

Annual Report

VISION SPRING INITIATIVES

RC No. 908183



Vision Spring Initiatives

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Our Thematic Areas

<p>Gender Justice</p> <p>This is Central and the core of VSI programming.</p>	<p>Participatory leadership/ women's decision-making</p> <p>Through VSI various programs women and girls have taken ownership of their bodies and voices</p>
<p>Sexual and reproductive health and rights</p> <p>Through partnerships our voices are amplified and greater results are achieved.</p>	<p>Education/Research</p> <p>VSI contributes to learning and results that impact women, girls and vulnerable groups</p>

The Year in Numbers

WORKSHOPS ATTENDED

35 CAMPAIGNS ATTENDED

5 TRAININGS OF TRAINERS

3 MEDIA EVENTS ATTENDED 2

PUBLICATIONS

Individuals reached

WOMEN 2,000,000.00

MEN 500

GIRLS 109

Boys 200

KEY INFLUENCERS 117

Media

Executive Summary

We are excited to report the milestones we achieved in year 2022! By the first week of the month of January we already knew it was going to be a super busy year. We had left 2021 thinking that our workload was a lot and had plans to focus a bit on self-care. Recall that countries were jumping out from the crazy impact of covid-19. 2022 saw us partnering even more to rebuild our fragile human rights space.

The records on human rights had not gotten any better, if anything, it had gotten worse. Insurgency attacks got worse and many men and women were abducted. One of such attacks was the Abuja train attack which lasted for more than 90 days. Towards the end of the year there was more bad news as floods ravaged all parts of Nigeria leaving many homeless.

Disregard for human right was widespread. We saw egregious systematic human rights violations rampant, impunity, rising hate speech, misogyny, exclusion and discrimination, social polarization and loss of civility, environmental degradation and unequal access to resources and opportunities.

The social implications of the flooding have far more casualties than can be seen, with Nigerian women and girls suffering the greatest losses across major industries. Nigerian women are among the lowest paid people in the country. In Nigeria, more than 50% of women are non-professional employees who rely primarily on menial jobs; farming is one of the main sources of income in the country. Nigerian women, who make their living from farming and animal husbandry, are responsible for approximately ¹70% of the nation's food output. The flood has drowned and ruined more than 200,000 hectares of farming land across the impacted states in Nigeria, with severe repercussions for women's financial empowerment and well-being. They have no crops to grow or animals to breed, so they are unable to return to their farms and engage in productive labor. This means that many households will be relying on seedlings stored for further use for survival, while uneducated families might consider withdrawing their girl children from school.

Human rights is currently one of the largest issues on a global scale as millions of men, women and children are forced into labor and sexual exploitation. Religious extremism remains an issue and common in many parts of the world.

Education has not witnessed better outcome as many children due to fear of attack and kidnap stay at home to avoid being trapped. ²The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has decried the number of out-of-school girls in the country, saying that over 60 percent of 10 million out-of-school children in Nigeria are girls. Girl child Education reduces inequality: Illiteracy is one of the biggest causes of poverty. Primary education is a lifter for girls, ethnic

¹

² July 23, 2022, Vanguard Newspapers

minorities, orphans, disabled people, rural families and those who are likely to be poor. By providing them education, they become relevant to the nation and its growth. The girl child is critical to transforming communities, reducing inequalities, and strengthening economies. We are hoping that the government will remove all barriers to girl child education such as poverty, child marriage and gender-based violence as they continue to hamper education. Poor families often favor boys when investing in education. In some places, schools do not meet the safety, hygiene or sanitation needs of girls.

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.

Women's leadership and participation in politics has not received the attention it requires. In April 2022, Vision Spring Initiatives alongside 9 other sister organizations won a landmark judgement in favor of women's participation through the 35% Affirmative Action. It is our hope that this judgement which has been acknowledged as success for African women spurs the government to review other areas of leadership in the country and ensure equal representation for men and women.

³The United Nations (UN), has decried the low number of female candidates contesting in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria, describing the development as unacceptable and appalling. This is as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), urged political parties to respect their constitutions to ensure internal democracy in the political parties and promote good governance. Nigeria is just 4.1 per cent in the parliament as we speak at the national parliament, while in other countries like Rwanda it is 67 percent, Senegal is about 57 per cent. Patriarchy, societal beliefs, and religious beliefs, violence and money politics continue to serve as bottle necks to women's inclusion.

Nigeria is signatory to numerous international treaties for the protection of women and girls with attendant obligations of making laws to keep track of international legal documents. We hope that as Nigeria goes into elections in 2023 there is political will to make women's voices count and that the year brings us closer to a better world where women and girls are

³ By Sodiq Omolaoye, Abuja, 30 November 2022

prioritized by our governments at all levels. Come 2024 we look forward to counting gains and not losses.

Organisational Background

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

Our vision: A society where gender equality and social justice becomes part of everyday life.

Our mission: Is to provide our constituents- Women, girls and other minority groups' with practical tools for self-development, voice and action through research, education, advocacy and movement building.

We strongly believe that fundamental rights are interrelated, inalienable and inseparable and cannot be achieved in isolation. We therefore focus on the following thematic areas towards achieving our mandate:

1. Gender justice and inclusion (Central and the core of VSI programming)
2. Education and Research
3. Participatory Leadership/Political education
4. Sexual and reproductive health and rights
5. Partnerships and Movement building

Our objectives

- To promote gender equality in all spheres of our programming and develop literary skills amongst women and young persons.
- To advocate for the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people and vulnerable groups
- To promote and advance education and research in Nigeria
- To promote participatory leadership and advance youth inclusion in decision making
- To engage with strategic stakeholders and demand implementation of Laws and Policies that guarantee the rights of citizens
- To collaborate with like-minded organizations and find areas of knowledge sharing and build strategic partnerships.

Our target Beneficiaries:

Children, young people, minority and vulnerable persons made vulnerable by laws, policies and practices.

1. GENDER JUSTICE

Gender justice is central and the core of VSI programs. Discrimination and violence against women and girls are major causes of poverty all over the world. Ensuring that women and men / boys and girls benefit equally is at the core of all VSI intervention programs. Gender justice and equality therefore underpin all our work and interventions.

Project under Gender Justice-

Policy Advocacy-VSI's policy advocacy project enables it to engage in advocacy to promote the inclusion of women and girls in Laws and policies relating to gender, as well as the enactment of these Laws and the Constitutional commitments towards equality and closing of gender gaps.



Women's lives matter: A protest march for sexual and reproductive justice

Legal Reform –VSI's legal reform project enables it to challenge obnoxious and discriminatory Laws, asking for their repeal and demanding institutionalization and implementation of Laws that respect in equal terms the rights and dignity of women/men and boys/girls.

Interpretation and Simplification of Laws – This initiative provides the opportunity for young people to benefit from interpretation and simplifications of Laws to enable them use these Laws to hold governments accountable and demand implementation of these Laws. The Laws are simplified for different age groups and for easy grasping for the users.

2. Education and Research:

Vision Spring Initiatives Girl Impact Project enables young girls and a few boys to 'unlearn' gender stereotypes and gain knowledge on gender and SRHR. While girls learn that they can undertake any role and responsibilities if they are provided with the

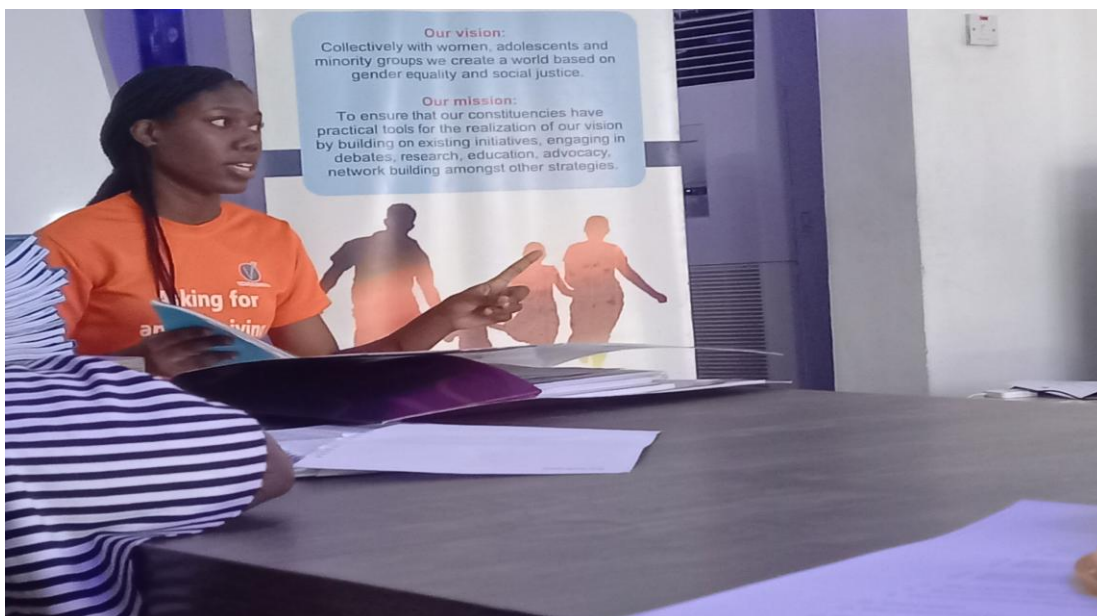
knowledge they require, boys learn to respect girls and ultimately become 'champions' in challenging stereotypes. This is one VSI's long term project and plan to charge a fee for the education as a means of sustaining the organization. Through Vision Spring Initiative's gender Manuals, young people's reading culture will be enhanced.



Cross-section of participants at a training facilitated by Seun-VSI Program Officer

VSI's Gender and human rights Institute Project- for gender trainings, curriculum review and development, including ensuring they are relevant to time and needs, teacher training, counsellors, school debates.

Research –All interventions promote evidence-based research.



Tobi Ayodele of VSI sharing knowledge with VSI volunteers

3. **Participatory Leadership / Political education Project**

Project under Participatory Leadership/Political Education-

Participatory and horizontal approach to leadership- VSI's leadership project draw from many years of partnering and engaging in leadership approaches that are inclusive and horizontal, respecting diversity, enhancing communication skills, every body's input and commitment and sharing results and challenges.

VSI's Political Education Project- election preparation, preparation as voters and those to be voted, school clubs on elections and citizenship, manifestoes and preparing youth for elections and violence free elections.

4. **Sexual and reproductive health and rights Project:** {Sexual and reproductive health and rights-from a development perspective}

Project under Sexual and reproductive health and rights' project

Women and young peoples' sexual and reproductive health and rights remain the most debated issue including lack of its inclusion as a development issue: Comprehensive sexuality education, information about life skills, communication strategies, diversities, bodily autonomy, bodily care, self-esteem, VAWG, sexual violence and responding to them.



5. **Partnerships and Movement Building:** {Youth represent developed and on-going development. They have passions, determination and constitute half of the world's population}.



Project under Network/exchange Program / Youth Outreach

This space enables young people and other groups to dialogue and reach a consensus, understanding and yearnings of young people. It creates safe space for exchange, information sharing, dialogues, debates, peace initiatives amongst others.

1. Gender Justice (Central and the core of VSI programming)

Gender justice is at the core of the work we do at Vision Spring Initiatives. In the year under review, we partnered with sister organisations in Nigeria to handle cases that pertain to women. We supported ending all forms of violence against women and girls in Nigeria. A total of 22 cases were reported to the organization, while a few referrals were made. The organization continues to partner with relevant agencies and sister organisations to push for rights realization for women and girls. Some of the cases referred was violence against children which was reported to the Child Protection Network of which VSI is a member. We also referred cases such as battery and assault to the Ministry for Women Affairs, Ministry of Justice and Mirabel centre. Two cases were reported to the human rights desk at Ikpakodo police station. We continued to provide counselling and psychosocial support on cases of spousal abuse and support women who desired to quit abusive marriage or relationships. **We now have dedicated line for handling cases of violence against women and are currently popularizing this number through our social media spaces: We plan to engage dedicated staff and popularize our hot lines so that women and girls can receive the justice they deserve through counselling psychosocial support and referral. +234802 038 2518**

Vision Spring Initiatives joined its Child Protection Network partners in Ikorodu to celebrate children's day. The aim was to connect with the children and make them feel a part of society and to create awareness on their safety and security. Mrs. Bukola Owokodu the coordinator of CPN Ikorodu coordinated the event with inputs from other members. The participants from different schools learnt skills including knowledge on ending sexual abuse; a harmful act which they are expected to report to trusted adults.



VSI representatives at the event

Representatives from different organizations were asked to compete in a number of fun games which thrilled the young persons.



Cross section of participants at the event

VSI representative Mary Fakunmoju thought the participants a song about self-confidence. Asked what they learnt from the song they mentioned self- confidence, how to control their choices, kindness and body boundaries. Medical personnel were also invited to make a presentation on menstrual hygiene. The presenter described menstrual hygiene as the blood flow from a female’s vagina. She gave tips on how to be hygienic during and after menstruation. This she said will be achieved through bathing regularly, changing the sanitary pad at least thrice in a day, avoid using soap or any foreign product on the private part and Washing the vagina regularly with clean water.

Shortly after, MaryAnn Adegoke, (Mrs.) CPN Eti-Osa LG Coordinator gave a follow up on the step down training she attended on mental health. She also enlightened participants on attending training on managing stress which she stated can help individuals cope with the stress that comes with the work. She made mention of the children on the street and how trainings should be done to help them leave the street including having talks with the parents of the children if they can be located. Others include teaching them parental skills and help them get soft loans to start businesses. Rev. Oyediji (care giver) who was invited for the step down training in Abuja for International Migration Organization (IOM) gave a recap on how 40 Stakeholders were brought together in the training to help migrants, as their numbers are getting high.

Mr. Olakunle Sanni, The National Secretary raised a suggestion on training families to take up children from the street, orphanages and other places in individual local government areas.

Iyaniwura opposed the motion stating that it is the responsibility of the government to establish homes for indigent children.

The Network at the national level held its annual follow up meeting to strengthen the network and also to inaugurate new NGO's members. The aim was to help integrate new members and highlight the challenges of field work as Child Protection Network Officers.



Leadership of the Child Protection Network in Lagos state

Other partnership the organization engaged with in 2022 are members of the Community of Action (COA) comprising 9 organisations partnering with HIVOS and Education as a Vaccine under the 'We lead' Project to implement activities for the realization of the sexual and reproductive health and rights of girls with disabilities, young persons living with HIV and hard-to-reach communities. The organization is also working in 6 states of the South West of Nigeria; Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Ekiti, Ondo and Osun.

Through this intervention the organization has formed alliances with sister organisations in these states. An example is partnership with Lagos state which led to support for an indigent woman who received popcorn machine to support her business. Another is the registration with Oyo state ministry for women affairs which also supported an indigent woman through Vision Spring Initiatives. The Osun state government is seeking to partner with VSI to set up implementation plan for SRHR action plan in the state. Through its partnership with NSWA Abuja, many organisations and 120 marginalised women received capacity strengthening on advocacy for policy review.



Cross section of young people at VSI's SRHR training in Oyo state

The organization increased its membership in 2022 with the following partners:

- ✓ COA members – “We lead” HIVOS project implementers in Nigeria
- ✓ Ministry for Women Affairs – Oyo state
- ✓ Partnership with religious and traditional rulers
- ✓ Partnership with organisations of persons living with HIV
- ✓ Partnership with organisations of persons with disabilities
- ✓ Partnership with Education as a Vaccine (EVA)
- ✓ Partnership with Spaces for Change
- ✓ Partnership with Feminists women’s group
- ✓ Federal Ministry for Women Affairs
- ✓ Interfaith Diversity Network of West Africa
- ✓ Gender updates group
- ✓ Lagoswomen2030
- ✓ Justice Support Network
- ✓ Lagos state Covid-19 CSOS
- ✓ Nigeria Universal Health Coverage Advocacy group
- ✓ Connecting the Dot Platform
- ✓ Domestic and Sexual Violence response team and NGOs platform
- ✓ Legal strategy team
- ✓ Child Protection Network
- ✓ Action group Free Civic spaces
- ✓ Spaces for Change
- ✓ Coalition for the Defence of Sexual Rights
- ✓ Lagos state Ministry for Women Affairs and Social Development



Cross section of workshop participants at the SRHR training organized in Ogun state

The organization continued to respond to collaborations, signature campaigns condemning and challenging violence against women and girls and others made vulnerable by laws, policies and practices.

2. Education and Research

Following the impact of COVID-19, remote learning became a trend that is being embraced by educational institutions in Nigeria. This is the virtual reality trends in education technology. It has been estimated that 11 million girls may not return to school because of COVID-19 pandemic, thereby increasing their risk of child marriage. Nigeria is yet to have a 100% enrolment for girls as desired by the provisions of the Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women (BWCW) Platform for Action (PFA). 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.** Vision Spring Initiatives' work with its girl impact is yielding results as the over 200 beneficiaries who graduated from 2 schools in Lagos are currently seeking admission into higher institutions. We hope to keep contact with them and ensure that they become advocates for rights promotion in Nigeria.

3. Participatory Leadership / Political education Project

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

4. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Comprehensive Sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls still have not received adequate attention. Through support from Global Fund for Women, VSI launched the first weekly Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights radio show titled What-n-Where Radio show. One opportunity the



VSI staff and volunteers pay advocacy visit to IGP in Abia state

5. Partnerships and Movement Building

Partnership continues to be one of Vision Spring Initiatives strong point. In 2022, the organization partnered with the following partners to achieve its goal in the power of partnership and movement building. Through support from Global Fund for Children, the organisation held series of interventions on generation equality.

Our target Beneficiaries:

Children, young people, minority and vulnerable persons made vulnerable by laws, policies and practices.

1. Gender Justice

Gender justice is central to Vision Spring Initiatives' programming and a core component of our mission to promote a society where gender equality and social justice becomes part of everyday life. In Nigeria, gender-based violence and discrimination against women and girls remains a significant challenge. According to UN Women, 30% of women in Nigeria experience physical or sexual violence by their partner and only 5% seek help from the police or health services. Women and girls are also disproportionately affected by poverty and have limited access to education and economic opportunities, with female literacy rates at 59% compared to 74% for males.

Our work in gender justice focuses on promoting gender equality in all spheres of our programming and developing literacy skills among women and young people. Through research, education, advocacy, and movement building, we aim to empower women and girls to advocate for their rights and access opportunities to achieve their full potential.

To address this issue, Vision Spring Initiatives, in partnership with Action Group on Free Civic Space, conducted two Zoom webinars and a 13-week radio program to raise awareness about gender justice. The initiative also established a Feminist Hub as a resource center for information on shrinking civic space.

Shrinking Civic Space:
GENDERED APPROACH TO A SECURE NIGERIA
THURSDAYS 12PM

Topic
Triggers, tactics and enablers of security-based restrictions on civil society in Nigeria

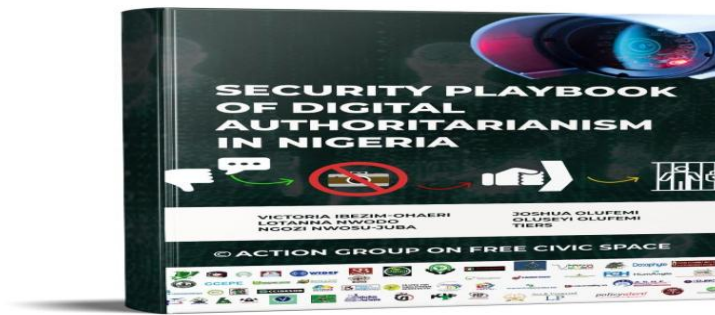
Guest: Rafiu Lawal
Executive Director
Building Blocks for Peace Foundation

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Initiated by Vision Spring Initiatives & supported by The Fund for Global Human Rights

The goal of Vision Spring Initiatives' research, titled "Shrinking Civic Space: Gendered Approach to a Secure Nigeria," was to create a safe society where the human rights of women and girls are protected and to understand the role of CSOs in the shrinking of civic space. The topics discussed in the webinars included:

- The concept of "Free Civic Space"
- Vision Spring Initiatives' and other CSOs' plans to address the issue of shrinking civic space



Publication on shrinking civic space by VSI and members of Action Group on Free Civic Space

The weekly radio program included guest speakers who addressed the following subjects:

- The scope of civic space
- Categories of insecurity-based restrictions on civic space
- The impact of insurgency and terrorism on women, girls, and women's human rights defenders
- The effects of national security measures on sexual minorities
- Triggers, tactics, and facilitators of security-based restrictions on civil society in Nigeria
- The vulnerability of women and girls to acts of terrorism and militarism
- Patterns of attacks faced by women activists and human rights defenders
- Laws protecting the rights and freedoms of women in conflict situations
- Opportunities for pushback
- Recommendations for mainstreaming a gendered approach in countering terrorism initiatives
- Restrictive security regulations



VSI's feminist hub for disseminating information on free civic space

The Feminist Hub, located on Vision Spring Initiatives' website, serves as a resource center for information on shrinking civic space and highlights the efforts of civil society organizations and other groups to reclaim this space. The Hub includes posts about shrinking civic space for people to view and stay informed about the topic.

2. Education and Research

Education and research play a critical role in promoting young girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). In Nigeria, a lack of access to quality education and limited investment in research has contributed to poor SRHR outcomes for girls.

Access to education is a fundamental human right that empowers individuals, particularly adolescents and women, to shape their lives and contribute to the development of their communities. Unfortunately, Nigeria faces significant challenges in providing quality education to all its citizens. In addition to the poor state of infrastructure and inadequate funding, socio-cultural and economic factors limit the educational opportunities of young adolescent and women.

According to UNICEF, only 53% of girls in Nigeria are enrolled in primary school, and this figure drops to just 27% for secondary school. This low educational attainment has a direct impact on girls' SRHR, with low levels of education linked to early marriage, unintended pregnancies, and limited access to healthcare. The recent directive of Nigeria's federal government to exclude sex education from the basic education curriculum raises concerns about the government's commitment to promoting comprehensive sexuality education.



VSI graduates more than 100 adolescents from De Keepers school

To address this issue, Vision Spring Initiatives, with support from Global Fund for Women have successfully graduated over 200 girls and a few boys through the SRHR school project, known as the Girl Impact Project. **This project aimed to provide comprehensive sexuality education to adolescents and young people in secondary schools, particularly in Lagos State, where it was implemented for two years. Our partner schools, De-Keeper's School in Ikorodu and Sceptre International School in Kosofe, were impressed with the results and impact of the project on the graduates.** VSI partnered with relevant agencies such as the Lagos State Ministry for Women's Affairs to award special recognition for their efforts during the implementation of the project. The ceremony was attended by representatives from the Education Ministry, the Child Protection Network, and VSI volunteers.



Representatives from the Education Ministry, the Child Protection Network, and the Project Director and the programs officer at VSI presenting an award to the principal of De-Keepers school, Ikorodu.

3. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Adolescent girls and young women in Nigeria face significant challenges in accessing sexual and reproductive health services, including stigma, discrimination, and lack of information. According to the Guttmacher Institute (2018), approximately 62% of unintended pregnancies in Nigeria occur among women aged 15-24, highlighting the need for improved access to family planning and reproductive health services. Also, a report issued by the United Nations Population Fund, UNFPA, entitled: "2022 State of the World Population (SWOP)" said that one in two pregnancies take place in the bodies of girls who did not affirmatively choose pregnancy or motherhood and an estimated 257 million women who want to avoid pregnancy are not using safe, modern methods of contraception, and where that is available, nearly a quarter of all women are not able to say no to sex.



Tobi Ayodele trains media on ending gender stereotypes against vulnerable persons in Nigeria

The report also stated that 60 percent of unintended pregnancies end in abortion and an estimated 45 percent of all abortions are unsafe, causing 5 – 13 percent of all maternal deaths, thereby having a major impact on the world's ability to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. Ensuring young girls and women have access to comprehensive sexuality education, affordable and quality SRH services, and contraceptives can prevent unintended pregnancies, reduce maternal mortality and morbidity, and improve their overall health outcomes. VSI's work in promoting access to affordable and quality SRH services, comprehensive sexuality education, and advocacy for young girls and women's rights aligns with addressing the critical issues in this thematic area.

To address this thematic area, Vision Spring Initiatives conducted SRHR training and policy knowledge for a total of 117 right holders identified through networks and government agencies in the month of August. The training targeted girls with disabilities, hard to reach and living with HIV in the South West states enhancing their skills on laws and policies, enabling them to advocate for their SRHR needs. The goal was to empower these individuals to establish organizations, networks, and movements that will serve their specific needs and push for a more intersectional approach to SRHR services and information from the government.



Women with disabilities, women living with HIV and Hard to Reach girls at the SRHR training in Ogun state

Vision Spring Initiatives, a member of the Community of Action (COA) organizations in Nigeria, was given the opportunity to participate in capacity-building trainings organized by HIVOS for the We-Lead Project. These workshops aimed to improve the skills and capacity of COAs to achieve the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Implementation. The following is a list of the workshops that were organized:

- Looking In Looking Out (LILO) Inclusion (14th - 18th March, 2022)

The main goal of this training was to promote the inclusion of underrepresented groups, such as LGBTI+ people, people with disabilities, and marginalized individuals, in society. The workshop was designed to help participants understand the recognition of their rights and to oppose discrimination, marginalization, and stereotypes. The workshop was a unique one, as it focused on training facilitators in inclusion, with participants from different communities.



The 'We Lead' Symposium organized by HIVOS to train VSI and fellow COAs on the right-based approach to accessing quality SRH information and services for women and girls

- **Training of Facilitators (11th-16th September, 2022)**

This workshop explored the therapeutic and psychological aspects of the training and helped participants understand the logic behind each activity. Participants were expected to have attended a LILO workshop prior to this training and to have a deep understanding of their own identities before guiding others in the process.



- **Free to be Me- Identity Workshop (20th-22nd September 2022)**

The LILO Identity workshop was designed to help individuals examine their identities and sexual orientation. It aimed to address the high levels of self-stigma in key populations by improving self-awareness, reframing personal narratives, and encouraging self-acceptance of sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression.

- **Youth-Led Research Training (10th - 12th August 2022)**

The Youth-Led Research training put young people at the center of the development process and enabled them to make inputs and draw attention to the gaps they identified. The training aimed to create meaningful engagement and to empower young people to take charge and occupy meaningful spaces. It was also designed to train the We-Lead Community of Action organizations in Nigeria on Youth-Led Research for evidence-based advocacy. The training was facilitated by Restless Development in partnership with HIVOS and EVA.



The Project Director with VSI mentees at the organisations event

- **Advocacy Training (4th - 6th October 2022)**

This training aimed to up-skill COAs and journalists on how to better engage stakeholders to ensure advocacy needs are met and to increase understanding of the fundamentals of advocacy, steps in advocacy processes, policy change, and policy implementation. The workshop was organized by the African Women’s Development Communication Network (Femnet) and Education as a Vaccine (EVA) and was attended by COAs, media, journalists, and right holders.



- **Advocacy and Communication Strategy Workshop (24th-28th October, 2022)**

The Advocacy and Communication Strategy training was designed to help the We-Lead's Community of Action partners leverage advocacy and communication effectively and strategically in their various campaigns. It also aimed to develop an implementation plan.

- **SOGIESC and Disability Training (28th November - 2nd December 2022)**

This training was aimed at educating and sensitizing participants on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) and demystifying facts about the LGBTQI+ community. The training also focused on inclusive advocacy, which is the strategic process to bring about change in policies and practices at local, national, regional, and international levels.

On August 23rd, Vision Spring Initiatives, a leading women's rights organization in Nigeria, in collaboration with Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (**WARDC**) and over 500 other women's groups/organizations led a protest. The protest was held to demand respect for women's lives and to highlight the urgent need for safe abortion access in the country.

The protest was sparked by the recent suspension of the Guideline on Safe Abortion by the Lagos state government, which created significant barriers for women seeking safe abortion services. In response, Vision Spring Initiatives mobilized over 30 right-holders who joined the protest to raise their voices and demand change.

The protest was peaceful and well-attended, with participants marching through the streets and holding signs and banners to make their message heard. At the end of the protest, a delegation from the organization visited the Commissioner for Health and the state governor of Lagos state to discuss the issues at hand and request a review of the government's decision.



Women at the protest ground demanding respect for women's lives



Women at the protest ground demanding respect for women's lives

It was a promising outcome for Vision Spring Initiatives and the other women's groups and organizations involved in the protest, and we are hopeful that our voices will be heard and that women will be able to access safe and legal abortion services in the near future.

4. Political Participation

Nigeria has low rates of female representation in politics by global and regional standards. Although the proportions of women in elected positions increased slightly between 1999 and

2007, from an average of 2.3% across both houses of legislature to 7.8%, these small gains had stopped by 2011.

As of the 2015 election, Nigeria had 20 women out of 359 in its lower house (5.6%) and 7 out of 109 in its upper house (6.4%). This put it 180th in the world (“Women in Parliaments: World Classification,” 2019). Following the 2019 elections, women make up 7.3% of the Nigerian Senate and 3.1% of the House of Representatives. No state governors are women (NWTF, 2019). The number of women serving as ministers and appointed executives is also very low, with 11 of the 636 appointed executives between 1999 and 2015 being women (17.5%) and 15% of ministers in the same period (NCWD, 2016).

The World Economic Forum (2018) Global Gender Gap report measures ‘political empowerment’ in terms of the ratios of women to men in ministerial and parliamentary positions, as well as number of years as head of state over the last fifty years. Out of a total of 149 countries, Nigeria is ranked as having the 139th largest gender gap in ‘political empowerment’. A Nigerian government statistical report shows that in the years 1999-2015, 6% of councilors (local government) were women, 24% of judges in the federal court were women, and an average of 7% of each type of high-level government officials and senior administrators were women. The posts surveyed were: head of service, permanent secretary, special adviser, special assistant, central bank governors, chief executive officer, director general and executive secretary. In April 2022 alongside 9 other feminist organisations the organization won a land-mark judgment against the President of Nigeria on 35% Affirmative Action for women’s participation in leadership.



Lawyers and partners present as we won a land-mark judgment against the President of Nigeria on 35% Affirmative Action for women’s participation in leadership.

5. Partnerships and Movement Building

Vision Spring Initiatives believes in the power of collaborations and partnerships. The organization is currently partnering with Women Advocates and Research and Documentation Centre to demand womens’ reproductive justice. The Project Director also made a presentation on safe abortion day stating the need for governments to support women’s rights to safe abortion.

The organization also partnered with International Centre for Environmental Health and Development (ICEHD). As climate change hits Nigeria, small scale women farmers count losses, because they play vital roles in agricultural production and are key to Africa’s most

populous country's food security. They account for 70 per cent of agricultural workers and 80 per cent of food producers but are at the receiving ends of the negative impacts of climate change. Many states in Nigeria rely on rain-fed agriculture which makes a larger number of small scale holder farmers vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change; Rising global temperatures, regular flooding and rising water level. Through this partnership, Vision Spring Initiatives contributed to gender based training and how government should consider women farmers who contributed to the GDP of the nation.



VSI staff and others during a radio program to support the voices of women farmers

Other partnerships in the year include partnership with Action Group on Free civic space-this partnership became necessary due to the popular use of the security architecture to limit civil society and disenable the environment for active civic participation in Nigeria. It seeks answers to the question: how can states (like Nigeria) facing multiple security challenges protect civic freedoms while combating violent security threats such as terrorism and violent extremism? Nigeria's security threats include "terrorism and violent extremism, armed banditry, kidnapping, militancy and separatist agitations, pastoralists-farmers conflicts, transnational organized crime, piracy and sea robbery, porous borders, cybercrimes and technology challenges." Among this array of threats, terrorism and violent extremism rank high on the risk scale and have indeed, received the lion share of attention in terms of strategy, funding and media attention. In name of curbing insecurity, law enforcement powers have been expanded, a litany of security laws have been introduced, meanings of existing laws have been broadened to impute serious crimes with heavier penalties while physical and digital surveillance have become routinized. From this expansion of policing powers springs an overflow of intended and unintended consequences of law enforcement such as a surge in arrests and detention, use of deadly force to disperse civil demonstrations, censorship of free

speech, internet restrictions, proscription of religious and ethnic agitators, designation of dissenters as terrorist groups.



Vision Spring Initiatives partnered with various government agencies towards implementing the 'We lead' project in Nigeria. Some of these partners include traditional rulers, ministries for women affairs in Ogun, Oyo and Ondo states. The agencies commended the work of VSI encouraging it to support more programs in the states.



VSI representative with representatives of Women Affairs Ministry in Osun state

Administration and Finances

Board Update

Vision Spring Initiatives board members are:

Toyin Ajao	Board member
Aisha Mohammed	Board member
Dolapo Dola-Lami	Treasurer
Akudo Oguaghambaq	Board member
Ngozi Nwosu-Juba	Ex-Officio Member

Staff development

The organisation held planning meeting to enable its staff gain knowledge on the projects to be implemented in the year. Staff members attended many capacity strengthening trainings in the year under review which enhanced their capacity to perform their tasks

VSI staff and volunteers

Ngozi Nwosu-Juba - Project Director

Tobi Ayodele - Program Officer

Adesoji Erewami - Admin Officer

Timothy Mboho – Accountant

Mary Fakunmoju – Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

Bukola Fagbemi- Communications Officer

Temitope Lawani – Accounts Officer

Regina Livinus – Intern/ Office Assistant

Volunteers

Busolami Ajayi	Opeyemi Fagbemi
Opeyemi Oyeyemi	Rachael Balogun
Felicia Adaenyi	Temitope Fasuyi
Deborah Umoh	Juliana Botchey
Mary Udoh	Chinonso Duru
Abiola Kareem	Anita Graham
Folashade Adebawo	Aderonke Eseka
Precious Kolawole	Adebimpe Adebara Chika Blessing

Partners in 2022

Interfaith Diversity Network of West Africa

FEMNET Kenya

Women Law Development Center of Nigeria (WLDCN)

Coalition for the Defense of Sexual Rights (CDSR)

LAGOSWOMEN2030

International Centre for Sexual and Reproductive health and rights (INCREASE)

De Keepers International School Ikorodu

Sceptre Secondary School Kosofe

Ajoke Ayisat Afolabi Foundation

We lead Community of Action (COA) members

Action Group for Free Civic Space

Nigerian Women Trust Fund

Supporters

International Centre for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (INCREASE)

Global Fund for Women

Global Fund for Children

HIVOS

AmplifyChange

Nigerian Women Trust Fund (consultancies)

ISDAO (fiscal hosting)

Urgent Action Fund

Spaces for Change

Women Advocacy, Research and Documentation Centre (consultancies)

Centre for Health and Information (Consultancies)

Board members' contribution in cash and kind

IPAS Nigeria

