA SEX WORKERS ASSOCIATION.

Nigeria: <https://malala.org/countries/nigeria> Oladiji, S. (2020). Registrar braves COVID-19 to document Nigeria's children. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/stories/registrar-braves-covid-19-document-nigerias-children>

Olarinoye, G. (2018, February 9). NGO, govt wage war against female genital mutilation in Osun. Vanguard. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/02/ngo-govt-wage-war-female-genital-mutilation-osun/>

Oliha, F. O., Ebietomere, E. P., & Ekuobase, G. O. (2019). An electronic birth record management system for Nigeria. *Nigeria Journal of Technology (NIJOTECH)*, 38(3), 763-768. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/njt.v38i3.31>

Oluokun, A. (2020, November 24). Sex slavery, child prostitution on alarming increase in Rivers – Group. *PM News*. <https://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2020/11/24/sex-slavery-child-prostitution-on-alarming-increase-in-rivers-group/>

Oni, B. A. (2014). Discriminatory property inheritance rights under the Yoruba and Igbo customary law in Nigeria: The need for reforms. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*, 19(2), 30-43. https://www.academia.edu/attachments/34090922/download_file?ct=MTYyMDkzNzI1MiwxNjIwOTM3MjUyLDE5MDU1OTk3Mw==&s=swp-toolbar&iid=bfe05736-e673-4291-b7e0-3c472d452d6a

Pandemic effect on girls' education and child marriage: <https://www.unfpa.org/news/millions-more-cases-violence-child-marriage-female-genital-mutilation-unintended-pregnancies>

Partners West Africa Nigeria. (n.d.). Child Rights Act Tracker. <https://www.partnersnigeria.org/childs-rights-law-tracker/>

Peter, O. (2019, August 4). Video: Lady from 'hell' maltreat young boy, traps him inside dog cage in Nsukka. *Within Nigeria*. <https://www.withinnigeria.com/2019/08/04/video-lady-from-hell-maltreat-young-boy-traps-him-inside-dog-cage-in-nsukka/>

PH. (2020). Deaconess arrested for allegedly burning her ward's genitals and butt with lighter (WARNING: Graphic photos). *Nigeriana News*. <https://nigeriana.news/deaconess-arrested-for-allegedly-burning-her-wards-genitals-and-butt-with-lighter-warning-graphic-photos.html>

Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre. (n.d.). Child's Right Act. <https://placng.org/lawsofnigeria/laws/C50.pdf>

Sánchez, E., & Rodriguez, L. (2019). Period poverty: Everything you need to know. *Global Citizen*. <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/period-poverty-everything-you-need-to-know/>

Save The Children. (n.d.). National Policy on Food and Nutrition in Nigeria. <https://nigeria.savethechildren.net/sites/nigeria.savethechildren.net/files/library/NPFN%20manual%20design%20%20v13.pdf>

Senate Passes Sexual Harassment Bill, 2020 – Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre. (2020). Retrieved 17 May 2021, from <https://placng.org/i/senate-passes-sexual-harassment-bill-2020/>

Sexual assault and the LGBT community: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/sexual-assault-and-the-lgbt-community>

Shuaibu, I. (2021, February 8). Kano Transmits Child Rights Bill to State Assembly for Passage. This Day. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/02/08/kano-transmits-child-rights-bill-to-state-assembly-for-passage/>

Sieff, K. (2016, April 3). They were freed from Boko Haram's rape camps. But their nightmare isn't over. The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/af-rica/they-were-freed-from-boko-harams-rape-camps-but-their-nightmare-isnt-over/2016/04/03/dbf2aab0-e54f-11e5-a9ce-681055c7a05f_story.html.

Singateh, M. F. (2021). Impact of coronavirus disease on different manifestations of sale and sexual exploitation of children. <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/46/31>

Six years ago, Boko Haram kidnapped 276 schoolgirls. Where are they now? <https://www.national-geographic.com/magazine/article/six-years-ago-boko-haram-kidnapped-276-schoolgirls-where-are-they-now>

Spotlight Initiative. (n.d.). Nigeria. <https://spotlightinitiative.org/nigeria>

statisca.com

The Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. (n.d.). Nigeria: Consultancy for the development of a national and state plan of action on ending violence against children in Nigeria. <https://www.alliancecpha.org/en/child-protection-vacancies-jobs-positions/nigeria-consultancy-development-national-and-state-plan>

The Global Findex database 2017: <https://globalfindex.worldbank.org/>

The Guardian Tallen hails move to create 111 special seats for women in NASS' 2 May 2021
<https://guardian.ng/news/tallen-hails-move-to-create-111-special-seats-for-women-in-nass/>

The Nation. (2017, February 28). Rivers govt committed to ending illegal fees in public schools.
<https://thenationonlineng.net/rivers-govt-committed-ending-illegal-fees-public-schools/>

The Penal Code Act, CAP P3 LFN 2004.

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, 1993 <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Vienna.aspx>

Tijani-Adenle, G. (2019). Women in Nigerian News Media: Status, Experiences and Structures (Ph.D).
De Montfort University, Leicester.

Trends of inequality in access to schooling in Nigeria – Evidence from three DHS surveys (2003, 2008 and 2013): <https://edorennigeria.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/edoren-in-equalities-in-access-to-schooling.pdf>

Tunji Akande, 2014 Youth Unemployment in Nigeria: A Situation Analysis <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2014/09/23/youth-unemployment-in-nigeria-a-situation-analysis/>

U.S. Department of Labour. (2020). 2019 findings on the worst forms of child labour: Nigeria.
https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2019/Nigeria.pdf

U.S. Department of Labour. (2020). 2019 findings on the worst forms of child labour: Nigeria.
https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/child_labor_reports/tda2019/Nigeria.pdf

U.S. Department of Labour. (n.d.). Child Labor and forced labor reports: Nigeria. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/nigeria>

Ujam, A. N. (2019, December 26). Child marriage in Nigeria: Wedded to poverty. <https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/child-marriage-nigeria-wedded-poverty>

UN Women

UN-Water. "Gender." UN-Water, <https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/gender/>. Accessed 18 May 2021.

UNESCO. (2020). How many students are at risk of not returning to school? <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373992>

UNFPA, UNICEF. (2018). Child Marriage in West and Central Africa at a glance. <https://www.unicef.org/wca/media/2596/file#:~:text=As%20the%20most%20populous%20country,has%204.1%20million%20child%20brides.>
Unicef

UNICEF Data. (2021). Early childbearing. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-health/adolescent-health/>

UNICEF Nigeria. (2017). UNICEF Nigeria equity profile: Education. https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/1631/file/Nigeria-equity-profile-education_0.pdf.pdf

UNICEF Nigeria. (2019). Nigeria: Child protection. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/2836/-file/UNICEF%20Nigeria%20child%20protection%20fact%20sheet.pdf>

UNICEF Nigeria. (n.d.). Child Protection. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/child-protection>

UNICEF. (2015). An assessment of menstrual hygiene management in schools. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/media/1256/file/Assessment-menstrual-hygiene-management-in-secondary-schools-2.jpg.pdf>

UNICEF. (2016, November 22). Universal Children's Day: A wake-up call on child rights violations. Reliefweb. <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/universal-children-s-day-wake-call-child-rights-violations#:~:text=Nigeria%20ratified%20the%20Convention%20on,childhood%20for%20every%20human%20being>

UNICEF. (n.d.). Education. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/education>

UNICEF. (n.d.). Ending violence against children in Nigeria: A multi-sectoral response to the 2014 Nigeria Violence Against Children Survey. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/reports/ending-violence-against-children-nigeria>

United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner "Women's Rights are Human Rights" (2014) New York and Geneva HR/PUB/14/2 <https://www.ohchr.org/documents/events/whrd/womenrightsarehr.pdf>

Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC). Who we are. [https://www.ubec.gov-ng/about/who-we-are/](https://www.ubec.gov.ng/about/who-we-are/)

Untitled. <https://nigerianwomentrustfund.org/>. Accessed 18 May 2021.

Uwaezuoke, C. N. (2019). Out-of-school children in Nigeria: Making extant legislations count. *Interdisciplinary Journal of African & Asian Studies*, 5(2), 1-10. <https://nigerianjournalsonline.com/index.php/ijaas/article/download/491/482>

Uwandu, E. (2019, March 20). Delta govt frowns at unauthorised, illegal fees collection in public schools. *Vanguard*. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/03/delta-govt-frowns-at-unauthorised-illegal-fees-collection-in-public-schools/>

Uzor, Darlington. (2019). Young Women's Struggle for Political Participation in Nigeria: Examining the "Not Too Young to Run" Movement.

Water Issues Are Women's Issues. <https://wellawareworld.org/blog/water-issues-are-womens-issues>. Accessed 18 May 2021.

Webmaster. (2019, August 2). World Bank partners Ekiti government to tackle gender-based violence, genital mutilation. Abiodun Aborisade. <https://abiodunborisade.com/world-bank-partners-ekiti-government-to-tackle-gender-based-violence-genital-mutilation/>

Welle (www.dw.com), Deutsche. "Living Planet: Women Protest Niger Delta Oil Pollution | DW | 15.04.2021." *DW.COM*, <https://www.dw.com/en/living-planet-women-protest-niger-delta-oil-pollution/av-57214219>. Accessed 18 May 2021.

Women in agriculture, changing the gender gap in development

Women's Economic Empowerment: Advocating for Improved Access to Finance for Women Entrepreneurs in Nigeria: <https://www.cipe.org/blog/2020/03/18/womens-economic-empowerment-advocating-for-improved-access-to-finance-for-women-entrepreneurs-in-nigeria/>

World Bank Group 'Women, Business and the Law 2019' <https://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/702301554216687135/WBL-DECADE-OF-REFORM-2019-WEB-04-01.pdf>

World Health Organisation. (2018). The invisible boys and girls: Understanding barriers to accessing healthcare among disadvantaged Nigerian youth. <https://www.afro.who.int/news/invisible-boys-and-girls-understanding-barriers-accessing-healthcare-among-disadvantaged>

World Health Organisation. (2020, January 31). Adolescent pregnancy. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-pregnancy>

YIAGA Africa Initiative (2019), Factsheets on Youth and the 2019 Elections in Nigeria. Accessed May 28, 2021. <https://www.yiaga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Fact-sheet-on-youth-and-the-2019-elections-in-Nigeria.pdf>

YIAGA Africa Report (2019) How Youth Fared in 2019 Accessed May 28, 2021. <https://www.yiaga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/HOW-YOUTH-FARED-IN-2019-ELECTIONS-1.pdf>

"Zamfara State PDP Ward 2 Group. (2021, February 8). Child Rights Act: Zamfara state in collaboration with Save the Children International deliberating reviewing draft for "Child Protection Law" [Video]. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=412593673143891&_rdr



Vision Spring Initiatives

2B Kofoworola Street, Dele Kuti Estate Beach Road,
Ebute Ikorodu Lagos Nigeria

+234 8023412994 +234 8183346356
visionspringinitiatives@yahoo.com
<http://visionspringinitiatives.org/about-us/>
@vsi_ng Instagram @vsi_ng
f Vision Spring Initiatives



978-978-993-969-5