



Dorothy Njemanze
Foundation

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



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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 to officially launch the Compendium of Sector-Specific Solutions for Inclusive Leadership in Nigeria in Niger State and to chart a collective path forward towards gender equity, inclusive leadership, and systemic transformation.

This event brought together diverse stakeholders in a spirit of collaboration and shared accountability to address persistent barriers that hinder the full participation and leadership of women, girls, and other marginalized groups across Nigeria's key sectors. This communique captures the shared understanding, commitments, and agreed next steps that emerged from the robust dialogue and stakeholder contributions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Participants commend DNF and HBS for their unwavering commitment to advancing gender democracy, inclusive leadership, and access to justice for women, girls, and other marginalized groups in Nigeria. The gathering recognized the compendium as a living document co-created through broad consultations with communities, experts, and stakeholders across multiple sectors. We endorse its use as a working tool for policy reform, advocacy, collaborative action, and as a reference document for developing gender-responsive policies and programs.

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

Nigeria continues to grapple with entrenched barriers that hinder the full participation and leadership of women, girls, and other marginalized groups across key sectors, including politics, governance, education, health, security, livelihood, sports, the creative industries, and housing. These systemic challenges perpetuate poverty, inequality, and violence, undermining the country's democratic ideals and sustainable development goals.

The compendium, developed through extensive consultations, is not only a reference document but a working tool and call to action. It captures locally rooted, sector-specific recommendations for dismantling these barriers and advancing inclusive governance at national and subnational levels. The document stands as a testament to collective effort and shared accountability in addressing the complex challenges facing marginalized communities.



IDENTIFIED ISSUES

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

POLITICAL AND GOVERNANCE BARRIERS

- Persistent underrepresentation of women in politics, governance, and leadership positions despite existing policies and constitutional provisions
- Limited enforcement of affirmative action policies and gender quotas in political appointments
- Discriminatory practices in political party structures and candidate selection processes
- High maternal and infant mortality rates, particularly in rural and underserved communities
- Limited access to mental health services and gender-based violence (GBV) support systems

EDUCATIONAL INEQUITIES

- Significant gender gaps in educational attainment and literacy, particularly for girls from marginalized communities, rural areas, and low-income households
- High dropout rates among girls due to child marriage, poverty, and cultural barriers
- Limited access to "second chance" education and skills training programs for women and girls
- Discriminatory practices in sports, the creative industries, and housing sectors that limit women's economic empowerment
- Pay inequity and resource gaps for women across various sectors
- Limited access to credit, land ownership, and entrepreneurship opportunities for women

DISABILITY INCLUSION GAPS

- Insufficient disability inclusion laws and implementation frameworks
- Lack of robust frameworks for the inclusion and protection of PWDs, especially women and girls with disabilities
- Limited accessibility in educational institutions, healthcare facilities, and public spaces
- Harmful traditional practices that perpetuate violence and discrimination against women, widows, and girls
- Gender stereotypes and social norms that restrict women's participation in leadership roles
- Housing discrimination against widows, unmarried women, and single mothers

HEALTHCARE ACCESS CHALLENGES

- Barriers to accessible, quality healthcare for women and girls, including maternal and reproductive health services

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT OBSTACLES

CULTURAL AND SOCIAL BARRIERS

INSTITUTIONAL AND RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

- Funding gaps and limited capacity for sustained CSO advocacy and community engagement
- Insufficient coordination among stakeholders working on gender equality and inclusive leadership
- Limited documentation and sharing of best practices and lessons learned

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF LAUNCH

Participants acknowledged the significance of the compendium and shared critical reflections, including:

- The persistent underrepresentation of women in decision-making spaces despite existing policies and constitutional provisions.
- Gender disparities in access to quality education, particularly for girls from rural and low-income communities.
- Limited enforcement of laws protecting widows, unmarried women, and single mothers from housing discrimination and harmful cultural practices.
- Pay inequity and resource gaps for women in sports and the creative industries
- The lack of robust frameworks for the inclusion and protection of PWDs, especially women and girls.
- The critical link between child protection, poverty reduction, and addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).
- The need for increased funding, capacity strengthening, and coordinated action by CSOs and advocacy groups to maintain momentum for change.
- The importance of engaging traditional institutions as partners in dismantling harmful norms while preserving positive cultural values.



COLLECTIVE COMMITMENTS AND RESOLUTIONS



1. GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND AGENCIES PLEDGED TO:

- Integrate the compendium's recommendations into sectoral policies, budget lines, and annual action plans
- Use the compendium as a reference document for developing, reviewing, and implementing gender-responsive policies and programs
- Establish gender desks and focal points in all MDAs to champion inclusive leadership initiatives
- Allocate adequate budgetary resources for gender-responsive programming and implementation

LEGISLATIVE ARMS WILL:

- Prioritize engagements to champion the passage and implementation of gender-focused bills, including those on VAPP, disability inclusion, and child protection
- Engage relevant committees in the National and State Assemblies (e.g., Women Affairs, Education, Health, Housing, Sports, Security) to sponsor bills and motions addressing identified issues
- Conduct regular oversight of MDA implementation of gender-inclusive policies and programs

2. TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS EXPRESSED READINESS TO:

- Collaborate with DNF and CSOs to address harmful norms and practices that perpetuate gender inequality and SGBV
- Reaffirm their role as custodians of culture and moral authority in promoting positive change
- Partner with CSOs to dismantle harmful traditional practices while preserving positive cultural values
- Engage in community sensitization programs to promote inclusive leadership and gender equality
- Strengthening coordination and resource-sharing among organizations working on similar
- Developing joint advocacy strategies and campaigns to amplify impact

3. CIVIL SOCIETY & ADVOCACY GROUPS COMMITTED TO:

- Using the compendium as a practical tool for grassroots mobilization, legislative advocacy, and public interest litigation
- Collaborating on strategic and public interest litigation to address gaps in laws and jurisprudence that enable discrimination against women and girls
- Strengthening coordination and resource-sharing among organizations working on similar issues
- Developing joint advocacy strategies and campaigns to amplify impact

4. PROFESSIONAL BODIES AND WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS WILL:

- Leverage their networks to amplify the compendium's recommendations and monitor implementation progress
- Establish mentorship programs and professional development opportunities for women and girls
- Advocate for gender-responsive policies and practices within their respective sectors
- Support capacity building and skills development programs for marginalized groups

5. COMMUNITY LEADERS & INFORMAL GROUPS AGREED TO:

- Strengthen awareness campaigns to challenge gender stereotypes and harmful practices at the community level
- Engage in culturally relevant storytelling and media advocacy in local languages
- Mobilize market women associations, youth groups, and religious bodies to support inclusive leadership initiatives
- Foster community ownership of gender equality and inclusive leadership goals



ACTION POINTS AND IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS



POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

1. Policy Integration: MDAs at federal and state levels shall use the compendium as a reference document for developing, reviewing, and implementing gender-responsive policies and programs
2. Legislative Advocacy: Engage legislative arms to advocate for the passage of gender-focused bills, including those addressing GBV, VAPP, and disability inclusion
3. Budget Allocation: Ensure adequate budgetary allocations for gender-responsive programming in all sectors

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

1. Multi-Stakeholder Platforms: Institutionalize state-level multi-stakeholder platforms to coordinate, monitor, and track the implementation of the compendium's recommendations
2. Regular Review Meetings: Convene quarterly review meetings to monitor progress on implementing the compendium's recommendations and produce periodic progress reports for public accountability
3. Task Force Formation: Form task forces or working groups within Niger State to lead follow-ups on specific sector recommendations

LEGAL AND ADVOCACY INTERVENTIONS

1. Strategic Litigation: CSOs and legal professionals to collaborate on public interest litigation and strategic litigation to close legal gaps that perpetuate discrimination
2. Advocacy Visits: Plan and hold follow-up advocacy visits to MDAs and legislative committees, armed with the compendium, this communique, and context-specific scenarios

CAPACITY BUILDING AND EMPOWERMENT

1. Education Programs: Expand mentorship, scholarship, skills training, and "second chance" education programs for girls and young women, especially survivors of child marriage, sexual violence, and those in marginalized communities
2. Economic Empowerment: Scale up mentorship, education, and economic empowerment initiatives, with special focus on survivors of GBV, widows, and PWDs
3. Disability Inclusion: Strengthen frameworks and programs that support PWDs' access to education, health, housing, and livelihoods, ensuring meaningful representation of women and girls living with disabilities

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND SHARING

1. Documentation and Sharing: Organizations working on similar sector-specific solutions will be encouraged to share findings for possible integration into the compendium to keep it dynamic and relevant
2. Best Practices Database: Establish a repository of best practices, lessons learned, and successful interventions for replication and scaling
3. Continuous Learning: Facilitate regular knowledge exchange sessions among stakeholders to share experiences and innovations

COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

1. Media Engagement: Engage the media to develop human-interest stories that showcase successes and challenges in implementing inclusive leadership solutions
2. Community Dialogues: Organize additional dialogue sessions and townhalls to extend the compendium's reach to communities and grassroots actors, including market women associations, youth groups, and religious bodies
3. Awareness Campaigns: Continue grassroots mobilization and use of local languages and media storytelling to reach underserved communities and transform social norms

ACTION POINTS AND IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS



RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

1. Funding Strategy: Develop strategies for sustainable funding and resource-sharing among stakeholders to ensure the continuity and impact of actions agreed upon
2. Partnership Development: Strengthen partnerships with development partners, the private sector, and philanthropic organizations to support implementation of the compendium's recommendations
3. Resource Mapping: Conduct comprehensive mapping of available resources and funding opportunities for gender equality and inclusive leadership initiatives

MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK



To ensure effective implementation and accountability, participants agree to establish:

Monitoring Mechanisms

- Quarterly progress review meetings with all stakeholders
- Annual state-of-implementation reports with specific indicators and benchmarks.
- Community-based monitoring systems involving grassroots organizations.
- Regular feedback loops between implementing agencies and beneficiary communities.

Accountability Measures

- Public reporting of progress and challenges in implementing the compendium's recommendations
- Establishment of grievance mechanisms for addressing implementation gaps
- Regular stakeholder feedback sessions to assess impact and identify areas for improvement
- Integration of monitoring findings into policy review and development processes

Success Indicators

- Increased representation of women and marginalized groups in leadership positions
- Improved access to quality education, healthcare, and economic opportunities
- Reduction in incidents of gender-based violence and discrimination
- Enhanced institutional capacity for gender-responsive programming
- Strengthened legal frameworks protecting the rights of women, girls, and marginalized groups

CONCLUSION

This communique stands as a testament to our collective commitment to dismantle systemic barriers and to ensure that every woman, girl, and marginalized group in Niger State and Nigeria can thrive, lead, and participate fully in all aspects of life. We reaffirm that "no future is sustainable if it forgets its girls." When women and girls rise, entire communities and nations prosper.

The compendium represents more than a document; it embodies our shared vision for an inclusive, equitable Nigeria where leadership is not determined by gender, disability, or social status, but by competence, integrity, and commitment to the common good. We recognize that achieving this vision requires sustained effort, political will, adequate resources, and unwavering commitment from all stakeholders.

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

Let this communique 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 communique 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 June 2025:
Dorothy Njemanze Foundation (DNF)
Lead Convener**

Supported by



Strategic Partner

**On behalf of all stakeholders and
participants**

