

A COMPENDIUM

OF SECTOR-SPECIFIC SOLUTIONS FOR INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP IN NIGERIA

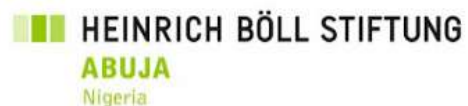
Evidence of Loss to the Economy and Call to Action for ALL



By



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of this compendium is to offer a robust understanding of the challenges and barriers that affect Nigerian women and girls across various sectors and areas of life while highlighting the potential gains Nigeria could achieve if her mothers, daughters, wives, sisters, nieces and colleagues were given more opportunities to thrive economically, socially, politically, and environmentally.

Despite the critical role women play in Nigeria's economy, they face pervasive gender-based discrimination and violence that undermine their economic security and participation. In agriculture, for instance, women struggle with unequal access to land, farm inputs, and financial resources, particularly for smallholder farmers. Wage disparity and underrepresentation in decision-making further exacerbate their challenges. Similar trends are also pervasive across other sectors. The high prevalence of gender-based violence, with a significant majority of survivors being women and girls, often under 17 years of age, highlights a severe issue. Additionally, women face limited employment opportunities, proper political representation, and increased risks of sexual harassment in male-dominated industries. In the finance and trade sectors, women entrepreneurs and professionals encounter difficulties in accessing business financing and leadership roles.

Inclusive Leadership policies are crucial for promoting gender equality and empowering women in Nigeria across her sectors of security, sports, education, health, agriculture, mining, finance, and trade sectors, among others. These Feminist Leadership policies ensure that women's needs and perspectives are incorporated into the development of policies, programs, and projects, thereby addressing gender-specific challenges and barriers to participation and advancement. Implementing Inclusive Leadership policies can contribute to sustainable development by increasing women's representation in decision-making roles, promoting gender-sensitive approaches, and ensuring equal access to productive resources.

By prioritizing Feminist Leadership and addressing the multifaceted gender issues in Nigeria's economy, the country can create more equitable and inclusive opportunities for women, ultimately strengthening its overall economic development and prosperity. This compendium offers a collection of gender issues that faces all Nigerian women and girls across board. The compendium amongst its many recommendations in specific sectors, proffers the following call to action:

EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

- Strengthen legal and policy frameworks to protect women's rights and promote gender equality across all sectors, including the effective implementation of existing legislation and development of comprehensive policies.
- Implement affirmative action measures to increase women's representation in leadership and decision-making roles, such as setting quotas for women's participation in agricultural organizations and governing bodies.
- Provide equal access to resources, including land, farm inputs, financial services, education, housing, and training, for women across all sectors.

- Conduct gender impact assessments for all major development projects and improve data collection to better understand the gendered dynamics across different sectors.
- Foster collaboration between the government, private sector, and civil society to drive meaningful and sustainable change through the implementation of feminist leadership policies.

Preface

As we read through this Compendium, let us not merely acknowledge the barriers that Nigerian women and girls face, but also commit to dismantling them. The stories and data within these pages illuminate a stark reality: our mothers, daughters, wives, sisters, and colleagues are often held back by systemic inequalities that stifle their potential. Yet, imagine a Nigeria where women and girls thrive equally alongside men—where they are empowered to contribute fully to agriculture, politics, business, and every sphere of life. The gains would be monumental, not just for women and girls, but for the nation as a whole.

This document is more than a collection of narratives and statistics; it is a clarion call to our collective conscience. It challenges us to address injustice, promote equality, and envision a future where every woman and girl in Nigeria can dream without limits and achieve without barriers.

The success of this Compendium is owed to the efforts, passion, and collaboration of numerous individuals and organisations who share a commitment to creating an inclusive society. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to:

- Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Abuja Office our funding partner, for believing in our mission and providing generous support.
- Kemi Yesufu, the lead researcher for this Compendium, whose dedication brought this vision to life.
- The dedicated staff of the Dorothy Njemanze Foundation (DNF): Priye Diri, Opeyemi Adenikan, Dorcas Edet, Caro-Ann Ogri, and Hafsat Abdulrasaq, for their tireless work and unwavering commitment.
- Ere Amachree and Donald Ikenna Ofoegbu, for your constant support and guidance throughout the development process.
- The talented designers, Adoo Kuma Assoh and Emmanuel Archibong, who ensured that this document is both engaging and impactful.
- Dr. Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, whose profound foreword sets the tone and enriches this Compendium with her wisdom and experience.
- The organisations and partners who actively participated in every stage of development, from the breakfast meeting to the strategy validation meeting—your insights and input were invaluable.

To all who contributed, your dedication and commitment to ensuring a more inclusive society for all are deeply appreciated.

The time for change is now, and it starts with us. Together, let us work towards a Nigeria where every woman and girl can realise her full potential.

With gratitude and hope,



DOROTHY NJEMANZE

*Founder and Executive Director,
Dorothy Njemanze Foundation (DNF)*

Foreward

I thank Dorothy Njemanze Foundation for asking me to write the Foreword to this exciting compendium. Dorothy Njemanze and her colleagues have done a great job outlining sector-specific solutions for inclusive leadership in Nigeria. This compendium will play a key role in arming a range of policy makers, activists, teachers, community leaders and thinkers with the tools they need to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

Nigeria currently features poorly on most global indicators measuring Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE). The most recent **Global Gender Gap Index** (2024), ranks Nigeria 125th/146 (an improvement from 130th out of 146 countries in 2023). The Global Gender Gap Index tracks Economic Opportunities, Education, Health and Political Leadership. Nigeria has one of the highest maternal and infant mortality rates in the world at 12% of global figures, right after India that has 17%. Nigeria also has the highest number of child brides at 22 million, highest in West Africa and 11th highest globally. Nigeria ranks 38/160 in the 2023 Global Slavery Index Report. According to UNICEF, there are approximately 18.3m children out of school in Nigeria and at least half of those are girls. These issues continue to hinder the progress of Nigerian women due to entrenched patriarchal power, violent conflict and displacement, endemic poverty, lack of political will, low political representation of women, religious and cultural conservatism. Not only did Nigeria not meet any of the original **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs), we might not meet most of the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) in 2030 either. If by a miracle we manage to meet a few of the targets, we will not meet SDG 5 which aims to achieve gender equality by ending all forms of discrimination,

Even though we continue to face serious obstacles in the quest for gender justice, we have made several gains over the years. For example, we have legal and policy frameworks such as the National Gender Policy, the Child Rights Act, the Violence Against Persons Act of 2015, State Gender Policies, State laws against violence, and others. In addition, Nigerian women and girls have more access to educational opportunities than ever before. Not only is the enrolment of girls in schools at high levels in Southern Nigeria, girls are doing well in tertiary institutions, graduating with top degrees, winning prizes and excelling in areas such as Medicine, Science and Engineering. There is also an unprecedented number of female role models on Faculties and non-teaching staff across the country, inspiring new generations of female students.

An achievement worthy of note, is that the women's movement in Nigeria has been able to build consensus around key issues of importance to women, such as rights to livelihoods and economic empowerment, freedom from all forms of violence, access to decision-making, reproductive rights and health, non-discrimination and the critical importance of peace and security. Nigerian women scholars, activists, community leaders, writers, thinkers, professionals, rural women and politicians who are part of a progressive women's movement have been able to create a body of knowledge, thought and activism on women's rights and gender equality.

I have mentioned these achievements so that it can be noted that change is possible. If we are determined and committed, the current reversals and backlash notwithstanding, we can witness significant improvements in this area. This compendium serves as a call to action, as well as a roadmap for stakeholders who can use whatever platforms they occupy to make a difference. It is easy to feel disillusioned and tired, in the face of so many obstacles. We however need to remember that patriarchy never gets tired. Injustice never gives anyone, particularly women, a break. Every minute that goes by, a woman or girl somewhere is in pain. This is a laudable project, and it will add immense value to the efforts of seeking a better world for women and girls.

Congratulations and well done, Dorothy Njemanze Foundation.
The struggle continues. Forward ever, backward never.



BISI ADELEYE-FAYEMI

*Co-Founder, African Women's development fund and
Former First Lady, Ekiti State, Nigeria*

ACRONYMS	DESCRIPTIONS
AA	Action Alliance
AFN	Athletics Federation of Nigeria
APC	All Progressives Congress
APGA	All Progressives Grand Alliance
APRRW	African Protocol on People’s Rights and the Rights of Women
AU	African Union
BON	Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CJID	Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development
DNF	Dorothy Njemanze Foundation
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EFInA	Enhancing Financial Innovation & Access
FHH	Female-Headed Households
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
ENACT	Enhancing Africa’s response to transnational organised crime
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
GDP	Gross Domestic Products
GEESI	Gender Equality, Empowerment of Women, and Social Inclusion framework
GOCOP	Guild of Corporate Online Publishers
GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
IOM	International Organization of Migration
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NBBF	Nigeria Basketball Federation
NEITI	Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NCBI	National Centre for Biotechnology Information
NCPWD	National Commission for Persons with Disabilities
NDHS	Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey

ACRONYMS	DESCRIPTIONS
NFF	Nigerian Football Federation
NITDA	National Information Technology Development Agency
NPAN	Newspaper Proprietors' Association of Nigeria
NSIP	National Sports Industry Policy
NUJ	Nigeria Union of Journalists
OGBV	Online Gender-Based Violence
PCOS	Polycystic Ovary Syndrome
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
SBM	SB Morgen
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendant
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
VAPP	Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act
WASSCE	West African Senior School Certificate Examination
WHO	World Health Organisation

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ORGANIZATIONS / INDIVIDUALS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEVELOPING OF THE COMPENDIUM

DNF AT A GLANCE

INTRODUCTION: Ride on All Wheels

The Strength of a Woman: Drawing from her Power

Women and girls embody a unique blend of strength and grace, resilience and tenderness. They are the quiet architects of our world's future, shaping it with their dreams, courage, love, and unyielding spirit.

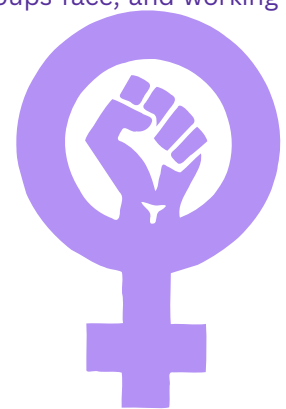
From the nurturing embrace of a mother to the boundless curiosity of a young girl, their presence infuses life with depth and meaning. Women and girls possess an innate ability to turn adversity into opportunity, and their stories of triumph over obstacles are testaments to their indomitable will. They are the silent leaders, the compassionate warriors, and the dreamers who dare to envision a better world. In their laughter, we find joy; in their determination, we find hope; and in their love, we find the true essence of humanity.

Celebrating women and girls is celebrating the very heartbeat of our existence, acknowledging that within them lies the power to transform, to heal, and to inspire a brighter, more equitable world for all.

This is why leadership in the family, community, sectors and at the national level must be inclusive, equitable, and participatory - principles that form the foundation of fair and just governance. Such leadership actively explores, draws strength from, and meaningfully involves all people, particularly women and girls who have historically been excluded. This equitable approach to leadership naturally aligns with and embodies Feminist Leadership.

Feminist Leadership is an approach that builds upon these principles of equality, social justice, and empowerment, specifically focusing on challenging and transforming power dynamics that perpetuate gender inequality that puts women and girls at risk, disadvantaged and in exploitative positions. It involves leading with an understanding of the systemic barriers women and marginalized groups face, and working towards creating inclusive and equitable environments for them all.

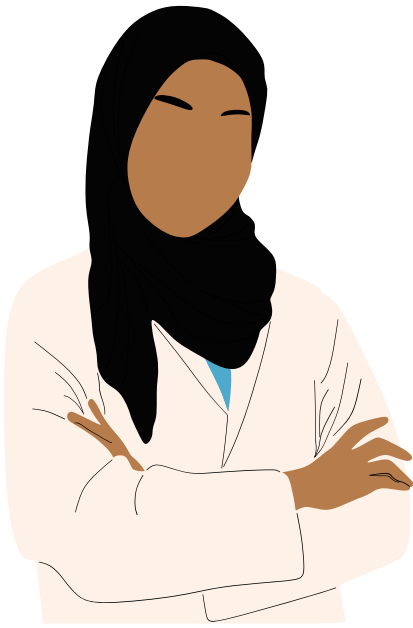
Feminist Leadership goes beyond the number of women in representation, just as equitable leadership goes beyond mere diversity metrics. Both are fundamentally about a conscious and systematic effort to ensure that systems, institutions, people and cultures operate and thrive in more fair, democratic, inclusive and just ways. For example, one that represents all hears all, and addresses the specific gender dynamics and their concerns in a participatory manner.



Key Characteristics of Inclusive Leadership:

- 1. Inclusivity and Diversity:** It values and prioritizes the inclusion of diverse voices and experiences, recognizing that multiple intersecting identities (e.g., race, class, sexuality) impact individuals' experiences and opportunities.
- 2. Collaboration and Shared Power:** Feminist Leadership promotes collaborative decision-making and shared power rather than hierarchical, top-down structures. It seeks to flatten power structures and encourages collective leadership.
- 3. Empowerment and Capacity Building:** It focuses on empowering individuals, particularly those from marginalized groups, and building their capacities to lead and make decisions.
- 4. Ethical and Values-Based:** It is grounded in ethical principles and values such as justice, equity, respect, and care. It aims to align actions with these values consistently.
- 5. Transformational and Visionary:** Feminist Leadership seeks to bring about transformative change in society, envisioning a world where gender equality and social justice are the norms.

Importance of Giving Women and Girls Opportunities to Thrive:



- **Economic Growth and Development:** When women and girls have equal opportunities, it leads to greater economic participation, which boosts overall economic growth and development. A study by the European Investment Bank, as well as other studies have shown that gender equality in the workforce can significantly increase a country's GDP.
- **Improved Health and Education Outcomes:** Empowering women and girls often leads to better health and education outcomes not only for them but also for their families and communities. Educated and healthy women can make informed decisions, leading to improved family welfare.
- **Reduction of Poverty:** Women's economic empowerment is critical for poverty reduction. When women have better access and control over their income and resources, they are more likely to invest in their families and communities, breaking the cycles of poverty.
- **Social Justice and Human Rights:** Ensuring women and girls have opportunities to thrive is a matter of social justice and human rights. It is about recognizing and addressing the systemic inequalities and discrimination that have historically marginalized women and girls.
- **Better Decision-Making and Leadership:** Diverse leadership leads to better decision-making. Women bring different perspectives and experiences that can enhance problem-solving and innovation. Gender-diverse teams are known to be more effective and creative.
- **Peace and Stability:** Gender equality and women's participation in leadership and decision-making are linked to more peaceful and stable societies. Women's involvement in peace processes and conflict resolution tends to lead to more sustainable and lasting solutions. Feminist Leadership and the empowerment of women and girls are crucial for creating a just, equitable, and prosperous society. By reviewing and adjusting traditional power dynamics and promoting democratic, inclusive, collaborative, and ethical leadership, feminist leadership can drive significant positive changes in families, communities and the nation at large.

Providing opportunities for women and girls to thrive benefits everyone, leading to stronger economies, healthier communities, and more just and stable societies.

Unfortunately, many families, communities, and countries fail to take advantage of the gains that women and girls bring in thought leadership, due to baseless fears of what horror a woman can become when given opportunities to thrive and grow. Hence, a label of a rebel and angry feminist has been placed on a few women groups and individuals who have simply called for more opportunity and protection of the rights of women and girls – wives, daughters and sisters.



Barriers to Inclusive Leadership

Inclusive leadership in Nigeria faces numerous barriers, deeply rooted in cultural, socio-economic, and institutional contexts.

Some of the core barrier include:

Cultural and Societal Norms

- **Patriarchal Norms:** Traditional gender roles and patriarchal values dominate many communities in Nigeria, where leadership is often viewed as a male prerogative.
- **Gender Stereotypes:** Stereotypical perceptions of women's roles as primarily domestic and nurturing limit their acceptance as leaders in communities, sectors and society.

Economic Barriers

- **Economic Inequality:** Nigerian women often have less access to financial resources and economic opportunities, which hinders their ability to pursue better lives for their families and seeking leadership roles in their areas of interest.
- **Limited Access to Education and Training:** Many women and girls in Nigeria have restricted access to quality education and leadership training, essential for developing the necessary skills and capacities.

Political and Institutional Barriers

- **Underrepresentation in Politics:** Women are significantly underrepresented in political positions and decision-making bodies in Nigeria, this limits their interest and influence on policies and leadership practices and concerns.
- **Institutional Discrimination:** Workplace discrimination and biased organizational practices prevent women from rising to leadership positions.

Legal and Policy Barriers

- **Inadequate Legal Protections:** Weak enforcement of laws protecting women's rights and addressing gender discrimination can undermine efforts to promote Feminist Leadership.
- **Lack of Supportive Policies:** Insufficient policies that promote work-life balance, such as maternity leave and childcare support, can discourage women from pursuing leadership roles.

Social Barriers

- **Gender-Based Violence:** High levels of gender-based violence and harassment can create an unsafe environment for women, discouraging them from stepping into public and leadership roles.
- **Socialization and Internalized Gender Norms:** Women and girls may internalize societal messages that undervalue their potential and capabilities, affecting their self-confidence and ambition.

Networking and Mentorship

- Lack of Mentorship and Networks: Limited access to mentorship and professional networks can hinder girls and women's leadership development and opportunities for career advancement.

Intersectional Barriers

- Intersectional Discrimination: Women from marginalized communities (e.g., rural women, women with disabilities) face compounded barriers due to intersecting forms of discrimination.

Despite these barriers, Nigerian women have made significant contributions to the country's development, particularly in the informal and micro-enterprise sectors. Women account for 41percent of micro-business ownership and 23 million female entrepreneurs in Nigeria – contributing 48percent of Nigeria's GDP, placing the country among the highest entrepreneurship rates globally.¹ This is despite the challenges of the poor urban plans of government that have stifled access to markets, the multiple taxations, poor access to business credits from the financial system, poor infrastructures for women, etc.

Over 60percent of the food produced in Nigeria are produced by small scale women farmers.² Despite their limitations in the sector such as the cultural limitation to farmlands, poor access to financial credits for farming, multiple taxation from farms to markets, very limited access to proper machinery for planting, processing, storage, etc.

Women are also struggling hard to succeed in entertainment, sports, arts and other industry areas regardless of the challenges that suppress them. Nigerian women's participation and representation decline as they move up the corporate and political ladder, with women owning only 20percent of enterprises in the formal sector and comprising just 12percent of corporate board directors.³

Only 23percent of women have access to formal financial credits. Women also face several barriers to productive resources such as land and skills. Women representation in government from executive to the legislature at federal, state and even local government levels have diminished over time, as institutional barriers in political parties make it harder for women to grow and earn representation, as well as issues of election violence, high cost of campaigns, etc.

These barriers in their various dimensions require a multifaceted approach, including understanding the issues, and barriers, as well as proffering cultural transformation, legal and policy reforms, economic empowerment initiatives, and efforts to increase women's representation, participation and access to leverages needed to improve their living conditions and self-awareness as humans and citizens of Nigeria.

Without addressing these barriers, Nigeria will continue to operate sub-optimally economically, politically and socially. It is like driving a bicycle with just one good wheel. No family, community, or nation grows by suppressing its daughters, wives and sisters – it is too much a weight for one gender, and a loss for everyone.

1. BusinessDay Nigeria (December 10, 2023): Elevating women's entrepreneurship in Nigeria: Policy strategies for the future by Ifeoma Uddoh. <https://businessday.ng/life/article/elevating-womens-entrepreneurship-in-nigeria-policy-strategies-for-the-future/>

2. (International Budget Partnership 2021)

3. KPMG (March 2021): Women on Boards. KPMG Nigeria Board Governance Centre. <https://assets.kpmg.com/content/dam/kpmg/ng/pdf/advisory/women-on-boards-thought-leadership-march-2021.pdf>

Objective of the Compendium

The goal of this compendium is to offer a robust understanding of the challenges and barriers that not only affect Nigerian women across the various sectors and areas of lives, but indirectly erode or deprives Nigeria the great gains that the country could have earned, if only women were allowed more opportunities to thrive economically, socially, politically, and environmentally, as citizens of Nigeria. The document will also be presenting core recommendations to address the challenges across the identified sectors. Specifically, the document seeks to:

1. Provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and barriers affecting Nigerian women across various sectors and aspects of life.
2. Highlight how these obstacles not only impact women individually but also deprive Nigeria of significant benefits that could be realized if women were given more opportunities to thrive.
3. Present key recommendations to address the challenges identified across these sectors.

Methodology

The purpose of this compendium is to explore and document the barriers to inclusive Leadership in Nigeria across various sectors including politics, education, agriculture, trade, human rights, etc. This study adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issues. Data were collected through a comprehensive literature review, semi-structured interviews with female leaders across different sectors. Primary data sources included interviews, surveys, and focus groups discussions. Secondary data sources comprised academic articles, government reports, and publications from NGOs and international organizations.

Each chapter of the compendium is dedicated to a specific sector, discussing the unique barriers and challenges faced by women, supported by data and insights from our research.

This methodology ensures a thorough and rigorous examination of the barriers to inclusive Leadership in Nigeria, providing valuable insights and recommendations for stakeholders and policymakers.

UNDERSTANDING THE NATIONAL GENDER POLICY 2021 - 2026

The National Gender Policy (NGP) 2021-2026, crafted by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, is anchored on the core principles of human rights, gender equality, and women's empowerment as outlined in international, continental, and national frameworks. Central to this policy is the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). It also aligns with key regional and international protocols such as the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), African Union (AU) Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality, African Protocol on People's Rights and the Rights of Women (APRRW), the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), International Conference on Population and Development Plan of Action (ICPD PoA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The comprehensive 110-page document serves as a guideline for both public and private sectors to empower and protect women, girls, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups. It envisions an equitable society free from discrimination, integrating the rights of women, men, girls, and boys across all national development sectors.

It is important to note that the National Gender Policy recognises the elderly as a socially excluded group whose safety and welfare should be mainstreamed in developmental policies. Indeed, the aged are considered a minority group in three ways, i.e., they suffer discrimination, prejudice and deprivation. Here in Nigeria, there have been cases of elderly women who were beaten and dehumanized after being accused of practicing witchcraft . While there is a dearth of data on the percentage of the elderly who earn pension in Nigeria, government retirees do not get their pension and gratuity in time due to government lapses or until they give bribes. Despite years of reforms in the pension administration sector, some retirees still make long journeys to the nation's capital to solve problems delaying or stopping their pension payments.

The enactment of the Senior Citizens Centre Bill was the first step taken to mainstream the welfare of Nigeria's estimated 9.6 million elderly citizens, aged 60 and above. However, the Federal Government must show genuine commitment to the protection and care of the elderly by funding the Centre adequately. States and local government administrators equally have a role to play in upholding Section 16 of the 1999 Constitution (As Amended), which provides that the state shall direct its policy towards ensuring "that ... old age care and pensions, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens".

5. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/243077-70-year-old-woman-beaten-death-alleged-witchcraft.html>

6. <https://punchng.com/the-traumatised-pensioners/>

Key targets of the National Gender Policy include:

- Full domestication of CEDAW by 2025
- Adoption of the National Gender Policy by at least 80percent of federal Ministries, Departments, and Agencies by 2025.
- A minimum of 60percent adoption of the National Gender Policy by state governments and their institutions by 2025.
- Implementation of Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in public financing.
- Making the Nigerian judicial and legal system gender-friendly and responsive to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).

Strategies to achieve these goals encompass:

- Advocacy for 50:50 affirmative action in appointive and elective positions.
- Promotion of CEDAW domestication.
- Adoption of gender mainstreaming as a developmental strategy across sectors.
- Building the capacity of state and non-state actors in gender mainstreaming frameworks and GRB.
- Investing in leadership training for women.
- Enforcing compliance with gender-related laws and policies, and enhancing the capacity of the judiciary and law enforcement agents in gender matters.

The National Gender Policy prioritizes several areas, including:

- Legislation and policy frameworks.
- Economic empowerment, productivity, and livelihoods.
- Gender, agriculture, and rural development.
- Employment and labour participation.
- Business sector (informal and formal).
- Sports and entertainment industry.
- Unpaid care work and household economy.
- Human development, health, survival, and nutrition.
- Maternal and child health/development.
- Education attainment, vocational and life skills.
- Social protection and gender and disability.

These priorities are to be mainstreamed using the Gender Equality, Empowerment of Women, and Social Inclusion (GEESI) framework.

For Persons with Disabilities, the policy advocates for an inclusive society that offers suitable infrastructure, quality social services, equal opportunities, and protection, especially for women and girls with disabilities.

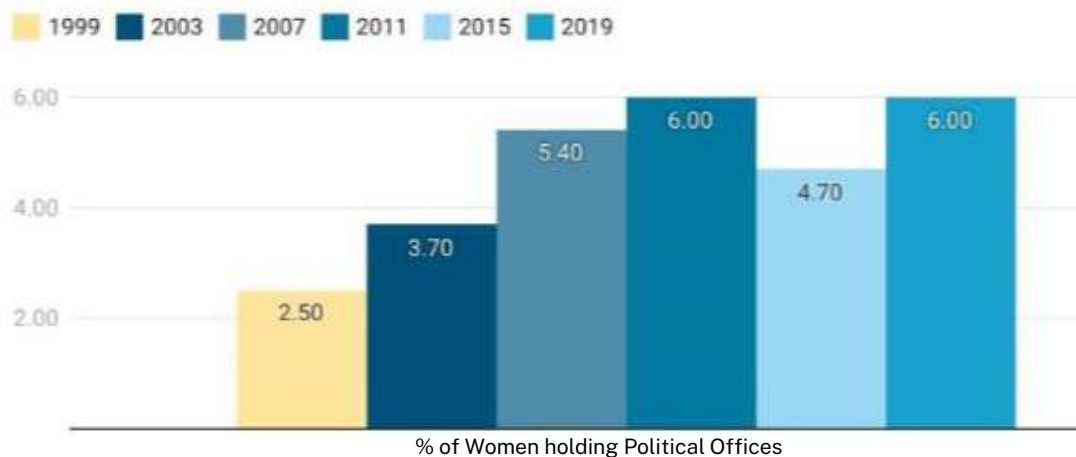
Ultimately, akin to the 2006 National Gender Policy, the primary objective of the revised National Gender Policy (2021) is *"to establish a just society free from discrimination, where the needs and concerns of women, men, girls, boys, and other vulnerable groups are equitably integrated into all sectors of national development."*

POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE: Poor Representation for Women

"I'm absolutely confident that for two years if every nation on earth was run by women, you would see a significant improvement across the board on just about everything... living standards and outcomes."

-President Barack Obama

Percentage of Women Representation in Political Seats



Women make up 49.32 percent of Nigeria's population . But female representation in decision-making has been abysmally low since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 . Women are underrepresented at the national, state, and local government councils.

Women's participation and representation in Nigerian politics also remains extremely low. Since 2011, there has been a noticeable decline in the number of women holding elective and appointive positions. According to the data, women make up only 5.8percent of the national parliament, 11.5percent of ministerial positions, and there has never been a female head of state in the last 50 years⁹ This places Nigeria 149th globally in the political empowerment index . ⁵

Only 10.1 percent (1,553) of the 15,307 total number of political candidates for the 2023 general election were females; a significant reduction from the 2019 general elections figure of 2,968. Furthermore, only a meagre number of 72 women were elected at the state and federal level with the remaining 1,487 losing out.

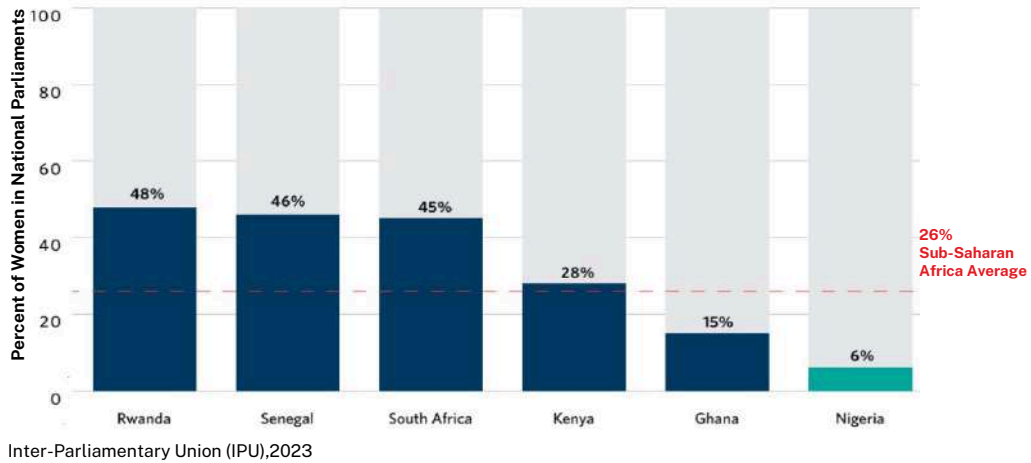
The representation of women in the legislature is equally dismal. In the Senate, women constitute only 3percent of the 109 members. The House of Representatives fares slightly better, with women comprising 4percent (14) of its 360 seats).

7. Ibizugbe, Osaruonamen. n.d. Centre for Journalism, Innovation and Development. Accessed October 12, 2024. <https://thecjid.org/women-in-nigerias-2023-election-series-the-case-for-representation-in-governance/#:-:text=They%20say%20politics%20is%20a,return%20to%20democracy%20in%201999.>

8. Oluyemi, Mrs. Oloyede. n.d. MONITORING PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS IN NIGERIA. National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, Abuja, Nigeria).

9. Monitoring Participation of Women in Politics in Nigeria (2015). Paper presented by Mrs. Oloyede Oluyemi, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, Abuja, Nigeria) https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/Finland_Oct2016/Documents/Nigeria_paper.pdf

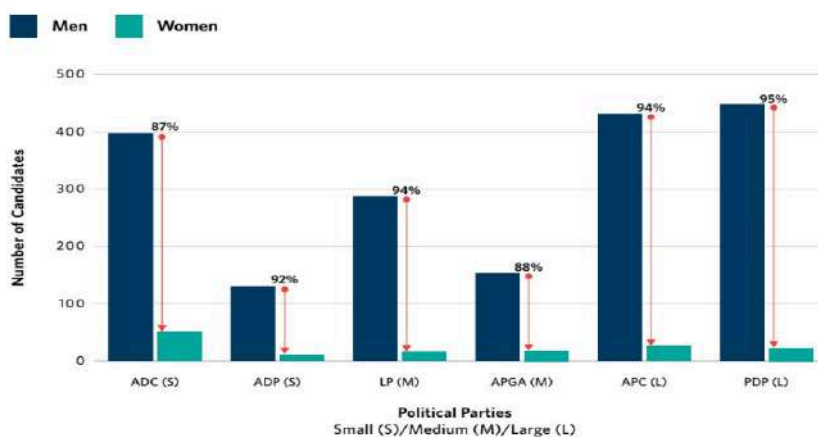
Women’s Representation in National Parliaments in Select African Countries



Examining the State Houses of Assembly reveals that merely 57 women have been elected out of the 993 number of members across the states. Furthermore, among Nigeria's thirty-six states, only eight have female deputy governors: Rivers, Akwa-Ibom, Kaduna, Ogun, Ebonyi, Plateau, Ekiti and Adamawa.

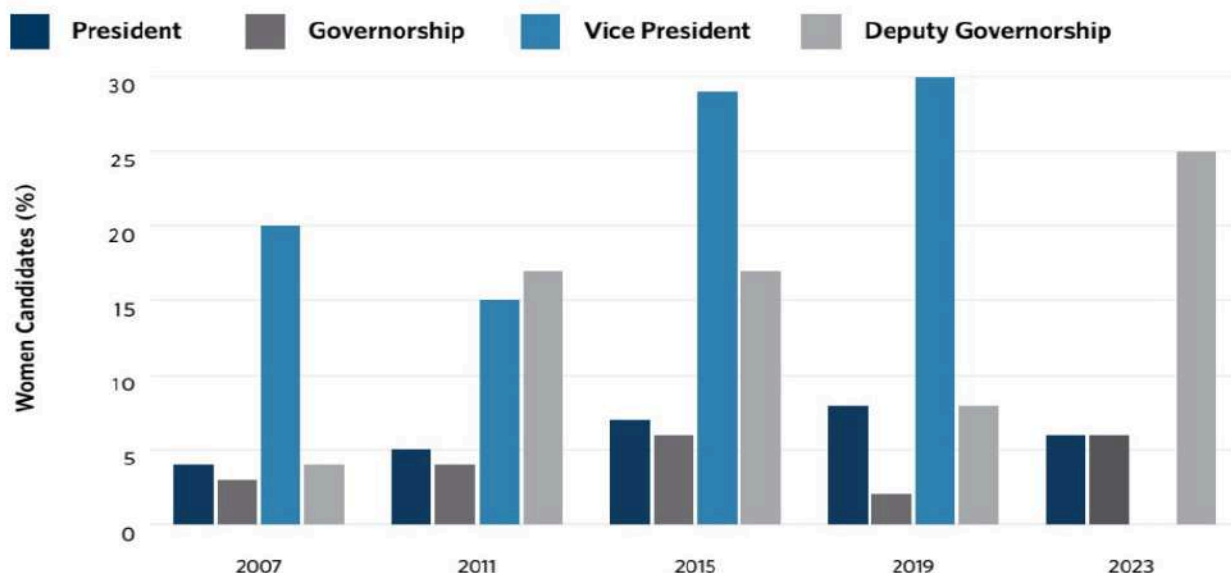
Furthermore, 90 percent of female candidates ran on the platforms of small parties. In general, smaller political parties appear to have lower entry barriers for women. For instance, in the 2019 elections, 96 percent of women candidates for federal seats emerged from small parties, according to the Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development (CJID). In the 2023 cycle, women represented 11 percent, on average, of candidates from small parties, with many small parties doing significantly better in women’s representation than others. The gender gap was significantly higher in dominant parties.

Percentage Difference in Gender Representation of Candidates in the 2023 National Elections by Party



10. Elor Nkereuwem (May 2023): Why Women Haven’t Been Successful in Nigerian Elections. Pivotal Election in Africa. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

There Are More Women Candidates for Nominal and Deputy Executive Positions



Source: Elor Nkereuwem (2023)

The Nigerian government failed to implement the 35percent affirmative action for women's political representation as contained in the National Gender Policy 2006, despite a 2022 landmark court ruling by the federal high court ordering its enforcement. Notwithstanding government's inability to implement NGP 2006, the Federal Government adopted the updated National Gender Policy 2021 which recommended 50:50 affirmative action target for women's representation in political appointments and elected positions. Clearly, successive governments have failed to meet these targets.

Women's groups and civil society organizations have repeatedly called on the government, including the current Tinubu administration, to implement the 35percent affirmative action. But these demands have been largely ignored even as different aspects of the NGP 2021 are yet to be implemented .

More current and disaggregated data on women's representation in politics in Nigeria can be found at Invictusafrica.org.

The Main Barriers and Challenges for Women in Nigerian Politics:

Demanding Sexual Favours in Exchange for Political Support:

Nigeria is a deeply patriarchal society, where women are often expected to be subservient to men. There are widespread sexist attitudes that view women as unfit for political leadership. Women candidates are sometimes labelled as "Prostitutes" for seeking political office especially in rural areas where women are expected to strictly adhere to traditional roles. Female aspirants face demands for sexual favours in exchange for financial and political support. This is despite the fact the Nigerian society is influenced by Christianity and Islam.

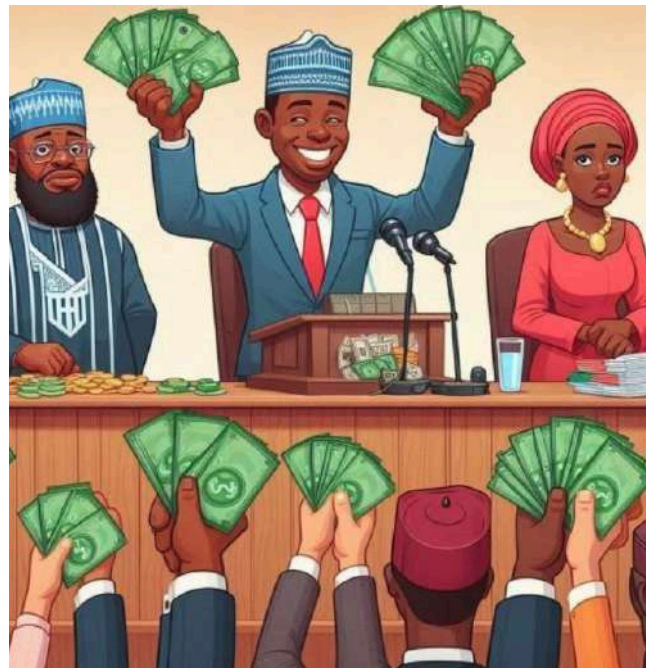
Female politicians have reported that male voters and political leaders have promised to support their campaigns if the women would have sex with them. One candidate, Okunola Abiola, who ran for a House of Representatives seat in Lagos in 2019, said "Notable residents in Ikeja demanded sexual commitment from me as collateral if I wanted to win. Electorate promised me their vote if I can date or have sexual affair with them. "On many occasions, I have been harassed sexually: both verbally and by physical actions and this was a major setback for me." – Okunola Abiola.

Female politicians also face verbal and physical sexual harassment, for instance candidates like Sylvanus Okeoma have faced "a lot of sexual harassment" on the campaign trail. The harassment includes verbal comments, touching, and other unwanted sexual behaviour. "I faced a lot of sexual harassment, and my agents were attacked." - Sylvanus Okeoma

Financial and Party Structural Barriers

The high costs of running for political office and the dominance of "political godfathers" who control party nominations create significant financial barriers for women. Women also face structural disadvantages like high cost of nomination forms, and lesser financial might compared to men running for the same office.

The cost of elections in Nigeria has risen from just over N1 billion in 1999 to over N100 billion in 2015, making Nigeria's elections the most expensive in the world. The cost of expression of interest and nomination forms for presidential candidates has increased from N15 million in 2007 to N22 million in 2015, a 300percent rise.



11. Luke Kelly (24 May 2019): Barriers and enablers for women's participation in governance in Nigeria. University of Manchester. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d430c8eed915d09ddbd354a/596_Nigerian_Women_Governance.pdf
12. Radio Nigeria (October 15, 2022): Challenges of Women in Politics. <https://radionigeria.gov.ng/2022/10/15/challenges-of-women-effective-political-participation/>
13. The Cable Nigeria (September 20, 2019): Female politicians: How men promised to vote for us if we had sex with them by Mercy Abang. <https://www.thecable.ng/female-politicians-how-men-promised-to-vote-for-us-if-we-had-sex-with-them/>
14. The Cable (September 20, 2019): Female politicians: How men promised to vote for us if we had sex with them. by Mercy Abang. <https://www.thecable.ng/female-politicians-how-men-promised-to-vote-for-us-if-we-had-sex-with-them/>
15. The Election Network (December 4, 2019): On the Cost of Elections in Nigeria; Where Does all the Money Go? by Farida Adamu, <https://theelectionnetwork.com/2019/12/04/on-the-cost-of-elections-in-nigeria-where-does-all-the-money-go/>

For the 2023 elections, the APC and PDP set their presidential nomination fees at one hundred million Naira (N100 million) and forty million Naira (N40 million) respectively, further pricing out many potential female candidates(16) .

In an effort to support female party members, the All Progressives Congress (APC) introduced a constitutional amendment mandating the nomination of a minimum of two female delegates per ward for party primaries and waived the payment for nomination forms for female aspirants who contested for the party's ticket in the 2023 election. Additionally, Action Alliance (AA) offered a 50percent discount on nomination forms for female aspirants, youths, and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the same election. The All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) also announced a 50percent price reduction for female aspirants and youths for the 2023 general election.

Despite these measures, many female and young aspirants have criticized the discounted or free nomination form policy as disingenuous. They asserted that party leaders often pressure women and youths to step down in favour of preferred candidates. PWDs, particularly women with disabilities are not considered when decisions are made on who to support or select as party candidates. Furthermore, internal party intrigues sometimes force many aspirants to withdraw from primaries, rendering the discounted or free forms policy ineffective in achieving their intended purpose.

Violence and intimidation and Poor Government Response

Women candidates and voters often face violence, hate speech, and other forms of intimidation, which deters their political participation. The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP) 2015 was hailed as a game changer, especially for protecting women in politics. Section 23 ((1) (2) (3) (4)) of the law deals with political violence by non-state actors with a provision of a jail term not exceeding four years or a fine not exceeding N500,000.00 or both for a person convicted of the offence. Section 24 (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) speaks to the penalties for convicted state actors and anyone who assists them in unleashing electoral violence.

While the VAPP Act has laid an important legal groundwork, its impact on reducing violence against female politicians in Nigeria is still limited by issues related to implementation, cultural norms, political dynamics, and the need for ongoing advocacy and support. Deep-rooted cultural and societal norms in Nigeria continue to perpetuate gender-based violence and discrimination.



16. Dataphyte (April 23, 2022): Parading Millions: Expensive Party Nomination Forms and Nigeria's 2023 Elections by Ayantola Alayande. <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/elections/parading-millions-expensive-party-nomination-forms-and-nigerias-2023-elections/>

Beyond legal frameworks, support systems such as security for female candidates, legal aid, and counselling services that are essential to effectively protect and empower women in politics are missing. Perpetuators of violence against female politicians are hardly persecuted to serve as a deterrent for future abuse.

Rejection of the five (5) Gender Bills:

The five key gender bills in Nigeria that have faced significant challenges in being passed by the National Assembly are:

1. Bill to provide special seats for women in the National Assembly and State Houses of Assembly. This is aimed to reserve a certain number of legislative seats for women.
2. Bill to provide for 35percent affirmative action for women's participation in political party leadership positions. This would have mandated political parties to field a minimum of 35percent women candidates.
3. Bill to grant citizenship to foreign-born husbands of Nigerian women. This sought to give equal citizenship rights to foreign spouses of Nigerian women.
4. Bill to allow Nigerian women to obtain the indigeneship (citizenship) of their husband's state after five years of marriage. This is aimed to give women equal rights as men in this regard.
5. Bill to ensure that at least 10 percent of all ministerial appointments are allocated to women. This was an effort to increase women's representation in the federal cabinet.

These bills were initially rejected by the 9th National Assembly in 2022 due to a combination of factors:

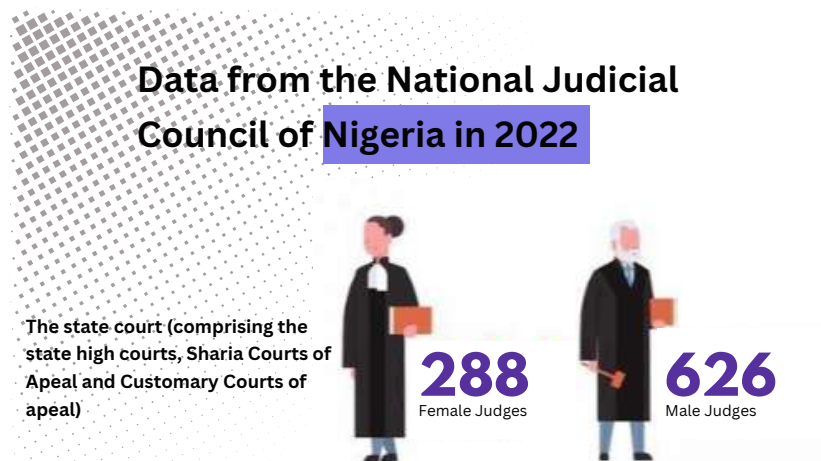
1. Lack of Understanding and Awareness: Many male legislators did not fully comprehend the importance of these bills for advancing gender equality and women's political participation.
2. Cultural and Religious Biases: There was significant opposition from conservative and patriarchal elements who held deep-rooted cultural and religious biases against expanding women's rights and political representation.
3. Insufficient Advocacy and Lobbying: Women's rights groups and female legislators were not able to mount a strong enough advocacy and lobbying campaign to build robust support for the bills among their male counterparts.
4. Resistance from Patriarchal Forces: The male-dominated political landscape in Nigeria resisted changes that could threaten the existing patriarchal power structures. Many lawmakers were reluctant to support measures that would increase female representation and influence.
5. Concerns about Meritocracy and Autonomy: Some lawmakers argued that the affirmative action quotas and reserved seats would undermine the principle of meritocracy, and infringe on the autonomy of political parties to choose their own leaders.
6. Fears of Disruption and Unintended Consequences: There were concerns that implementing these bills could lead to significant changes in the political and social order, potentially causing disruptions and unintended consequences that lawmakers were unwilling to risk.
7. Lack of Political Will: Ultimately, there appears to be a general lack of political will among Nigerian lawmakers to meaningfully address gender inequality issues and prioritize women's political empowerment.

The combination of cultural and religious biases, institutional resistance, and insufficient political commitment has posed formidable barriers to the passage of these important gender equality bills in Nigeria's National Assembly. Overcoming these deep-seated challenges will require sustained advocacy, awareness-raising, and a fundamental shift in the political landscape.

The rejection of the gender bills sparked widespread protests and advocacy campaigns by women's rights groups. After the public outcry, the House of Representatives later agreed to reconsider three of the bills - the ones related to citizenship, indigeneship rights, and the 35percent affirmative action. However, the other two bills on special legislative seats and the 10percent ministerial appointments remained rejected.

Women's rights organizations and some legislators continue to advocate for the passage of the full set of gender bills, arguing they are crucial for advancing gender equality and women's political representation in Nigeria. However, progress remains slow due to the entrenched cultural, political and institutional barriers.

Women in Nigeria's Judiciary



Female representation in the judiciary is critical to ensuring justice and fairness, it signals hope for a response to women's concerns. A relatively small number of women have been, or are part of, the judiciary, particularly in senior judicial leadership positions".

Data from the National Judicial Council of Nigeria in 2022, shows that women in the superior courts of record (which includes the Supreme Court, Court of appeal, Federal High Court, and National Industrial Court) totaled 66 in comparison to their male counterparts numbered 142.

In the state court (comprising the State High Courts, Sharia Courts of Appeal and Customary Courts of Appeal) female judges numbered 288 out of a total of 914 judicial officers.

The Supreme Court of Nigeria has a total of 13 Honourable Justices, among which only four, representing 31percent, are females. There are a total of 74 Honourable Judges at the Federal High Court of Nigeria, only 25 of this number, representing just 34percent, are female ¹⁷ According to statista.com, among the National judicial officers in Nigeria, women represent a minority. In 2018, there were 705 men and 286 women working in different positions of National Judicial Officers. Also only 230 Judges of High Courts, for instance, were women, while male Judges of High Courts were 581

17. Sunday Ehigiator, "2023 IFJ: Spotlight on Female Justices in Nigeria", This Day, March 11, 2023, <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2023/03/10/2023-ifj-spotlight-on-female-justices-in-nigeria#:~:text=Female%20High%20Court%20Justices.just%2034%20percent%2C%20are%20female>
18. Statista.com (2024): Number of Judicial officers in Nigeria in 2018, by position and gender

Globally, there has been a marked increase in the number of females entering the legal profession. The Legal Futures most recently put the number of females in undergraduate law courses at 69percent. According to the website, “The number of female applications for law courses rose 41percent in the decade to 2021, compared to just 2percent for men” . In Nigeria, data from the Council for Legal Education shows that out of 5,960 students registered in the 2017/18 session, 2,986 of them are females. In addition, 50.1percent of law students in that academic session are females and the number seems to be on a rise yearly.

More women's representation in the judiciary is key to ensuring that the courts represent their citizens, address their concerns and hand down sound judgments. Women judges are seen as better able to understand and address gender-based issues like domestic violence, rape, and sexual offenses. Female judges are viewed as more likely to "think outside the box" and bring a different perspective compared to their male counterparts. Limited female representation in the judiciary is considered a major barrier to women's access to justice in Nigeria. Patriarchal cultural and religious norms that view women as subservient to men have historically disadvantaged women in the Nigerian judicial system. Gender discrimination and bias against women in the legal profession and judiciary remain significant challenges.

PWDs’ Struggle to Be in Government:

PWDs make up an estimated 15percent of Nigeria's population, or around 14 million people. In the 2023 elections, of the total 93.46 million voters, about 14 million are PWDs. However, their representation in politics and governance remains extremely low. Very few PWDs are in elected or appointed political positions at the federal, state, and local government levels.

Despite the enactment of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, and Section 30 of the Act encouraging Persons with Disabilities to fully participate in politics, administration of political parties and governance, this group remains largely excluded from governmental roles. Worst still,

women with disabilities suffer higher levels of discrimination when it comes to electing candidates into office or appointing qualified individuals for positions in government.



States are expected to domesticate the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act -, but the adoption process often require years of sustained advocacy, while states which already have domesticated the Act have recorded varying degrees of success. Nevertheless, some states have made significant strides in involving PWDs in government. For example, Oyo State, through an executive order effective since 2021, appointed 33 PWDs as Special Assistants and Supervisory Councillors in Local Government Areas (LGAs). This action represents a proactive approach to inclusivity and sets a precedent for other states.

19. Bywater, Dr. Krista. November 2021. Barriers to Gender Based Violence (GBV) health services in humanitarian settings during COVID-19. Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh), Iraq, & Northeast Nigeria: Global Health Cluster COVID-19 Task Team.

The 2022 Electoral Act included provisions to enhance the participation of PWDs, such as mandating INEC to capture disability types in the voter register. In recent elections, INEC has taken some steps to improve accessibility, like providing priority voting for PWDs and training its officials accordingly. Civil society organizations have advocated for greater representation and pushed for the implementation of existing laws and policies.

Despite these legal protections and some progress, much work remains to be done to achieve full political and governmental inclusion for PWDs across the country .²⁰

Barriers to Political Participation for PWDs

1. Lack of accessibility: Polling units and other electoral infrastructure do not often accommodate the needs of PWDs, such as ramps, Braille ballots, and sign language interpreters. The SB Morgen (SBM) Intelligence report found that only 22.3 percent of PWDs had access to assistive aids at their polling units in the 2023 elections .
2. Stigma and discrimination: PWDs face negative stereotypes and social biases that view them as incapable of participating in politics.
3. Financial constraints: The high costs of running for office put it out of reach for many PWDs who often face economic marginalization.
4. Inadequate legal protections: Nigeria's laws and policies on the political rights of PWDs have historically been weak and poorly enforced.
5. Insufficient voter education: Many PWDs are unaware of their political rights and the support available to facilitate their participation.
6. Women with disabilities face more obstacles in political participation, from voting to contesting for public office.

Recommendations to Improve Women's Access to Politics and Governance:

To improve women's participation and representation in politics and political office in Nigeria:

- Implement Affirmative Action Policies: Fully implement the 50:50 affirmative action target for women's representation in political appointments and elected positions as outlined in Nigeria's National Gender Policy.
- Reform Electoral Financing: Introduce campaign finance reforms to reduce the high costs of running for office, which disproportionately disadvantage women candidates.
- Strengthen Political Party Commitments: Require all political parties to adopt internal policies and quotas to field more women candidates and promote their leadership within party structures.
- Enhance Women's Access to Resources: Provide targeted funding, training, and capacity-building programs to support female candidates from the grassroots up to national level in order to help them overcome structural barriers.

20. Friday Otokor, "PWDs, vulnerable groups constitute 70% of voters - INEC", Punch, October 25, 2022, <https://punchng.com/pwds-vulnerable-groups-constitute-70-of-voters-inec/>.

21. The Cable (July 19, 2023): Make their voices count: A tale of PWDs' inclusion in Nigeria's elections by Ilerioluwa Oladipupo. <https://www.thecable.ng/make-their-voices-count-a-tale-of-pwds-inclusion-in-nigerias-elections/>

- **Address Violence and Harassment:** Enact and enforce laws to protect women in politics from violence, intimidation, and sexual harassment before, during and after campaigns, and while in office.
- **Improve Civic and Voter Education:** Conduct widespread civic education to raise awareness on the importance of women's political participation and encourage voters to support female candidates.
- **Promote Mentorship and Networking:** Establish structured mentorship programs to guide and support aspiring women leaders, and facilitate networking opportunities for women in politics.
- **Leverage Technology and Media:** Utilize digital platforms and media to amplify the voices and visibility of women in politics, countering negative stereotypes and biases.
- **Engage Traditional and Religious Leaders:** Work with traditional and religious leaders to address cultural and patriarchal norms hindering women's political empowerment with more focus on women at the grassroots level.
- **Strengthen Gender-Responsive Governance:** Ensure that the ongoing constitutional review process and other legislative reforms prioritize gender equality and women's political rights.

To improve the representation and inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Nigerian politics:

1.Strengthen Legal and Policy Frameworks:

- Enact comprehensive anti-discrimination laws that protect the political rights of PWDs and mandate their inclusion in electoral and political processes.
- Fully implement and enforce the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018 and the National Disability Policy.
- Ensure targeted protection for women with disabilities participating in the political process.

2.Enhance Accessibility of Electoral Processes:

- Ensure that all polling units, campaign events, and other political activities are easy for people with disabilities to access. This includes providing supportive equipment and making necessary adjustments to accommodate their needs.
- Require the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to provide accessible voter education materials and voter registration services for PWDs with more focus on women with disabilities.

3.Increase Representation Targets and Affirmative Action:

- Introduce legal quotas or affirmative action measures to guarantee a minimum percentage of PWDs in elected and appointed political positions.
- Encourage political parties to adopt internal policies that promote the nomination and selection of PWD candidates with specific number of slots for women with disabilities.

4.Provide Capacity-Building and Funding Support:

- Establish training and mentorship programs to equip PWDs with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively participate in politics.
- Provide financial grants and campaign support to PWD candidates to address the higher costs they often face.

5.Promote Inclusive Political Culture:

- Conduct widespread public awareness campaigns to challenge stigma, stereotypes, and discrimination against PWDs in the political sphere.
- Engage traditional and religious leaders to address cultural barriers and promote the political rights of PWDs, especially women with disabilities.

WOMEN, VIOLENCE AND SECURITY

Impact of High-Level Insecurity on Women

Prolonged insecurity in regions such as the North East, North West, North Central, Niger Delta, and South East has disproportionately impacted women. Women are more vulnerable to violence, displacement, and trauma in conflict-affected areas. As of June 2022, there were approximately 3.1 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria, forced to flee their homes due to over a decade of insurgency and conflict, including attacks by Boko Haram and bandits. Women constitute a significant majority among these IDPs in the North East .

International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports indicate that in February 2023, the number of IDPs were 2.3 million in Nigeria ²³.

The number of women killed, raped, kidnapped, or displaced by bandits and other perpetrators is alarming. Women, persons with disabilities (PWDs), and children are disproportionately affected by violence, abductions, and displacement. Some PWDs are survivors of insurgency and banditry who have sustained permanent injuries. Insecurity disrupts schooling, affecting children's education and future prospects. The abduction of Chibok secondary school girls led to the #BringBackOurGirls movement, marking the beginning of an unfortunate trend of student abductions.

Access to healthcare becomes challenging, impacting maternal and child health in areas experiencing violent attacks. Fear of violence restricts women's mobility and economic participation. The security situation in Nigeria poses multifaceted challenges, affecting various aspects of society, including the economy. It has hindered GDP growth, disrupted businesses, eroded investor confidence, and discouraged both foreign direct investment and local business expansion. Farmers, many of whom are female, face threats that affect food production and security.

Sex Crimes Against Women even by the Police

While widespread attacks across the country are well-documented, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) remains a pervasive issue in Nigeria. Violence against women manifests in various forms, including domestic, verbal, and physical abuse, rape, early and forced marriages, incest, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), acid attacks, and killings. With a 55percent level of internet penetration in Nigeria, more women have become victims of Online Gender-Based Violence (OGBV).

The non-consensual dissemination of intimate images constitutes the most common form of OGBV in the country.



22. Oluwole Ojewale & Omolara Balogun, "Banditry's impacts on women and children in Nigeria needs a policy response", LSE Blog, January 10, 2022, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2022/01/10/banditry-impacts-on-women-children-in-nigeria-needs-policy-response-kidnappings-ssi-education/>.

23. Bywater, Dr. Krista. November 2021. Barriers to Gender Based Violence (GBV) health services in humanitarian settings during COVID-19. Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh), Iraq, & Northeast Nigeria: Global Health Cluster COVID-19 Task Team.

In April 2023, the former lover of a Nollywood actress who shared her nude videos and pictures via WhatsApp was arrested in Liberia . The veteran actress' case is one of the many incidents of revenge porn in the country with many survivors not getting justice despite the existence of the Cybercrime Prohibition and Prevention Act.

The SGBV situation is serious in Nigeria with UNFPA research showing that 31percent of women have experienced physical violence since age 15, with 14percent experiencing physical violence in 2017, mostly perpetrated by intimate partners. Between 2020 and 2023, Nigeria recorded 27,698 cases of SGBV, with 1,145 fatal cases and 393 convictions .

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the alarming prevalence of SGBV, revealing that women with disabilities are particularly at risk of sexual abuse and rape. A 2020 UN Women report indicated that women and girls with disabilities in Nigeria are nearly twice as likely to experience gender-based violence compared to their non-disabled counterparts. These women often live in communities already severely impacted by the socio-economic effects of the pandemic, with increased tensions providing opportunities for abuse. They also face barriers in accessing information on where to seek help and other essential services .

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) remains rampant in Nigeria. These are all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for cultural or other non-medical reasons.



24. <https://theeagleonline.com.ng/empress-njamahs-lover-turned-blackmailer-arrested-in-liberia/>

25. NAN, "FG says Nigeria records 27,698 SGBV cases in three years", Punch, November 15, 2023, <https://punchng.com/fg-says-nigeria-records-27698-sgbv-cases-in-three-years/>.

26. UN Nigeria (4 May 2020): Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria During the Covid-19 Crisis: The Shadow Pandemic.

Despite improvements in media reporting on rape and child sexual abuse, SGBV remains underreported due to societal taboos. Women and girls are abused in their homes, schools, and even places of worship. Sexual harassment is common in the workplace, where women are often treated as sex objects and expected to trade sexual favours for grades, appointments, promotions, or roles. Particularly in the banking sector, young women are expected to trade sexual favours to meet unrealistic targets.

The culture of silence around rape and sexual assault allows many perpetrators to escape justice, and survivors who report abuse often face ostracism. The Nigerian Police Force has a very low conviction rate for rape cases, with only 393 convictions out of 27,698 reported cases over a three-year period. This extremely low conviction rate is indicative of the police's inability to effectively investigate and prosecute sexual violence crimes.

Police personnel also have been accused of sexually abusing female detainees in their custody. These allegations highlight the vulnerability of women in the criminal justice system and the lack of accountability for sexual misconduct by law enforcement officers.

Patriarchal attitudes and gender biases within the police force and society lead to victim-blaming and dismissive attitudes towards sexual violence. The Nigerian government has established anti-corruption agencies and police oversight mechanisms, but their effectiveness has been limited by a lack of political will and resources. The Nigerian Police Force faces significant challenges in addressing sexual violence and abuse due to a combination of corruption, lack of resources and capacity, and deeply entrenched gender biases.

Overcoming these barriers will require among other interventions a comprehensive reform of the criminal justice system, which must include the complete overhaul of Nigeria's correctional centres. The safety and improved welfare of female inmates should form an integral part of the restructuring and rehabilitation of Nigeria's outdated correctional system. Through observational research conducted at correctional facilities in Nigeria, it was discovered that female inmates who constitute 4.82 percent of inmates do not have access to reproductive healthcare services. These facilities such as the Suleja and Kano Correctional Centres are burdened by overcrowding with female inmates sleeping in cramped cells.

27. Human Rights Watch (17 August 2010): Nigeria – Corruption Fueling Police Abuses. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2010/08/17/nigeria-corruption-fueling-police-abuses>

28. Human Rights Watch (August 2010): "Everyone's in on the Game"; Corruption and Human Rights Abuses by the Nigeria Police Force. 1- 56432-671-3

29. IDOWU OLUWAFEMI AMOS (2016): Factors Affecting Female Police Officers' Performance in Akure Command, Ondo State, Nigeria. Research on Humanities and Social Sciences. ISSN (Paper)2224-5766 ISSN (Online)2225-0484 (Online) Vol.6, No.3, 2016

30. Sophy N.A (2014): Corruption in the Police Force in Nigeria: An Afro-centric Ethical Critique.

<https://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/server/api/core/bitstreams/a5c0dfa4-bba3-4e3f-8d15-a4115c86e867/content>

31. State Report (2013): Nigeria 2013 Human Rights Report. <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/220358.pdf>

32. <https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/female-prison-admissions-rise-by-482-in-nigeria/mw5v0cr>

Female Representation in Security Agencies

Women are significantly underrepresented in Nigeria's security sector, with some units and departments having zero female representation. Women account for only 9.75percent of the police force and an estimated 5-10percent in the armed forces, primarily in support roles. However, a significant step was taken in February 2011 when President Goodluck Jonathan ordered the admission of females into the Nigeria Defence Academy to become combatant officers. As of 2021, women made up only 28percent of Nigerian Armed Forces peacekeepers, though this surpassed the UN's 17percent benchmark. Advocating for inclusion in Nigeria's security agencies is crucial, given that women are significantly affected by high levels of insecurity and sexual violence. Historically, leadership positions within Nigeria's security agencies have been predominantly male, with only the Nigerian Immigration Service having appointed female Controller-Generals thrice. The recruitment process favours male applicants, resulting in a disproportionately low percentage of women in the police, armed forces, and paramilitary.



Women in security agencies face challenges such as sexual harassment, sex-for-posting, and other forms of discrimination. Until January 2023, an unmarried female police officer who became pregnant was dismissed under Regulation 127 of the Nigeria Police Force, a policy declared discriminatory and null by the National Industrial Court. The Court of Appeal also voided Regulations 126 and 127, emphasizing their inconsistency with constitutional provisions and urging the Nigerian Police to align its regulations with modern societal norms .

Recommendations

1. Review and Reform Discriminatory Policies:

- Conduct a comprehensive review of all military laws, policies, and regulations to identify and eliminate any provisions that discriminate against women or limit their participation in the armed forces.
- Develop and implement clear policies that guarantee equal opportunities for women in all military roles, including combat positions, without any gender-based restrictions.
- Women should be included in the policy formulation process of security agencies to ensure that policies are inclusive and address the needs of all personnel.

33. ADF (April 30, 2024): Nigeria Looks to Increase Role of Women in Security Sector. <https://adf-magazine.com/2024/04/nigeria-looks-to-increase-role-of-women-in-security-sector/>

34. Idowu Abdullahi, "Unmarried cop sacked for getting pregnant gets N5m damages", Punch, January 11, 2024, <https://punchng.com/unmarried-cop-sacked-for-getting-pregnant-gets-n5m-damages/>.

2. Strengthen Accountability Mechanisms:

- Establish robust preventive and independent complaint mechanisms to address cases of gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, and abuse within the military.
- Ensure swift and impartial investigations, and impose appropriate disciplinary measures on perpetrators to send a strong message of zero tolerance for such misconduct.
- Ensure accountability and oversight mechanisms are in place to prevent abuses of power by security personnel.
- Ensure the safety and well-being of women in police cells by providing adequate facilities, gender-sensitive protocols, and regular monitoring.
- The Nigerian Police Trust Fund should prioritize gender mainstreaming initiatives, such as investing in establishing forensic centers and introducing a standard rape test kit.

3. Enhance Gender Mainstreaming and Training:

- Integrate gender perspectives into military training curricula, leadership development programs, and decision-making processes.
- Provide mandatory, comprehensive training on gender equality, sexual harassment, and the rights of women in the armed forces for all personnel.

4. Increase Recruitment and Retention of Women:

- Implement targeted recruitment campaigns and affirmative action measures to attract more women to join the military.
- Provide mentorship, career development opportunities, and family-friendly policies to support the retention and advancement of women in the armed forces.

5. Enhance Capacity to Respond to SGBV:

- The Nigerian Police Force (NPF) should be well-equipped and trained to effectively respond to, investigate, and prosecute cases of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).
- Specialized training and resources are essential to ensure that survivors receive justice and support.
- Strengthen laws protecting women by passing the amended Criminal Code, which had the removal of the statute of limitations for rape cases as one of its significant changes.

6. Promote Collaboration with Civil Society:

- Engage with women's rights organizations, gender experts, and other civil society stakeholders to inform policy reforms and implementation strategies.
- Encourage the military to work closely with these partners to address the unique challenges faced by women in the armed forces.

7. Protect Women and Girls from Online Gender Based Violence:

- Effective enforcement of relevant laws to protect women's digital rights such as the Nigeria Data Protection Regulation (NDPR), Data Protection Bill, Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act, Cyber Crimes Act (2015), Penal Code and Criminal Code Act.
- The Media should take the lead in enlightening women and girls on the risks online as well as their human and digital rights.

8. Protect and Provide for Female Inmates in Correctional Centres:

- Correctional Centres should be remodeled and fully equipped for the provision of sexual reproductive health services.
- Creation of non-custodial centres for women and offenders held for minor infractions.
- Adequate provision for pregnant women and their newborn babies born in correctional centres.
- Appoints senior female officers into decision making positions in the Nigerian Correctional Service.

GENDER AND EDUCATION

Access to education for women and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in Nigeria remains challenging due to the country's social, economic, and political realities.

Roadblocks to Education: Women and PWDs in Nigeria have historically faced significant barriers to accessing quality education. These barriers include cultural beliefs and gender stereotypes that prioritize male education and deepen discriminatory practices, stigmatization of PWDs, poverty, lack of infrastructure, and limited resources for special needs education. Consequently, many women and PWDs are



marginalized and denied equal educational opportunities. In many households, girls are burdened with a greater share of domestic work. Boys typically have better access to information and communication technology (ICT) and gadgets, while girls are often directed toward household chores, leaving them with less time for schoolwork. This limited access to digitalized classrooms hampers their ability to benefit from quality and relevant learning. Government and other stakeholders must prioritize creating an inclusive educational system aligned with industry, market needs, skill acquisition, and the elimination of gender and disability disparities at all educational levels.

Insecurity in the country is another major factor. In northern Nigeria, terrorist groups like Boko Haram have targeted schools, kidnapped thousands of women and girls, and displaced entire communities. The impact of terrorism on the ability of vulnerable groups, such as women and PWDs, to access educational services has been profound .

Out-of-School Children: According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, Nigeria has 20 million out-of-school children, 60% of whom are girls. One million girls drop out between the first and last year of primary school, while 600,000 leave school between Primary Six and Junior Secondary School One (JSS1). Previously, the number of out-of-school children was estimated between 10 and 15 million, but a 2022 UNESCO report attributes the increase to worsening security in northern Nigeria. Of these 20 million children, seven million have disabilities .

35. B Ubong, (2016): Insecurity And Girl-Child Education In Nigeria. https://www.academia.edu/30618807/INSECURITY_AND_GIRL_CHILD_EDUCATION_IN_NIGERIA

36. Mojeed Alabi, "UPDATED: Nigeria now has 20 million out-of-school children – UNESCO," Premium Times, September 1, 2022, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/551804-breaking-nigeria-now-has-20-million-out-of-school-children-unesco.html>.

37. Inclusive and Accessible Basic Education for Children with Disabilities in Nigeria: The Role of Federal and State Ministries of Education, n.d. <https://www.jonapwd.org/Factsheet%20inclusive%20Education.pdf>

In northern Nigeria, social attitudes further hinder education rates. The North-East and North-West states have 29percent and 35percent of Muslim children, respectively, attending Qur'anic education, which does not include basic education skills such as literacy and numeracy³⁸. Many northern states, especially those under Sharia law, allow girls to marry before the age of 18, restricting their access to education due to early marriage or pregnancy.

Sexual Harassment in Schools: Girls who attend school often face bullying and sexual harassment throughout their educational journey, from primary school to university. A UNICEF report indicates that four in ten girls are sexually harassed or assaulted in secondary school by male classmates or teachers, compared to one in ten boys. In tertiary institutions, the rate of sexual harassment for female students is nearly 70percent, with the main perpetrators being male schoolmates and lecturers, according to the National Centre for Biotechnology Information (NCBI).

Sex-For-Grades Prohibition Bill: To address sexual harassment in universities, the Senate passed the "Sex-For-Grades Prohibition Bill" in July 2020, proposing up to 14 years in jail for offenders. The bill, designed to protect female students from harassment by educators and promote ethical standards in tertiary institutions, was passed by the House of Representatives in February 2022. However, the former president left office without signing the bill into law .

Female Leadership in Educational Institutions: Between 1960 and 2023, only 38 women held the position of Vice Chancellor out of 720 individuals who occupied this role in various Nigerian universities, highlighting the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership .

Education Policies: The Nigerian government has implemented several policies to promote inclusive education and increased access for marginalized groups. The 2004 National Policy on Education emphasized equal access to education for all, including women and PWDs⁴¹. The Universal Basic Education Programme, introduced in 1999, aimed to provide greater access to quality basic education, mandating free and compulsory education for all children, including those with disabilities.

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Education in National Gender Policy: The 2006 Gender Policy on Education aimed to bridge the gender gap and promote equality. The revised National Gender Policy outlines objectives such as eliminating gender disparities, creating gender-sensitive learning environments, reviewing curricula and infrastructure, increasing access to life-changing opportunities, and providing high-quality and affordable education from early childhood to tertiary levels.

Inclusive Education: The Special Needs Education Policy of 2015 promotes inclusive education and support for PWDs. The 2019 Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act further aims to address discrimination and improve access to education for children with disabilities. However, despite these policies, many children with disabilities remain out of school due to discriminatory practices, stigmatization, and lack of access to appropriate facilities.

38. UNICEF, "Situation of Women and Children in Nigeria," n.d. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/situation-women-and-children-nigeria>.

40. Adelowo Adebunmi, "Concerns as Buhari Withholds Assent to Sexual Harassment Bill Days to Exit," The Guardian, May 24, 2023, <https://guardian.ng/news/concerns-as-buhari-withholds-assent-to-sexual-harassment-bill-days-to-exit/>.

41. Deborah Tolu-Kolawole, "Only 38 female VCs have headed Nigerian varsities since 1960 – Committee of Vice-Chancellors," The Punch, October 7, 2023. <https://punchng.com/only-38-female-vc-have-headed-nigerian-varsities-since-1960-committee-of-vice-chancellors/>.

42. World Bank, "National Policy on Education," n.d. http://wbfiles.worldbank.org/documents/hdn/ed/saber/supporting_doc/AFR/Nigeria/TCH/National%20Policy%20on%20Education.pdf.

43. Universal Basic Education Commission, "Compulsory, Free Universal Basic Education Act 2004," September 2021. <https://ubec.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/NGA87623-UBE-ACT-2004.pdf>.

these policies, many children with disabilities remain out of school due to discriminatory practices, stigmatization, and lack of access to appropriate facilities. ⁴³

Despite several policy interventions, women and PWDs continue to face significant challenges in accessing education. The primary reason for the limited success of government policies is the gap between policy formulation and implementation. This gap is often due to inadequate funding, corruption, lack of political will, and inefficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Additionally, existing policies often lack specificity and fail to address the unique needs of women and PWDs. To improve access to education, targeted interventions are required, addressing healthcare, assistive technologies, inclusive teaching practices, accessible facilities, adapted curricula, and trained teachers. Without these measures, policies will not have a meaningful impact on improving access to education for marginalized groups.

Recommendations

1. Increase Investment in Inclusive Education Infrastructure:

- Federal and state governments should increase investment in education infrastructure, teacher training, and resources for special needs education.
- This includes the provision of assistive technologies, accessible facilities, and inclusive teaching methods to accommodate diverse learning needs.

2. Strengthen Enforcement and Accountability Mechanisms:

- Establish stronger enforcement mechanisms to ensure effective implementation of existing policies.
- Implement regular monitoring and evaluation to identify gaps and adjust policies and programs as needed.
- Put in place accountability measures to address corruption and ensure transparency in budgeting and resource allocation.

3. Promote a Culture of Inclusivity:

- Raise awareness and promote a culture of inclusivity within communities to break down societal barriers, including harmful stereotypes and biases.
- Achieve this through advocacy campaigns, community engagement programs, and partnerships with local organizations and leaders.

4. Ensure Safe and Accessible Schools for Children especially Girls:

- Provide schools that are accessible and safe for children especially girls, free from gender-based violence, harassment, and discrimination.
- Increase the number of female teachers to inspire and motivate girls to pursue education.
- Ensure schools have appropriate sanitation facilities catering to the needs of young girls.

5. Establish Scholarships and Alternative Learning Pathways:

- Provide scholarships and financial support programs for women and persons with disabilities.

43. Inclusive and Accessible Basic Education for Children with Disabilities in Nigeria: The Role of Federal and State Ministries of Education, n.d. <https://www.jonapwd.org/Factsheet%20Inclusive%20Education.pdf>

- Promote alternative learning pathways, such as vocational training and literacy programs.

6. Leverage Technology for Inclusive Education:

- Explore and adopt innovative programs, such as the "School on Air" initiative in Oyo state, to provide alternative learning opportunities for marginalized groups, including PWDs.

7. Address Poverty and Economic Constraints:

- Implement programs to address poverty and economic constraints that prevent girls and children with disabilities from attending school.
- Enforce the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act with greater vigor to ensure no child is denied basic education.
- Establish special schools for those who cannot attend regular schools.

8. Tackle Terrorism and Insecurity:

- Address terrorism and insecurity in the northern region to restore educational access for vulnerable groups, especially girls.
- Protect schools and students from attacks, kidnappings, and disruptions caused by armed groups.

9. Strengthen Legal Protections against Sexual Harassment:

- Expedite the re-gazetting and enactment of the Sexual Harassment Bill to protect female students in higher education institutions.
- Encourage state assemblies to develop appropriate legislative interventions to protect female students in secondary schools.

10. Implement Gender Equality Targets in Science, Technology Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education:

- Achieve the 50:50 ratio of female to male students in STEM education by 2030, as set in the National Gender Policy.
- Adopt the 50percent Affirmative Action to bridge gender gaps in leadership positions in the education sector by 2030.



GENDER AND HEALTH

Women in Nigeria face significant gender-based barriers in accessing healthcare services.

Socio-cultural Norms and Practices: Nigeria's patriarchal society often view women as inferior, limiting their autonomy and decision-making power over their own health. Studies show that 45percent of women in Nigeria require their husband's permission to access healthcare. Additionally, harmful cultural practices like female genital mutilation (FGM), which affects 20percent of Nigerian women, have severe detrimental impacts on women's physical and mental wellbeing.



Geographical Disparities: The distribution of healthcare facilities in Nigeria is highly unequal, with rural areas facing significant shortages. While 70percent of the population lives in rural areas, only 30percent of the country's health infrastructure is located there. This forces many women to travel long distances to access care, a challenge exacerbated by the lack of affordable and reliable transportation options.

Economic Barriers: Nigeria's out-of-pocket health expenditure stands at 76.7percent, one of the highest in the world. This disproportionately affects women, who often have lower economic status and less financial independence. Furthermore, only 5percent of the population is covered by health insurance, leaving the majority, including many women, without financial protection.

Gender-Based Violence: Fear of stigma and discrimination prevents many women, especially survivors of gender-based violence, from seeking healthcare. A 2018 study found that only 3percent of women who experienced intimate partner violence sought help from a healthcare provider.

Maternal and Reproductive Health: Nigeria has one of the highest maternal mortality ratios globally, at 1,047 deaths per 100,000 live births. This is largely due to insufficient investment in maternal healthcare services and infrastructure. Additionally, the unmet need for family planning services stands at 16percent, and only 29percent of women receive cervical cancer screening.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): is a significant gender-based health issue in Nigeria, with far-reaching consequences for women and girls. According to the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey, 20percent of women and girls aged 15-49 in the country have undergone FGM, with the practice being more prevalent in certain regions, such as the South-East (35percent) and South-South (32percent) zones. FGM can lead to severe health complications, including bleeding, infections, infertility, and increased risk of childbirth difficulties, as well as long-lasting physical and psychological trauma. The practice is deeply rooted in harmful gender norms and beliefs about female sexuality and "purity," reflecting the underlying gender inequality and discrimination embedded in Nigerian society. Despite the enactment of laws prohibiting FGM, such as the Violence

44. Bywater, Dr. Krista. November 2021. Barriers to Gender Based Violence (GBV) health services in humanitarian settings during COVID-19. Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh), Iraq, & Northeast Nigeria: Global Health Cluster COVID-19 Task Team.

Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act of 2015, the eradication of this practice remains challenging due to the entrenched cultural and social norms that justify it. Addressing this gender-based health issue requires a comprehensive, multi-stakeholder approach that tackles the underlying inequalities, raises awareness, provides support services, and ensures the effective implementation of anti-FGM laws and policies across Nigeria.

Cancer and VVF as Gender Related Health Issues: Cancer and Vesicovaginal Fistula (VVF) are significant gender-related health issues in Nigeria. Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in Nigeria, accounting for 40-50percent of all female cancers. The age-standardized incidence rate of breast cancer in Nigeria is 52.3 per 100,000 women, higher than the global average of 46.3 per 100,000 women. Cervical cancer is the third most common cancer and the second most frequent cause of cancer deaths among women aged between 15 and 44 years. In 2020 – the latest year for which data is available – the country recorded 12,000 new cases and 8,000 deaths from cervical cancer . Nigerian women are more likely to be diagnosed with cancer at later stages, leading to poorer outcomes and higher mortality rates. Barriers to early detection and treatment include lack of awareness, limited access to screening services, and cultural stigma around cancer.

Vesicovaginal Fistula (VVF) is a devastating childbirth injury that predominantly affects women in Nigeria. Nigeria has the highest global burden of VVF, with an estimated 400,000 to 1 million women living with the condition, and about 20,000 new cases occurring annually; 90 percent of the cases go untreated .

VVF is caused by prolonged obstructed labour, which is more common in areas with limited access to emergency obstetric care and skilled birth attendance. Women living with VVF often face social stigma, isolation, and poor quality of life, as the condition leads to uncontrolled leakage of urine and faeces. Factors contributing to the high VVF prevalence in Nigeria include early marriage, teenage pregnancy, poverty, and gender inequalities in access to healthcare.

Drug Addiction among Women in Northern Nigeria: Northern Nigeria is facing a growing crisis of women battling drug addiction, a trend linked to a combination of socio-cultural and socio-economic factors in the region. The insurgency, kidnappings, and banditry that have plagued parts of northern Nigeria have had devastating impact, leading to deaths, displacement, and financial burdens, with women disproportionately affected, some becoming rape survivors. These crises have left many women and children orphaned and vulnerable, driving some to turn to drug use as a coping mechanism. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), women now represent up to 49percent of amphetamine users and non-medical users of other substances in Nigeria. A 2018 UNODC report found that one in four drug users in Nigeria are women, with particularly high drug use prevalence in the North-West (12percent), North-Central (10percent), and North-East (13.6percent) regions . The underlying drivers include multidimensional poverty, lack of access to education and healthcare, early marriage, and the socio-economic upheaval caused by the ongoing conflicts in the region. Addressing this challenge requires a comprehensive, gender-sensitive approach that tackles the root causes and provides support and rehabilitation services for affected women.

45. Africa Renewal (October 2024): Nigeria to vaccinate 7.7 million girls against leading cause of cervical cancer. <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/october-2023/nigeria-vaccinate-7.7-million-girls-against-leading-cause-cervical-cancer#:~:text=In%20Nigeria%2C%20cervical%20cancer%20is,8%2C000%20deaths%20from%20cervical%20cancer.>

46. Borgen Magazine (February 2014): Vesico Vaginal Fistula: 80,000 Nigerian Women Suffer Annually by Dickson Salami Adamu. <https://www.borgenmagazine.com/vesico-vaginal-fistula-80000-nigerian-women-suffer-annually/>

47. Kipazze Madaki, "The burden of drug abuse: Predictors of prescription drug abuse among women in Northern Nigeria. A systematic review", *Scientific African*, November 2023.; <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2468227623004076>.

Abortion as a Gender related Health Issues: Abortion is considered a significant gender issue in Nigeria due to the country's highly restrictive laws and the consequences of unsafe, clandestine abortions on women's health and lives. Under Nigerian law, abortion is only legally permitted to save the life of the pregnant woman, forcing many women to resort to unsafe methods performed by untrained providers. Mental health issues like depression, anxiety, and trauma are common but under-served among this population. Substance abuse is prevalent, often as a coping mechanism, but treatment options are limited. Comprehensive, non-judgmental, and sex worker-led health services are critical to fulfilling their right to health. Criminalisation of sex work in Nigeria pushes workers into more precarious and unsafe working conditions. Sex workers face high risks of violence, exploitation, and abuse from clients, law enforcement, and the public, with little legal recourse.

Women's Mental Health: According to -WHO-, worldwide about 10percent of pregnant women and 13percent of women who have just given birth experience a mental disorder, primarily depression. This is even higher in developing countries like Nigeria, with statistics of about 15.6percent during pregnancy and 19.8percent after childbirth . Conditions peculiar to women like Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) and menopause also cause depression and anxiety as seen in different research. But there is little awareness around these conditions. In addition to this, the spike in SGBV has seen more women battling with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Despite the evident need for medical care and psychosocial support for women battling mental health disorders, they scarcely get support at home and in the health system. Rather, in many cases, women are taken for prayers or to persons who claim to have exorcism power. Shockingly women and girls like a 13-year-old girl in Karu, Nasarawa State have been raped by pastors and other religious leaders who dubbed them demon-possessed with a promise to deliver them from demonic possession.

Women who choose the better option of seeking treatment are practically stuck as WHO reports that mental health is underfunded and understaffed in Nigeria, with only 0.12 psychiatrists per 100,000 population in 2017. As a deeply religious society Nigerians especially women visit religious leaders for counselling because the idea of consulting a psychologist is still foreign to them.

Female Representation in The Health Sector: Women are significantly underrepresented in leadership positions in the Nigerian health sector, despite making up an estimated 60-70percent of the health workforce. Men occupy most decision-making positions in the health system, keeping women on the sidelines of leadership for decades.

According to research, in Nigeria, women constitute the majority of medical doctors and nursing and midwifery personnel, with data from 2018 reporting that 65percent of medical doctors and 87percent of nursing personnel were women. However, in Northern Nigeria, trained Healthcare Workers (HCWs) on the frontlines are majorly male due to low levels of education among girls, though untrained HCWs are more likely to be female.

Female health workers face challenges related to poor work environments, gender stereotyping, and discrimination. Patriarchal norms and gender stereotypes disadvantage women in the health sector and society. There is a lack of enabling resources, unfavourable workplace practices, and gender bias against women.

52. <https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/promotion-prevention/maternal-mental-health>.

53. <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/11/pastor-rapes-13-yr-old-during-deliverance-says-its-devils-work/>.

54. Nextier (2023): Stakeholder Analysis Report: Nigeria. Advancing Women's Leadership in Health. WomenLift Health.

https://www.womenlifthealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Report_Nextier_WomenLift-Health_-_Nigeria-Stakeholder-Analysis_-_Project-Final.pdf

55. Taiwo M, Oyekenu O, Ekeh F, Dey AK, Raj A. Gender differences in work attendance among health care workers in Northern Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic. *EClinicalMedicine*. 2022 Oct;52:101605. doi: 10.1016/j.eclinm.2022.101605. Epub 2022 Aug 3. PMID: 35936022; PMCID: PMC9347235.

Female doctors and nurses in Nigeria find it very difficult to balance their multiple roles and responsibilities, with family obligations considered a primary role. The lack of work-life balance and the need to fulfil family responsibilities hinders women's career advancement.

Recommendations to Improve Women's Access to Healthcare in Nigeria

- 1. Amend Laws and Policies:** The government should amend laws and policies to improve women's access to healthcare, allocate more funding to the health sector, and enforce laws prohibiting harmful practices like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Additionally, the government should improve the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data to better understand the healthcare needs of women.
- 2. Implement the Ministry of Health's Agenda:** The Federal Ministry of Health should ensure the effective implementation of its four-point agenda to improve health outcomes. This agenda focuses on enhancing governance, prioritizing maternal health, strengthening health systems, and ensuring equitable access to quality care. Feminist groups should form a coalition to advocate for the implementation of this agenda.
- 3. Ensure Transparent Funding Management:** The government should ensure the transparent management of new funding plans aimed at attaining Universal Health Coverage, as these initiatives will significantly benefit women and persons with disabilities (PWDs). The government should also mainstream Gender Responsive Budgeting for the health sector.
- 4. Strengthen State-Level Healthcare Systems:** State governments should take decisive action to reduce the reliance on Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA)s, allocate more funds to the health sector, and better manage state-owned health insurance schemes to create demand from mothers who cannot afford healthcare services.
- 6. Address Brain Drain in the Health Sector:** The government should develop a multi-sectorial plan to stem the brain drain in the health sector, which disproportionately affects women and PWDs. This could include initiatives such as scholarships and bursary awards for girls studying relevant healthcare courses.
- 7. Enforce Laws Against Harmful Practices:** The government should galvanize states where FGM persists to better implement enacted laws aimed at ending this harmful practice. Additionally, the government should collaborate with states to improve sensitization on the dangers of early marriage and Vesico-vaginal Fistula (VVF).
- 8. Decriminalize Abortion:** The government should amend laws criminalizing abortion to give women the right to choose and treat them as clients whose healthcare rights must be protected, free from judgment.

56. ALobaid AM, Gosling CM, Khasawneh E, McKenna L, Williams B. Challenges Faced by Female Healthcare Professionals in the Workforce: A Scoping Review. *J Multidiscip Healthc.* 2020 Aug 5;13:681-691. doi: 10.2147/JMDH.S254922. PMID: 32821112; PMCID: PMC7417925.

9. Prioritize Women's Mental Health: The government should significantly improve awareness on women's mental health to stop the ascription of conditions like postpartum depression, gender-based violence (GBV) induced PTSD to spiritual reasons.

6. Government should incentivize the study of relevant mental health courses such as psychiatry and clinical psychology especially for qualified female students.

7. Address the Impact of Economic Policies: The government should introduce multi-sectorial solutions to address the challenge of skyrocketing drug prices due to new economic policies, to prevent more women from dying and worsening Nigeria's already high maternal mortality rate.

8. Improve Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities: Hospitals across the country should be modified to ensure accessibility for PWDs, and the government should introduce PWD desks to reduce waiting times and increase access to health services. The government should also implement the free healthcare provisions of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act.

GENDER AND LIVELIHOOD: POVERTY WEARS FEMALE FACE

Poverty in Nigeria has a distinct gender dimension, with women disproportionately affected compared to men. According to the 2022 Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics, 63percent of persons living in Nigeria (133 million people) are multidimensional poor. Of this number, 60percent are women.

The National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) estimates that there are 35.1 million persons currently living with disabilities in Nigeria, with 90percent of this population living in extreme poverty. It is evident that disability and poverty are closely interlinked in Nigeria, and women with disabilities often experience the combined disadvantages associated with gender and disability.



<https://fadeafrica.org/tag/poverty-in-nigeria/>

Several factors contribute to the feminization of poverty in Nigeria:

1. Discrimination: Discriminatory norms and deep-seated gender biases perpetuate poverty among women and persons with disabilities (PWDs).

From childhood, PWDs are often ostracized from the community and treated as outcasts, while women are often raised to be dependent and subservient

57. National Bureau of Statistics (NOVEMBER 17, 2022): Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index (2022).

<https://www.undp.org/nigeria/publications/nigeria-multidimensional-poverty-index-2022>

58. Maryam Abdullahi, "35m people living with disabilities in Nigeria, says NCPWD," December 2, 2023, <https://www.thecable.ng/35m-people-living-with-disabilities-in-nigeria-says-ncpwd/amp/>

wives, with limited ambitions or interests beyond those of their husbands. Many parents see the education of the girl child as a waste of time and resources, as she will soon be married out to another family. Such scenarios make it harder for members of vulnerable groups to access economic opportunities and worsen poverty among them.

2. Lack of Access to Education: One in every five of the world's out-of-school children is in Nigeria. The 2022 UNESCO report put the current number of out-of-school children in Nigeria at 20 million. Of this number, over 60percent are girls and 7 million are PWDs. These children will eventually grow up to face social exclusion and limited access to economic opportunities. The 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey found that only 48.3percent of female candidates passed the 2019 West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), compared to 51.7percent of males . Lack of education⁶¹ limits women's economic opportunities and earning potential.

3. Unemployment and Underemployment: Women and PWDs are often relegated to informal, low-paying jobs or no jobs at all. A provision in the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act stipulates that all public and private organizations in the country should reserve 5percent of their workforce for persons with disabilities. However, there is no data available to show the extent of compliance with this aspect of the law, and it is unclear whether the relevant agencies of government have put in place the necessary mechanisms for enforcement, monitoring, and evaluation.

4. Unpaid Domestic Work: The burden of unpaid work is felt by women across socioeconomic classes, but it is more severely experienced by women in lower-income groups who lack access to support structures such as affordable child care and domestic help. Women provide millions of hours of domestic work and care every day, and yet this labor is not recognized or appreciated, as it is not considered a "proper job." The imbalance in unpaid domestic work between men and women is such that women who also engage in paid labor have less time than their male counterparts for financially rewarding activities, hence they earn comparatively less.

5. Harmful Cultural Practices: Practices like early marriage and widowhood inheritance deprive women of their economic rights. Married girls more often than not leave school, so they then lack the skills to lift themselves out of poverty. According to UNICEF, Nigeria has the highest number of child brides in West and Central Africa, with an estimated 22 million child brides living in Nigeria, accounting for 40percent of all child brides in the region. While poverty is a key cause of child marriage, it is also an ongoing consequence of it. Robbed of the chance to grow, learn, and fully realize their potential, Nigerian child brides are disempowered and often consigned to a life of penury.

59. UNICEF (2022): Education – Nigeria 2022. <https://www.unicef.org/nigeria/education>

60. Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (2018 NDHS). <https://ngfrepository.org.ng:8443/bitstream/123456789/3145/1/NDHS%202018.pdf>

61. (National Bureau of Statistics September 2019)

62. Aya Chebbi, "Unpaid work and domestic labour: The reality for African women," March 9 2020. <https://www.one.org/africa/stories/unpaid-domestic-labour-african-women/>

63. UNICEF (2015): Child Marriage in West Africa and Central Africa: At a Glance. <https://www.unicef.org/wca/media/2596/file>

Number of girls and women married in childhood in West and Central Africa

Source: Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and Multi-indicator Country Surveys(MICS), 2005-2017
Generated by UNICEF Data and Analytics Section, January 2018

Nigeria	22 million	Benin	900,000
Democratic Republic of the Congo	8.9 million	Central African Republic	800,000
Niger	4.1 million	Togo	600,000
Mali	2.8 million	Liberia	500,000
Burkina Faso	2.6 million	Mauritania	500,000
Chad	2.6 million	Congo	400,000
Cameroon	2.4 million	Gambia	200,000
Ghana	2.3 million	Guinea-Bissau	200,000
Côte d'Ivoire	2.1 million	Gabon	200,000
Guinea	1.9 million	Equatorial Guinea	100,000
Senegal	1.6 million	Cabo Verde	30,000
Sierra Leone	1.0 million	Sao Tome and Principe	20,000
West and Central Africa			59 million

6. Limited Access to Land and Credit: Although the Nigerian Land Use Act of 1978 gives men and women equal land rights, in practical terms, women remain marginalized in access to and economic utilization of land, despite their massive engagement in agriculture (above 80percent of farmers in Africa are women). This is a widespread problem in rural communities where informal institutions such as customs and traditions prevail. Women cannot inherit or own family land, and even with court rulings and new laws in states such as Abia and Rivers favouring women's inheritance and ownership of land, progress has been slow.

Only 4.2percent of Nigerian women aged 15 to 49 owned some piece of land completely in 2018. One consequence of women's poor access to land is the lack of access to credit facilities from formal financial institutions, where land serves as collateral.

7. Mining and Sexual Violence in Nigeria: According to report by ENACT (2020),^{67,68} artisanal or Illegal mining in northern Nigeria is leading to two worrying trends. One is the exchange of illegally mined gold for weapons, and the other is the use of women and girls in these illicit activities. Ogonnaya (2020) captures the gender dimension of illegal mining and insecurity. Across the north-west, particularly in Zamfara State, girls and women are involved in illegal mining in two ways. Girls are used

64. Ebere Augustine Ugwueje, (2014) "Gender Equality Mainstreaming: Implications for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development in Abia State of Nigeria," African Journals Online, <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ijdmr/article/view/104390/94470>

65. Tayo George et al (2014); "Women's Access to Land and its Implications for Economic Empowerment in Ota, Nigeria," June 2014.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265384676_Women's_Access_to_Land_and_its_Implications_for_Economic_Empowerment_in_Ota_Nigeria

66. Maurice Ogonnaya (2020): Women and girls in illegal mining in northern Nigeria. ENACT Observer (3 December 2020) <https://enactafrica.org/enact-observer/women-and-girls-in-illegal-mining-in-northern-nigeria>. Also see: Maurice Ogonnaya (2020): Illegal mining and rural banditry in North West Nigeria: Responses, successes and challenges. ENACT Policy Brief Issue 19 | November 2020

67. The Guardian Newspaper (25 May 2015): Illegal Miners as Killers. <https://guardian.ng/opinion/illegal-miners-as-killers/>

in the mining fields as labourers by illegal miners. This exposes them to severe poisoning by lead dust that results in health problems, sexual harassments and abuse and even death.⁶⁷

Some women and girls even in the Southern part of Nigeria have also be accounted dead or sexually abused within the space of illegal mining in their communities. A 2020 study by the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) collaborates this gender threat as they found that socio-economic dislocations through illegal mining led to drug use, alcoholism and prostitution among women in mining communities.

8. Women in Agriculture and Gender Issues: Women make up the majority of the agricultural workforce in Nigeria, contributing up to 60-93percent of the labour in cash crop production, food crop production, and marketing/trading. However, women farmers in Nigeria face significant barriers and discrimination, such as unequal access to land, farm inputs, and financial resources compared to men. Female labour are often underpaid and undervalued. Women farmers are also underrepresentation in decision-making bodies and policies of the government.

In addition, women farmers in Nigeria face numerous challenges, including gender-based violence. Gender-based violence (GBV) is a significant issue affecting women farmers in Nigeria. A study in Enugu State found that 90percent of surveyed women farmers have experienced GBV, with 76percent of cases involving violence against children.

GBV has a profound impact on women farmers, leading to reduced income, food insecurity, and perpetuating the cycle of inequality. It also affects their physical and psychosocial well-being, limiting their ability to work and produce food for their families. Women farmers often face barriers in accessing land, farm inputs, and financial resources compared to men. This limits their ability to invest in their farms and increase productivity. Women farmers have limited access to education and training opportunities, which are crucial for improving agricultural skills and increasing productivity. Women are underrepresented in decision-making bodies and agricultural organizations. This lack of representation limits their ability to influence policies and programs that affect their livelihoods.⁷²

9. Women and Access to Finance: According to the African Development Review (2015), female farmers in Nigeria get less than 10percent of the credit made available to small-scale farmers; they are also dissuaded from applying for formal loans because of the density of the administrative process for appropriate loan sizes and their credit ratings. Women are not well represented in farmer clusters and constitute a minority in agriculture cooperatives, leaving them with limited voices. According to the National Bureau of Statistics in 2017, only about 8,000 women can access agriculture loans compared to over 20,000 men in the same sector.



68. Punch Newspaper (12th November 2020): Harvest of death, rape, drug abuse in Osun mining communities. <https://punchng.com/harvest-of-death-rape-drug-abuse-in-osun-mining-communities/>

69. Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) (2020): Impact of mining on women, youth and others in selected communities in Nigeria, NEITI Occasional Paper Series, Issue 7, October 2020

70. Okoroafor, Chiadikaobi & Amarachukwu, Ohagwu & Blessing, Nwokike. (2024). Navigating Gender-Based Violence impacts on women farmers' livelihoods and mitigation strategies in selected South eastern states in Nigeria. *Discovery Agriculture*.

71. .13140/RG.2.2.33733.01763.

72. Siobhan Shaw (March 14, 2023): Gender-Based Violence in Agriculture. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/gender-based-violence-agriculture-siobhan-shaw/>

73. The Cable (March 14, 2024): Nigerian women in agriculture: A catalyst for food security, economic growth, and family well-being by Guest Writer. <https://www.thecable.ng/nigerian-women-in-agriculture-a-catalyst-for-food-security-economic-growth-and-family-well-being/>

74. EFinA Access to Financial Services Survey

A 2018 national level survey administered by EFINA identified that women's financial inclusion stood at 58.9percent, which translates to a gender gap of 8.5percent when compared to men's financial inclusion which stood at 67.4 percent. Nigerian men are considerably more likely to save in a bank (25.8percent of men; 16.3percent of women). Women are more likely to save with informal mechanisms only (21.9percent of women, 15.1percent of men). Roughly twice as many men as women are likely to have a pension product (10.6percent of men, 5.4percent of women). The lack of insurance products is striking across genders: only 2.4percent of men and 1.0percent of women have one or more insurance product.

In summary, addressing the gender dimensions of poverty in Nigeria requires a multi-faceted approach that tackles the root causes of inequality. This includes investing in girls' education, promoting women's economic empowerment, addressing gender-based violence, and ensuring universal access to quality healthcare services. By prioritizing gender equality, Nigeria can unlock the full potential of its women and drive sustainable economic growth and development. According to the McKinsey Global Institute, Nigeria's GDP could grow by 23percent or \$229 billion by 2025 if women participated in the economy to the same extent as men.

Recommendations for the Economic Empowerment of Women and PWDs

- 1. Prioritize Girls' Education:** The government should enforce the free basic education law and ensure schools are safe and accessible for girls and persons with disabilities (PWDs) across all states. Families should be incentivized and compelled to educate their daughters and children with disabilities.
- 2. Challenge Harmful Cultural Norms:** The government, in partnership with feminist and rights groups, should launch nationwide campaigns to educate rural communities on the detrimental impact of negative customs and traditions that perpetuate gender inequality and deny women and PWDs access to land and credit.
- 3. Enhance Political Representation:** The government should implement affirmative action measures to increase the participation of women and PWDs in politics and public service, remedying the effects of historical discrimination.
- 4. Improve Access to Quality Healthcare:** The government should prioritize providing universal access to quality healthcare services, particularly for women and PWDs, to break the vicious cycle of poverty and poor health outcomes.
- 5. Promote Work-Life Balance:** The government and civil society organisations should educate men on the importance of sharing domestic chores and childcare duties, and establish affordable, quality childcare centers to enable women to pursue economically gainful activities.

75. McKinsey (September 2015): How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth <https://mck.co/2i7319d>

6. Support Youth with Disabilities: The government should develop programs that provide skills training, job readiness, and placement assistance for youth with disabilities, coupled with ongoing mentorship.

7. Raise Disability Awareness: The government should conduct public awareness campaigns to foster a better understanding of disability and challenge the stigma faced by PWDs.

8. Promote Assistive Technology: The government should support the in-country production of affordable assistive technologies through agencies like National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) to improve accessibility for PWDs.

9. Strengthen Disability Inclusion Laws: The government should provide adequate funding for the implementation of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act and establish accessible mechanisms for PWDs to report discrimination.

10. Ensure Transparency in Poverty Alleviation: The government should install robust mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability in the execution of social welfare and poverty alleviation programs, particularly those targeting women, girls, and PWDs.

GENDER DISPARITY & SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN NIGERIAN SPORT



Nigerian female athletes are outperforming their male counterparts in international tournaments. Despite a lesser representation, 35 of the 47 gold medals won by the Nigerian athletes were won by women. This trend is also observed in the Olympics and Commonwealth Games. Female athletes outperform their male counterparts. Nine of the 14 medals Nigeria won in Athletics were secured by women, highlighting the pivotal role female athletes have played in uplifting the image of the country over the years. So, providing an enabling environment for women to thrive ought to be paramount in the nation's decision-making process. Unfortunately, Nigeria's sports sector has long grappled with significant gender imbalances, which have hindered women's participation and representation. According to the National Sports Industry Policy (NSIP) 2022-2026, women account for only 30percent of participants in organized sports in the country.

The Athletics Federation of Nigeria (AFN) is one of about 40 sports federations in Nigeria, standing among the top five, falling just behind the likes of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) and Nigeria Basketball Federation (NBBF) in terms of popularity and influence. Athletics is important to Nigeria as one of its major medal spinners at global competitions.

76. Premium Times (April 13, 2024): African Games: Again, Nigerian women outperform their male counterparts in sports. <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/sports/sports-features/685581-african-games-again-nigerian-women-outperform-their-male-counterparts-in-sports.html>

Out of the 27 medals Nigeria won in the Olympics from 1952 to 2021, 14 were achieved in Athletics(77).

There are currently 124 coaches registered with the Athletics Coaches Association of Nigeria (ACAN), of that number, only 24 are women – less than a third of the total number of registered Athletics coaches in Nigeria. Of the national teams selected for 21 international competitions between 2015 and 2023, (both continental and global), there were only 7 female coaches, compared to more than 45 for their male counterparts(78).

Gender-based violence and discrimination against women are significant issues in sports in Nigeria. Studies show that women in sports face various forms of abuse, including sexual harassment, unequal pay, and lack of opportunities for leadership and decision-making roles(79).

Barriers to Women's Participation: Discriminatory cultural norms and gender biases have been pervasive, with many families prioritizing the education and development of boys over girls. This has limited girls' access to sports opportunities from a young age. Additionally, the risk of harassment and sexual abuse, as well as the lack of safe spaces for women's sports, have deterred female participation. A 2020 survey found that more than 50percent of female athletes in Nigeria had experienced some form of gender-based violence and sexual harassment(80).

Underrepresentation in Leadership and Governance: Women have been severely underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles within sports organizations and governing bodies in Nigeria. Only 25percent of board members in National Sports Federations are women, according to the National Sports Industry Policy (NSIP).

Funding and Resource Disparities: Women's sports leagues and competitions have historically received significantly less funding, sponsorship, and media coverage compared to their male counterparts. The Nigerian Women's Football League, for instance, attracts only 20-30percent of the funding received by the Nigerian Premier League.

Unequal Access: There is often unequal access to sports facilities and training resources, with men's sports receiving more attention and investment. A study conducted by the Sports Ministry found that male athletes had access to better training facilities and equipment in 70percent of sports disciplines.

Development Programs: Sports development programs frequently prioritize male athletes, leaving female athletes with fewer opportunities for growth and advancement.



77. Premium Times (August 1, 2023): High Price for Prizes: Nigeria's female Athletics coaches seek space in male-dominated field (1). <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/613060-high-price-for-prizes-nigerias-female-athletics-coaches-seek-space-in-male-dominated-field-1.html?tztc=1>

78. Premium Times (August 1, 2023): High Price for Prizes: Nigeria's female Athletics coaches seek space in male-dominated field (1). <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/613060-high-price-for-prizes-nigerias-female-athletics-coaches-seek-space-in-male-dominated-field-1.html?tztc=1>

79. UNESCO and UN WOMEN (2023): Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in Sport: A Handbook for Policy Makers and Sports Practitioners. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/3343_unwomen_unesco_vawg_handbook_6a_singlepage.pdf

80. News Agency of Nigeria (November 28, 2023): Highlighting mistreatment, discrimination against women in sports and government's deliberate inaction. <https://nannews.ng/2023/11/28/highlighting-mistreatment-discrimination-against-women-in-sports-and-governments-deliberate-inaction/>

Recommendations to Promote Gender Equity and Inclusion in Nigerian Sports

1. Legal and Policy Frameworks

- The National Assembly should enact specific legislation to address sexual abuse and exploitation in sports to ultimately empower female athletes to speak out.
- The NSIP should be updated by 2026 to include a well-defined funding plan for female sports and women's leagues.
- The government should implement the sport-related gender mainstreaming strategies contained in the National Gender Policy.

2. Governance and Accountability

- The membership of National Sports Federation (NSF) boards should be scrutinized to ensure the implementation of affirmative action measures, as recommended in the NSIP.
- In addition to recommending effective corporate governance in NSFs, the Federal Ministry of Sports should develop a mandatory code of ethics template for these organizations.
- The Federal Ministry of Sports must address corruption and improve transparency and accountability in the sports industry to regain the trust of private sector sponsors.
- National Sporting Federations must vet male coaches hired to train female athletes or teams.

3. Funding and Resources

- NGOs and feminist groups should include sponsorship of female athletic talent as part of their empowerment programs for girls and women.
- The government should provide scholarships for promising girls in sports, similar to the American model, to encourage more parents to support their daughters' athletic pursuits.
- The NSIP's recommendation for a special health insurance package for athletes should be expeditiously implemented, with a focus on packages benefiting female athletes.

4. Advocacy and Awareness

- Feminist groups should advocate for the implementation of gender-equality-related sections of the National Sports Industry Policy (NSIP) as part of their agenda.
- Feminist groups should advocate for equal pay for female and male athletes and teams by state and federal authorities.
- The Presidency should discontinue the practice of celebrating only male teams with national honors, and ensure equal recognition for victorious female teams.

5. Inclusion in Sports:

Nigeria is a Paralympic powerhouse. Team Nigeria made its debut at the Paralympics in Barcelona '92 and since then has recorded good performances at each edition it participated in. At their 8th appearance in Tokyo 2020, the Nigerian team lived up to expectations with 4 gold, 1 silver and 5 bronze medals. The women contributed the highest number of medals with 4 gold medals, 1 silver, and 3 bronze. However, Para-sports as with women's sports is poorly funded. Also, Para athletes face challenges ranging from the inadequate provision of facilities to the stigmatisation and discrimination of Persons with Disabilities. The growth of Para-sports in Nigeria is hindered by inadequate provision of facilities that accommodate the peculiar challenges of these members of society. Then, there is the problem of insufficient data for the development of policies and programs to provide for the needs of those in this community.

Nevertheless, to improve the participation of PWDs and give them a sense of belonging, NSIP recommends that Para athletes receive adequate social insurance and that they have access to medicines and rehabilitative services. The policy also lists the incorporation of physical education for children with any disability in their early childhood and secondary education.

On its part, the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities should monitor the implementation of the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018, to ensure accessibility of sports facilities for PWDs. Furthermore, the commission should partner with the private sector to create a fund to sponsor and support the Paralympics Federation and PWDs with sporting talent.



GENDER AND THE NIGERIAN MEDIA LANDSCAPE: Press Freedom & Gender Representation



The Nigerian media is recognized as the Fourth Estate of the Realm in the country's constitution. However, the battle for press freedom remains ongoing, with the arrest and intimidation of journalists persisting even after the return to democracy in 1999.

The 2024 World Press Freedom Index by Reporters

Without Borders (RSF) ranked Nigeria 112th out of 180 countries, an improvement from the 123rd rank in 2023.

According to the report, Nigerian journalists are regularly monitored, attacked, and arbitrarily arrested. The RSF index evaluated political, legislative, economic, social,

and security factors. Despite recurring intimidation, the Nigerian press continues to staunchly fight to uphold the rule of law and lead the push for good governance.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA):

The media played a crucial role in the passage of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2011, but many argue that journalists have not fully utilized the law to access reliable information for impactful stories. The FOIA grants citizens and journalists the right to access information from any Public Institution, all companies in which the government has a controlling interest, and private companies utilizing public funds, providing public services, or performing public functions (Section 2(7) FOIA, 2011). However, reporters have complained about FOIA requests being ignored, despite assurances from MDAs that such requests would be responded to.

Media Landscape and Gender Representation:

Nigeria is home to a vibrant press comprising national dailies, state and community papers, magazines, tabloids, various radio and TV stations, and numerous online news portals and blogs. The sector has several umbrella organizations: The Newspaper Proprietors' Association of Nigeria (NPAN), the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ), the Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria (BON), and the Guild of Corporate Online Publishers (GOCOP).

Historically and currently, these organizations are dominated by men. Only GOCOP has a female president, and the NGE has produced just one female president in its years of existence. Beyond leadership, men also dominate the ownership and management teams of various media houses, with editors and decision-makers in newsrooms being overwhelmingly male. In Nigeria, journalists are still colloquially addressed as 'gentlemen of the press,' indicating the sector's inherent sexism.

MFWA (2024): Press Freedom in Nigeria: the Spiral of Repression Continues in 2024. <https://www.mfwa.org/press-freedom-in-nigeria-the-spiral-of-repression-continues-in-2024/>
[2] Taofeek Oyedokun, "Nigeria ranks 112th on 2024 World Press Freedom index", Business Day, May 3, 2024, <https://businessday.ng/news/article/nigeria-ranks-112th-on-2024-world-press-freedom-index/>.

Challenges Female Journalists Face:

While female representation at the top echelon of media is poor, it is not due to a lack of qualified female journalists or low representation of women in the media. According to the Nigerian Association of Women Journalists (NAWOJ), it has about 2000 registered members, with many other female journalists active in the profession but not registered with NAWOJ. NAWOJ, an affiliate of the NUJ established in 1989, serves as a platform for female journalists. Some argue that NAWOJ has not effectively promoted gender equality within the media sector.

The association's lack of influence is attributed to the scant number of women at the ownership and managerial levels of most media houses and umbrella bodies in the sector. In many newsrooms, female journalists are relegated to 'soft' beats such as gender/women affairs, health, education, fashion, and entertainment, while male reporters cover 'lucrative' beats such as politics, business, judiciary, Government House, and the Presidential Villa. The Nigerian media, like the broader society, is affected by corruption, tribalism, and religiosity, which often results in male reporters being appointed to more important beats, better positioning them for promotion and other opportunities.

Coverage of Women's Issues:

Issues affecting women are rarely seen as cover page-worthy in print media or as lead stories in news broadcasts. Nonetheless, most national dailies have special pages on gender and women, and many broadcast stations have gender/women affairs desks. However, there is only one radio station dedicated to women's issues, Women's FM 91.7, and few programs solely focus on women's issues.

Research Findings:

Research conducted by African Women in Media using publications on three leading online platforms in Nigeria between January and June 2020 indicates that while coverage of violence against women and girls has increased, the quality and depth of reportage on these human rights violations need improvement.⁸⁴ The research also highlights the need to review the language used in reporting Sexual and Gender-Based Violence to avoid sensationalism. Additionally, the media has been found to support discriminatory gender norms and violence, reinforcing hierarchies by creating stereotypes and prioritizing certain groups.

Impact of COVID-19 and Sector Challenges:

The Nigerian media sector has faced significant challenges, including an eroding reading culture, alternative platforms for information and entertainment, and a loss of purchasing power, which have led to a decline in print media sales and a reduction in viewership/listenership in the broadcast sector. The COVID-19 lockdown further exacerbated these issues, resulting in downsizing within media houses and many journalists being underemployed or owed salaries for months⁽⁸⁵⁾.

84. Olufunmilayo Habibat Obadofin, "Impact of Covid-19 on Nigerian newsrooms", The Guardian, July 6, 2020, <https://guardian.ng/features/impact-of-covid-19-on-nigerian-newsrooms/>.

85. RVAWG (2023): THE STATUS OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN NIGERIA: A REVIEW. <https://africanwomeninmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/RVAWG-Status-of-Media-Coverage.pdf>

Opportunities for Women in Media:

Despite these challenges, the changing face of the Nigerian media presents women with new opportunities. Many journalists are leaving mainstream media to establish specialized and broadsheet online news portals or blogs. One of Nigeria's most successful bloggers, Linda Ikeji, is female. Women have also carved niches for themselves on social media as influencers, podcasters, and content creators. Brand influencer and cast member of the reality TV series, *The Real Housewives of Lagos*, Laura Ikeji-Kanu, described social media as a platform for new opportunities in her book, "How to Make Money on Instagram: The Brand Influencer Guide" (2018).

Content Creation and Social Media:

Despite the new opportunities and the freedom of expression that social media presents, content creation is still male-dominated. For instance, a report by Leadership Newspaper features only four female content creators in its 2023 top-20 list of content creators, with the rest being male. Social media is also a platform where Nigerian women are frequently stereotyped by some content creators and individual commentators who share misogynistic opinions.

A positive outcome of social media is the rise of citizen journalism. The Cyber Crime (Prohibition) Act 2015 protects social media users from cyber-stalking, revenge porn, child pornography, racism, and xenophobia. Other moves by the National Assembly to regulate speech on social media have been strongly opposed by netizens and industry stakeholders, who argue that the Cybercrime Act is comprehensive enough to protect social media users.⁸⁷

Recommendations for Enhancing the Nigerian Media Landscape and Supporting Female Journalists

1. Encourage Female Media Entrepreneurship:

- Female journalists should leverage the liberal approach to media entry and exit in Nigeria to pursue media entrepreneurship. They can explore opportunities in community journalism or specialized reporting, and consider setting up online media such as blogs and online TV portals, which are less capital-intensive than traditional newspapers, radio, or TV stations.

2. Appoint Women to Leadership:

- Members of the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN) and Broadcasting Organisations of Nigeria (BON) should be encouraged to appoint qualified women to managerial and senior editorial positions.
- Media owners should implement affirmative action policies when hiring new staff to diversify the newsroom.

3. Reinstate NUJ Guidelines for Reporting Sexual and Gender-Based Violence:

- The Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) should reinvigorate its 2020 plan to introduce comprehensive guidelines for reporting on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence. This will ensure sensitive and responsible coverage of these critical issues.

86. Kanu, Ikeji Laura, *How to Make Money on Instagram: The Brand Influencer Guide*. Lagos: Switch Books, 2018.

87. Okoh Aithe, "Reprieve for NCC as NITDA Bill flounders", *The Cable*, May 3, 2023, <https://www.thecable.ng/reprieve-for-ncc-as-nitda-bill-flounders/>

4. Fight for the Payment of Owed Wages:

- The NUJ should actively campaign for the payment of owed wages to journalists, including female reporters.
- Unpaid journalists are more vulnerable to compromising their integrity and independence.

5. Address Complaints of Sexual Harassment and Intimidation:

- The Nigerian Press Organisation's co-regulation protocol being implemented in collaboration with NPAN, NGE, NUJ, BON, and GOCOP, should ensure the newly established ombudsman also addresses complaints of sexual harassment, sexism, or intimidation from female reporters.

6. Implement 50:50 Affirmative Action:

- Government-owned media establishments should fully implement the 50:50 affirmative action for leadership positions as outlined in the National Gender Policy.

7. End the Culture of Assigning 'Soft' Beats to Female Reporters:

- Media organizations should end the practice of assigning female reporters to 'soft' beats while reserving more prestigious beats for male reporters.

8. Promote Positive Reportage on Women:

- Media outlets should focus on positive reportage of successful women and eliminate the use of derogatory language and stereotypes in their depiction of women.

9. Provide Financial Support for Female Media Entrepreneurs:

- Development finance institutions (DFIs) and commercial banks should create tailored financial packages to support aspiring female media entrepreneurs.

10. Avoid Derogatory and Stereotypical Messaging:

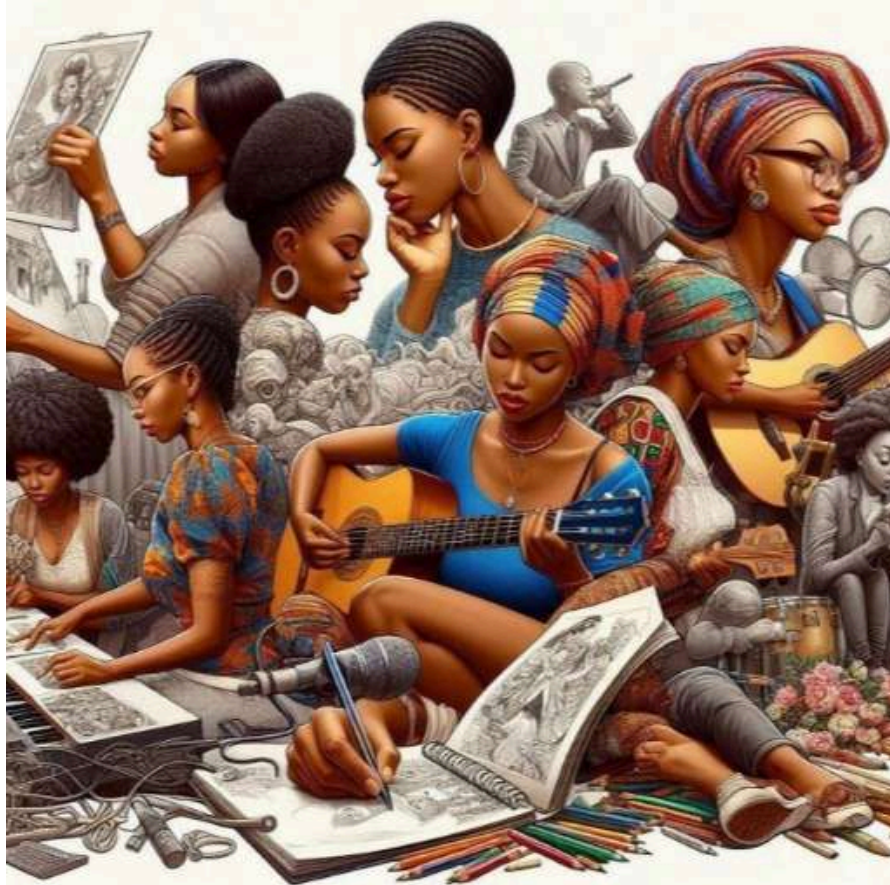
- Advertisers should avoid using derogatory and stereotypical messaging about women.
- Brands should support women's programs by advertising on them to ensure their sustainability.

11. Incorporate Gender Training into Media Education:

- The curriculum for media education should include gender training, as advocated in the National Gender Policy, to ensure future journalists are equipped to handle gender issues responsibly and sensitively.



GENDER ISSUES IN THE NIGERIA'S CREATIVE INDUSTRY



Lagos State is widely recognized as the capital of Africa's entertainment industry, with Nigeria's former capital city being the heart of Nollywood, the world's third-largest film industry, and the country's multi-billion Naira music sector. Beyond Lagos, hundreds of movies are produced in Asaba, Enugu, and Kano, the latter being home to the Hausa movie industry, Kannywood. Nigeria stands as the epicenter of African entertainment, with its creative industry projected to generate \$100 billion in revenue by 2030.

Economic Impact - The creative industry has long represented Nigeria's soft power, significantly contributing to the economy. This became particularly evident in 2013 when the Federal Government rebased the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to include music, film, telecommunications, online sales, and information technology. This adjustment increased the GDP from an estimated USD 285.5 billion to USD 510 billion.

88. Davis Ijaseun, "U.S. foresees Nigeria's creative industry revenue hitting \$100 bn by 2030", Business Day, November 7, 2023, <https://businessday.ng/news/article/u-s-foresees-nigerias-creative-industry-revenue-hitting-100-bn-by-2030/>.

Recognizing the industry's potential, the Federal Government established the Federal Ministry of Arts, Culture, and Creative Economy in 2023. By November 2023, the ministry announced a roadmap to drive economic development and boost the GDP by \$100 billion through the creative sector. The ministry projects that the creative sector, which includes respected authors, fashion designers, and fine artists, will contribute up to 10percent of the country's GDP.

Despite the industry's success, there are significant gender disparities, particularly in the portrayal and treatment of women. The Nigerian creative industry, including entertainment, media, fashion, design, and the arts, faces significant issues of gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment. Women encounter barriers to entry, advancement, and recognition compared to men

Damaging Portrayal of Women: Many Nollywood movies celebrate the subjugation of women, while numerous songs depict women as disposable sex objects, with some even glorifying sexual assault. Literature often promotes patriarchal views, further entrenching the notion that women are inferior to men.

Underrepresentation in Leadership: While women work extensively in lower and mid-level roles as dancers, makeup artists, costumers, and set managers, men dominate executive positions such as directors, producers, and scriptwriters. This male dominance extends to control over distribution systems and marketing, often leading to demands for sex-for-roles in the industry. Despite this, there has been a recent rise in female producers and directors, who have created some of the highest-grossing movies.

Challenges in the Music Industry: The Nigerian music industry has achieved global recognition, with top acts winning prestigious awards and the recording academy creating a Grammy category for Afrobeats in 2023. However, female artists face significant challenges, as the industry remains male-dominated at all levels. Successful music label CEOs, music channel founders, and DJs are predominantly male. There is a reluctance to invest in female musicians, and the industry often requires women to use their sexuality to sell music.

Unequal Opportunities and Pay: Women in the creative industry often earn less than men for the same roles and have fewer opportunities for leadership positions.

Sexual Harassment and Abuse: Sexual harassment and abuse are prevalent, particularly in male-dominated sub-sectors like gaming, architecture, and animation. Female creatives frequently report incidents of unwanted advances, quid pro quo demands, and physical assault.

91. Adedamola Ogunbawon, "FULL LIST: Top 10 highest-grossing movies in Nigerian history", *The Nation*, January 26, 2024, <https://thenationonline.ng/full-list-top-10-highest-grossing-movies-in-nigerian-history/>.

92. Scholastica Otiende & Peris Walubengo, "Top 30 richest musicians in Nigeria and their net worth as of 2024", *Legit.ng*, Tuesday, June 20, 2023, <https://www.legit.ng/ask-legit/top/1187494-top-30-richest-musicians-nigeria-net-worth-updated/>.

89. Olusola Mesele, "The Nigerian creative industry and intellectual property rights in a digital environment", *LawAllianz*, <https://lawallianz.com/publications/the-nigerian-creative-industry-and-intellectual-property-rights-in-a-digital-environment/>.

90. Busola Aro, "Culture minister projects \$100bn revenue from creative sector by 2030", *The Cable*, November 22, 2023, <https://www.thecable.ng/culture-minister-projects-100bn-revenue-from-creative-sector-by-2030/>.

Funding: Women creatives, especially those in rural and informal sectors, often struggle to access funding and investment opportunities to support their ventures and projects. The male-dominated nature of the industry and gender biases make it harder for women to secure financing.

Infrastructure: Women in the creative industry lack adequate access to the necessary infrastructure, such as well-equipped studios, production facilities, and distribution channels. This puts them at a significant disadvantage compared to their male counterparts.

Information and Education: There is a dearth of information, training, and educational opportunities tailored to the needs of women in the creative industry. This makes it harder for them to develop the skills and knowledge required to navigate the sector successfully.

Technology: Access to emerging technologies, digital tools, and platforms that are transforming the creative industry is often skewed towards men. Women, particularly in rural areas, face barriers in accessing and utilizing these technologies.

Intersectional Challenges: Women facing intersectional discrimination based on disability, socioeconomic status, and geographic location experience compounded challenges. The challenges faced by women in the Nigerian creative industry are further compounded for those who experience intersectional discrimination based on factors such as:

Disability: Women with disabilities face additional barriers in accessing resources, opportunities, and support within the creative industry. Lack of accessibility and inclusive practices exacerbate their marginalization.

Socioeconomic Status: Women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, especially those in the informal sector, have even fewer resources and support systems to build successful creative careers

Geographic Location: Women in rural and underserved areas have limited access to the infrastructure, networks, and opportunities concentrated in urban hubs like Lagos and Abuja, putting them at a significant disadvantage.

Ethnicity and Religion: Certain ethnic and religious communities may have more restrictive cultural norms and practices that further limit women's participation and advancement in the creative industry.

These intersectional factors create a complex web of challenges that women in the Nigerian creative industry must navigate, making it even more difficult for them to thrive and reach their full potential.

Efforts to Address the Issues: Recent efforts include the new Copyright Act 2022, which strengthens the legal framework for the creative economy and supports women's intellectual property rights. Various initiatives provide training, mentoring, and resources for women innovators, creators, and entrepreneurs. However, much more needs to be done to create a truly equitable and inclusive environment for women in the Nigerian creative industry. Continued advocacy, policy reforms, and collaborative efforts between the government, industry, and civil society will be crucial in driving meaningful change.

Recommendations to Address Gender Discrimination and Harassment in Nigeria's Creative Industry

- **Implement Affirmative Action for Leadership Positions:** The government should mandate a 50:50 gender balance in the appointment of CEOs and other leadership roles within government agencies overseeing the creative industry, such as the National Film and Video Censors Board, National Film Corporation, and National Council for Arts and Culture. This aligns with the provisions of the National Gender Policy.
- **Develop Industry-Wide Codes of Conduct:** The Federal Ministry of Arts and Creative Economy, in collaboration with relevant industry guilds and associations, should ratify comprehensive codes of conduct to address sexual harassment, exploitation, and unprofessional behavior on movie sets and other creative productions. These codes should be strictly enforced.
- **Strengthen Content Regulation and Censorship:** The National Film and Video Censors Board and the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) should implement stricter guidelines to prevent the production and distribution of content that portrays women in a demeaning or discriminatory manner, or promotes harmful traditional practices.
- **Protect Female Creatives from Harassment:** The Actors Guild of Nigeria should introduce a mandatory code of conduct for producers and directors, requiring them to commit to providing safe and harassment-free working environments for female members.
- **Enforce Compliance with Broadcasting Regulations:** The NBC should strictly enforce the provisions of the Broadcasting Code that prohibit the airing of materials harmful to women and children, ensuring the social and cultural objectives of the industry are upheld.
- **Safeguard Intellectual Property Rights:** The government should ensure the effective implementation of the Copyright Act 2022 to protect the intellectual property rights of female creatives, enabling them to fully benefit from their creative works.
- **Promote Collaborative Storytelling:** The government should encourage and facilitate partnerships between feminist authors, filmmakers, and other creative professionals to produce content that challenges gender stereotypes and promotes women's rights and empowerment.
- **Provide Access to Financing:** Development finance institutions, such as the Bank of Industry and Nigerian Export and Import Bank, should offer specialized loan packages and funding schemes to support female creatives and entrepreneurs in the industry.

GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING ACCESS

Based on the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), 14.7 percent of rural households and 21.8 percent of urban households were led by women.

Sources characterize Female-Headed Households (FHH) as vulnerable, especially adolescent FHH who often become primary earners. The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) notes that FHH are more susceptible to poverty and poor living conditions. They are less likely to access services without help.

Gender plays a significant role in access to housing and accommodation in Nigeria. Women in Nigeria face numerous barriers, including discrimination by landlords, cultural and religious beliefs, and societal norms. These barriers often result in women being denied housing or facing difficulties in securing rental accommodations.



Women, especially single women, face discrimination from landlords who often refuse to rent to them due to cultural and patriarchal beliefs that a woman should be under the responsibility of a man. This prejudice stems from the view that a woman must have a male guardian, even if she has the financial means to rent independently.

To avoid this discrimination, some women seek the assistance of male relatives or friends to pose as their husbands when negotiating rentals. Women heads of households are also vulnerable to stigma and sexual exploitation due to their perceived lack of male support.

Studies have shown that socio-economic characteristics like gender, occupation, and income level have a significant impact on housing conditions. Women generally have lower incomes and fewer economic resources compared to men, putting them at a disadvantage in accessing adequate and affordable housing. Poverty, low education, and lack of economic freedom experienced by many women further exacerbate the housing challenges they face. These socio-economic factors are intricately linked to poor housing conditions, which can then perpetuate the cycle of gender inequality.

93. National Population Commission (NPC) of Nigeria and ICF International (ICF), October 2019. Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2018.

94. European Union (EU), February 2019. European Asylum Support Office (EASO). [Country Guidance: Nigeria, Guidance Note and Common Analysis](https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Country_Guidance_Nigeria_2019.pdf) https://www.easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/Country_Guidance_Nigeria_2019.pdf

95. United Nations (UN), February 2019. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Humanitarian Needs Overview: Nigeria.

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98. Olusola Mesele, "The Nigerian creative industry and intellectual property rights in a digital environment", *LawAllianz*, <https://lawallianz.com/publications/the-nigerian-creative-industry-and-intellectual-property-rights-in-a-digital-environment/>

99. Busola Aro, "Culture minister projects \$100bn revenue from creative sector by 2030", *The Cable*, November 22, 2023. <https://www.thecable.ng/culture-minister-projects-100bn-revenue-from-creative-sector-by-2030/>

100. Sakariyau Jamiu Kayode, Maryam Saliyu Muhammad, & Muhammad Umar Bello (2021). Effect of Socio-Economic Characteristics of Households on Housing Condition in Bauchi Metropolis, Bauchi State, Nigeria. *Traektoriā Nauki = Path of Science*, 7 (7), 2001-2013. doi: 10.22178/pos.72-6

101. Odubo, Tonbra & Robert., (2023). Socio-Economic implications of Gender Inequality in relation to Women's Land ownership Rights in Amassoma, Bayelsa State, Nigeria. *PASSR No.15/JUNE 2022. Pan-African Social Science Review (PASSR)*, pg 117 - 127 88. Davis Ijaseun, "U.S. foresees Nigeria's creative industry revenue hitting \$100 bn by 2030", *Business Day*, November 7, 2023. <https://businessday.ng/news/article/u-s-foresees-nigerias-creative-industry-revenue-hitting-100-bn-by-2030/>

102. Olusola Mesele, "The Nigerian creative industry and intellectual property rights in a digital environment", *LawAllianz*, <https://lawallianz.com/publications/the-nigerian-creative-industry-and-intellectual-property-rights-in-a-digital-environment/>

103. Busola Aro, "Culture minister projects \$100bn revenue from creative sector by 2030", *The Cable*, November 22, 2023. <https://www.thecable.ng/culture-minister-projects-100bn-revenue-from-creative-sector-by-2030/>

Stronger legal protections, policy reforms and cultural shifts are needed to address the systemic gender biases in Nigeria's housing sector and ensure equal access to adequate housing for women.

This discrimination is driven by a combination of discriminatory practices, lack of legal protections, and entrenched cultural norms.

Discriminatory Practices by Landlords

Landlords often engage in discriminatory practices against women seeking rental housing. They frequently ask women about their marital status before considering their application, reflecting stereotypical beliefs about gender roles. Women face higher security deposits, more stringent screening, and differential lease terms compared to men. Landlords are particularly hesitant to rent to single women, viewing it as inappropriate for a woman to live independently without a male guardian. When female tenants are eventually leased apartments and other forms of accommodation, requests around the repairs and maintenance of the rented spaces are often dismissed or poorly handled by landlords or their representatives, usually agents or caretakers.

Lack of Legal Protection: While Nigeria's constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex, the right to adequate housing is not strongly protected in law. Nigeria has ratified international treaties on housing rights, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), but these have not been effectively implemented domestically.[5] The lack of robust legal safeguards leaves women vulnerable to housing discrimination.

Cultural and Religious Norms: Deeply entrenched patriarchal beliefs and cultural norms in Nigeria perpetuate the notion that a woman must be married or have a male guardian. Women living independently outside their father's or husband's home is often seen as inappropriate by society. These societal attitudes drive landlords to reject rental applications from single women.

Implement the Treaties: Nigeria has ratified several international human rights treaties that include provisions on the right to adequate housing, such as:

- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

100. Christian T. Odefadehan, et al (2023): GENDER INEQUALITY: INVESTIGATING HOUSING ACCESSIBILITY CHALLENGES AMONGST FEMALE NYSC CORP MEMBERS IN LAGOS, NIGERIA. Journal of Behavioural Studies, Vol. 4, No 1. <https://jbs.com.ng/index.php/jbs/article/view/64/62>

101. Olusegun Oriye et al (2012): Gender Equality in Housing Delivery - A Panacea to Adequate Housing Supply in Nigeria. Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences Vol. 3 (11) November 2012. ISSN 2039-9340. pg 437 - 445

102. Christian T. Odefadehan, et al (2023): GENDER INEQUALITY: INVESTIGATING HOUSING ACCESSIBILITY CHALLENGES AMONGST FEMALE NYSC CORP MEMBERS IN LAGOS, NIGERIA. Journal of Behavioural Studies, Vol. 4, No 1. <https://jbs.com.ng/index.php/jbs/article/view/64/62>

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104. Olusegun Oriye et al (2012): Gender Equality in Housing Delivery - A Panacea to Adequate Housing Supply in Nigeria. Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences Vol. 3 (11) November 2012. ISSN 2039-9340. pg 437 - 445

105. IRB - Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada: Nigeria: Whether women who head their own household, without male or family support, can obtain housing and employment in Abuja, Lagos, Ibadan, and Port Harcourt; government support services available to female-headed households (2017-November 2019) [NGA106362.E], 20 November 2019 <https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2021304.html> [accessed 13 July]

- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

However, these treaties have not been effectively domesticated into Nigerian law. The right to adequate housing is not strongly protected in the Nigerian constitution or domestic legislation. To address this gap, Nigeria should:

1. Fully incorporate the right to adequate housing from ratified international treaties into national laws and policies.
2. Enact specific legislation prohibiting discrimination in access to housing on the basis of gender, marital status, disability, or other protected grounds.
3. Ensure that domestic laws and policies align with international standards on housing rights, such as security of tenure, availability of services, affordability, accessibility, location, and cultural adequacy.
4. Provide effective remedies and recourse mechanisms for women and other marginalized groups facing housing discrimination.
5. Allocate sufficient budgetary resources and develop targeted programs to ensure equal access to adequate housing for all.

By domesticating its international housing rights obligations, Nigeria can strengthen legal protections and create an enabling environment for women and vulnerable groups to access adequate housing without discrimination.

Other recommendations for Addressing Gender Discrimination in Housing Access

By dismantling gender stereotypes, strengthening legal safeguards, and promoting inclusive practices, Nigeria can work towards a more equitable housing system that ensures women have equal access to adequate and secure accommodation. To address the gender discrimination in housing access, a multi-pronged approach is needed:

1. Strengthen Legal Protections

- Enact and enforce specific laws that explicitly prohibit gender-based discrimination in housing, and ensure effective enforcement.
- Domesticating and fully implement international housing rights treaties that Nigeria has ratified.
- Empower women to assert their housing rights through legal aid and support services.

2. Shift Cultural Norms

- Conduct awareness campaigns to challenge patriarchal beliefs and promote women's equal rights in housing.
- Empower women economically and socially to access housing independently.
- Engage religious and community leaders to address discriminatory cultural norms.
- Incorporate gender-sensitive housing education in school curricula.

3. Promote Inclusive Housing Practices

- Encourage landlords and real estate firms to adopt non-discriminatory rental policies.

- Provide training and support to help women navigate the housing market.
- Provide incentives for landlords who demonstrate inclusive practices in renting to women.
- Ensure women's equal participation in housing policy development and implementation.

4. Increase Women's Economic Empowerment

- Expand access to housing finance, property ownership, and inheritance rights for women.
- Invest in skills training, entrepreneurship support, and job creation programs for women.
- Provide social protection measures to support women heads of households.



5. Strengthen Data Collection and Research

- Improve data collection on gender disparities in housing access and outcomes.
- Conduct in-depth research to understand the drivers and dynamics of gender discrimination in the housing sector.
- Use evidence-based policymaking to design targeted interventions.

CONCLUSION

Empowering Women and Girls = Transforming Nigeria for Good



As we reflect on the insights and perspectives presented in this compendium, it becomes clear that gender inequality remains a persistent challenge in Nigeria. From the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's economic participation to the persistent gaps in skill and career development, and political representation, the data paints a sobering picture of the obstacles Nigerian women face.

However, this compendium also illuminates the resilience, determination, and immense potential of Nigerian women. Despite the odds, women are breaking barriers, shattering glass ceilings, and making their voices heard in every sector of society.

It is time for Nigeria to harness the power of its women and girls, recognizing them as equal partners in the nation's development. As Melinda Gates reminds us, "A woman with a voice is by definition a strong woman. But the search to find that voice can be remarkably difficult." By investing in women's education, health, and economic empowerment, and by ensuring their equal representation in decision-making processes, Nigeria can unlock its true potential.

The path to gender equality is a difficult, but necessary journey. As Audrey Hepburn once said, "I believe in being strong when everything seems to be going wrong, I believe that happy girls are the prettiest girls." Let us be inspired by the strength and resilience of Nigerian women, and work together to create a more just, equitable, and prosperous nation for all.

-Dorothy Njemanze Foundation (DNF)

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ORGANIZATIONS / INDIVIDUALS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO DEVELOPING THE COMPENDIUM

- TECHHER Nigeria
- Advocacy for Women with Disabilities Initiative (AWWDI)
- Young Women in Politics
- Gender Strategy Advancement International (GSAI)
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- Women in Politics
- Federal Ministry of Justice
- Federal Ministry of Women Affairs
- National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)
- The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP)
- Network of Women with Disabilities
- YIAGA Africa
- Lawyers Alert
- Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA)
- Youth Network for Community & Sustainable Dev (YNCSD)
- ASVIOL Support Initiative
- Yar'adua Foundation
- HipCity Innovation Center
- Sterling Centre for Law and Development
- Deaf Women Aloud Initiative (DWA)
- Policy Innovation Centre (PIC)
- Intersex Nigeria
- Partners West Africa Nigeria (PWAN)
- Clean Technology Hub
- Actors Guild of Nigeria, Abuja Chapter
- Global Rights
- Safe Spaces Initiative
- Aspilos Foundation
- CHAFHEIN
- Hope Behind Bars Africa
- Cece Yara Foundation
- Small Scale Women Farmers Organisation of Nigeria (SWOFON)
- Cedar Seed Foundation
- DEVATOP Centre for Africa Development
- Connected Development (CODE)
- Cal-Maji Foundation
- Mcissar Foundation
- CLEEN Foundation
- Cedar Seed Foundation
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- Education as a Vaccine
- Centre for Transparency Advocacy (CTA)
- DataPhyte
- Network for Safeguarding the Lives of Women
- Austin Aigbe
- Ene Ede
- The Sustainability Hub
- Hope Behind Bars
- Women In Management, Business & Public Service (WIMBIZ)
- Passion and concern for women welfare and empowerment initiative
- Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC)

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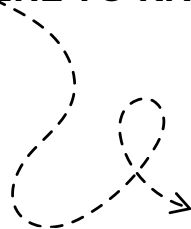
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