



Dorothy Njemanze  
Foundation

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# COMMUNIQUE ON SECTOR-SPECIFIC SOLUTIONS FOR INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP AND GENDER DEMOCRACY IN IMO STATE





# CONTENTS



- PREAMBLE
- ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
- CONTEXT AND RATIONALE
- KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED
- KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE LAUNCH
- COLLECTIVE COMMITTEMENTS AND RESOLUTIONS
- ACTION POINTS AND IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS
- MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK
- CONCLUSION

# PREAMBLE

We, representatives of traditional institutions, government, ministries, agencies and departments (MDAs), civil society organizations (CSOs), women's rights groups, professional bodies, informal associations, persons with disabilities (PWDs) advocacy groups, youth and community leaders, and the media, convened under the leadership of the Dorothy Njemanze Foundation (DNF) and with the support of Heinrich Böll Stiftung (HBS). We gathered in Imo State to launch the Compendium of Sector-Specific Solutions for Inclusive Leadership in Nigeria. Our purpose: to unite commitment and resources toward inclusive leadership and gender equality.



The gathering provided an inclusive platform for dialogue on the urgent need to strengthen gender-responsive governance, enhance women's leadership, and address systemic barriers hindering inclusive development. This communiqué reflects the shared insights, commitments, and actionable resolutions that emerged from robust deliberations among diverse stakeholders.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Participants commend the Dorothy Njemanze Foundation (DNF) for convening this timely dialogue and acknowledge the Heinrich Böll Stiftung (HBS) for its support. The Compendium of Sector-Specific Solutions for Inclusive Leadership in Nigeria was recognized as a vital evidence-based tool that provides context-specific recommendations for advancing gender democracy, inclusive governance, and social justice at the subnational level. We further appreciate the commitment demonstrated by traditional leaders, security agencies, and civil society actors, whose participation reaffirmed the collective responsibility to build a just, equitable, and inclusive Imo State.



# CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

The launch highlighted the widening gender gaps in leadership, governance, and access to justice in Imo State, emphasizing the urgent need for coordinated multi-sectoral action. Despite progress made through the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law and other frameworks, persistent barriers, such as weak political will, limited coordination between government and civil society, and cultural biases, continue to undermine inclusive leadership.

The Compendium serves as both a mirror and a call to action, documenting the economic and social losses arising from gender exclusion while presenting actionable solutions to rebuild trust, promote accountability, and ensure gender-responsive governance across all sectors.



# IDENTIFIED ISSUES

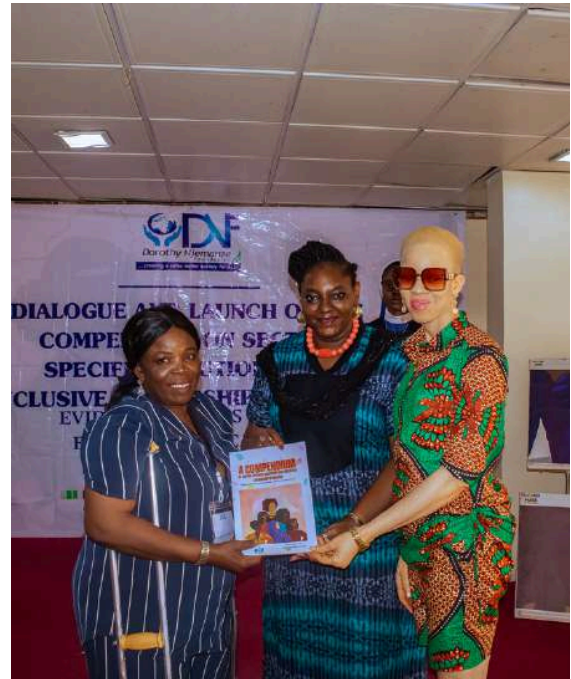
Participants deliberated extensively on sector-specific challenges and agreed that the following persistent barriers require urgent and coordinated action:

## 1. Governance and Political Will

- Declining engagement between government and civil society actors.
- Weak institutional support for women-focused programs and the repeal of progressive laws like the VAPP Act due to misinformation.
- Diminished political responsiveness and low citizen trust in governance systems.

## 2. Security and Justice Systems

- Escalating insecurity is restricting women's movement and participation.
- Weak justice mechanisms leading to prolonged prosecution and low survivor confidence.



- Non-functional Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) and the absence of safe shelters for survivors.
- 3. Women's Political Participation and Leadership
- Limited representation of women in political and decision-making spaces.
- Entrenched cultural and religious barriers perpetuate exclusion.
- Persistent skepticism around reserved seats

# KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF LAUNCH

Participants acknowledged the significance of the compendium and shared critical reflections that underscored the urgency of translating research into coordinated action. Discussions highlighted that:

- Despite existing frameworks and advocacy efforts, women remain underrepresented in key leadership and decision-making positions in Imo State, reflecting deep-seated systemic and cultural barriers.
- Political will and responsiveness to civil society engagement have significantly declined, weakening collaboration between government and CSOs and undermining participatory governance and accountability.
- The repeal of the of the Imo State "2012" Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Law, once a progressive milestone in the state, demonstrated how misinformation and politicization of gender issues can erode years of advocacy and policy gains.
- The security situation in Imo State has deteriorated, resulting in restricted mobility for women, reduced reporting of abuses, and limited access to justice and protection services.
- The Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) remains non-functional, and the absence





of safe shelters for survivors leaves women and girls without critical support systems in times of crisis

- Gender-based violence (GBV) remains widespread, compounded by weak law enforcement, limited funding, and systemic delays in the justice process.
- Socio-cultural norms and mindset barriers continue to sustain gender inequality, with survivors often facing stigma, victim-blaming, and community pressure to settle cases informally rather than pursue justice..
- Data fragmentation and poor coordination among CSOs hinder evidence-based advocacy and collective accountability, with limited access to reliable, disaggregated data on GBV, political participation, and social protection.
- Traditional leaders, security agencies, and civil society representatives expressed strong willingness to collaborate toward cultural reorientation, institutional reform, and coordinated GBV response mechanisms.
- The Compendium was celebrated as a transformative tool, a mirror reflecting both the challenges and the opportunities to build a more inclusive, gender-responsive governance framework for Imo State.
- CSOs also made a strong case for the constitution of "The Agency" as provided by the Imo State VAPP Law, 2021.

# COLLECTIVE COMMITMENTS AND RESOLUTIONS

In the spirit of shared accountability and collaborative action, participants resolve as follows:

## 1. Government Ministries and Agencies

- Integrate Compendium recommendations into policy, planning, and budgetary processes.
- Re-establish functional engagement channels with CSOs to promote participatory governance.
- Allocate dedicated budget lines for GBV prevention, shelters, and gender equality programming.
- Strengthen the Ministry of Women Affairs and related agencies to champion inclusive leadership.

## 2. Legislative Arms

- Introduce motions that promote women's representation and protect PWDs' rights.
- Conduct oversight visits to ensure implementation of gender-related policies.

## 3. Traditional Institutions

- Partner with civil society to challenge harmful norms and protect survivors of GBV.
- Promote community sensitization campaigns, reinforcing positive cultural values.
- Lead advocacy for equitable participation of women in traditional decision-making spaces.

## 4. Civil Society and Advocacy Groups

- Utilize the Compendium for coordinated advocacy, monitoring, and community education.
- Collaborate on strategic litigation to defend women's and PWDs' rights.
- Create a CSO coordination hub to harmonize GBV data and share best practices.

## 5. Professional Bodies and Women's Associations

- Develop mentorship and leadership programs for young women across professions.

- Advocate for gender-sensitive workplace policies and equal pay.
- Support survivors of GBV through economic reintegration programs and capacity-building initiatives.

#### 6. Community Leaders and Informal Groups

- Promote grassroots dialogues to challenge stereotypes and promote inclusivity.
- Use storytelling, local media, and town halls to drive mindset reorientation.
- Mobilize market women, youth groups, and faith leaders for advocacy and awareness.



# ACTION POINTS AND IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

1. Operationalize the Imo State SARC and establish one safe shelter for survivors of GBV.
2. Establish an Imo State GBV Response Team integrating police, CSOs, health services, and the judiciary.
3. Create a digital GBV and gender data dashboard to track cases, funding, and implementation progress.
4. Convene quarterly stakeholder review meetings to assess implementation and document outcomes.
5. Launch grassroots leadership and mentorship programs for women and girls.
6. Initiate media campaigns to amplify women's voices and showcase positive role models.
7. Organize community dialogues and school-based programs to address harmful gender norms.
8. Strengthen coordination between police and CSOs with survivor-centered protocols.
9. Integrate gender equality modules into school curricula at all levels.
10. Mobilize resources and partnerships to sustain gender advocacy and inclusive governance programs.

# MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK



To ensure accountability and sustained implementation, participants agreed to:

1. Establish quarterly monitoring and feedback mechanisms involving all key actors.
2. Produce annual state implementation reports detailing progress, gaps, and lessons learned.
3. Create community-based monitoring systems led by grassroots organizations.
4. Ensure public reporting and transparency of gender-related budget allocations.
5. Incorporate independent oversight and citizen feedback into state accountability systems.



Indicators of Success include:

- Increased representation of women in political and leadership positions.
- Reduction in reported GBV cases and improved survivor support systems.
- Functional SARC and operational shelter in the state.
- Active CSO-government collaboration on data and advocacy.
- Shifts in community attitudes towards gender equality and inclusion.



# CONCLUSION

This communiqué represents a shared vision for a gender-equitable and inclusive Imo State, where every individual, regardless of gender, disability, or social status, has equal opportunity to lead, participate, and thrive.

Participants reaffirm that “No state prospers when it sidelines its women, and no future is sustainable if it forgets its girls.”

Participants call for sustained advocacy, collaboration, and political will to dismantle systemic barriers to inclusive leadership in Imo State and beyond. We commit to holding ourselves and our institutions accountable for the promises made and the actions outlined in this communiqué.

The Compendium remains a living document that will guide policy reform, advocacy, and collaboration toward rebuilding trust, ensuring safety, and strengthening governance systems in Imo State and beyond.

Let this communiqué guide our actions, keep us accountable, and inspire a new era of inclusive leadership for a better, gender-equal Nigeria. Together, we can create a society where every person, regardless of gender, disability, or social background, has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to Nigeria's development and prosperity.

This communiqué is adopted as an outcome document of the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue and Compendium Launch and shall guide follow-up actions and engagements with all relevant actors.



**Signed on this 25th day of September  
2025:**

**Dorothy Njemanze Foundation (DNF)  
Lead Convener**

**Supported by**



**Strategic Partner**

**On behalf of all stakeholders and  
participants**





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