AGORA
POLICY

How to Deepen Gender, Social and Political Inclusion in Nigeria

How to Deepen Gender, Social and Political Inclusion in Nigeria

AGORA
POLICY

With Support of   MacArthur
Foundation

Acknowledgement

List of Acronyms

ACJA	Administration of Criminal Justice Act
APC	All Progressives Congress
ASUU	Academic Staff Union of Universities
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
COR	Calabar-Ogoja-Rivers
CRA	Child Rights Act
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
EFInA	Enhancing Financial Innovation and Access
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FRCN	Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria
GEEP	Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
INEC	Independent National Electoral Commission
LGA	Local Government Area
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
N-Power	Empowering Nigerian Youths for Prosperity
NANS	National Association of Nigerian Students
NCNC	National Council of Nigerian Citizens
NDHS	Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey
NDP	National Development Plan
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
NHGSFP	National Home-Grown School Feeding Programme
NPC	Northern People's Congress
NTA	Nigerian Television Authority
NWTF	Nigeria Women Trust Fund
OPD	Organisation of Persons with Disability
PDP	Peoples Democratic Party
PLAC	Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre
PLHIV	Persons Living with HIV
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
PYMN	Patriotic Youth Movement of Nigeria
RTD	Retired
SARS	Special Anti-Robbery Squad
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIP	Social Intervention Projects
SNG	Save Nigeria Group
STEM	Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
VAPP	Violence against Persons Prohibition
WEF	Women Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organisation

Contents

Executive Summary

More than 60 years after independence, Nigeria still struggles with building an inclusive society. Cries of political marginalisation, which predated independence, have yet to abate. The socio-economic disparity in gender relations remains wide. The low level of inclusion is evident in the unequal power relations and exclusionary processes which have left limited spaces for marginalized groups to participate in the social, political and economic life of the nation. Today's numerous challenges of terrorism, banditry, rising debt burden, hyperinflation and other social ills may have somewhat eclipsed discourse on inclusion, but the push to make it a mainstream issue, in the run-up to the 2023 general elections, is no less strident or necessary.

Low level of inclusion incapacitates not just the excluded groups but the country itself. Nigeria thus undermines itself by limiting the potentials of significant segments of its population: women, youths, people living with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities etc. Deepening inclusion in Nigeria is therefore not a favour to the excluded groups but a sensible route to the overall national development. Continuing to leave substantial segments of the population behind amounts to Nigeria shooting itself in the foot or punching grossly below its weight. It is thus in Nigeria's enlightened self-interest to be a more inclusive society.

As a concept, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) addresses unequal power relations experienced by people due to gender, wealth, ability, location, caste/ethnicity, language, agency, or a combination of these dimensions. It highlights the need for action to rebalance power relations, reduce disparities, and ensure equal rights, opportunities, and respect for all individuals regardless of their social identity.

This assignment adopts two tracks. First, it is diagnostic, deploying extensive literature/desk review and strategic consultations to unearth the causes of/factors that drive gender inequality and social and political exclusion of certain groups in Nigeria (ethno-religious groups, women, youth, and persons with disabilities (PWDs), among others). The second track used stakeholder and power analyses to identify persons with a mandate to act, and proffers policy actions for current and future governments to foster inclusion in all ramifications.

The causes of exclusion, as gleaned from the diagnostic phase of this assignment, are shown in Box 1.

BOX 1 - CAUSES OF EXCLUSION IN NIGERIA

Ethnic and Religious Minorities
✦ Political and Economic Structures
✦ Real/perceived inequality in access to power and resources
✦ Weak Implementation of the Federal Character Act

Women
✦ Patriarchy
✦ Socio-cultural and religious norms promote gender inequality
✦ Political Corruption, Money Politics
✦ Gendered clientelism
✦ Political violence
✦ Women's inadequate political experience.
✦ Electoral Law does not provide for Affirmative Action

Youths
✦ Ageism
✦ Weak Youth development, unequal and inappropriate education; unemployment
✦ Poor representation in politics
✦ Political Exclusion

Persons with Disabilities
✦ Ableism
✦ Stigma and Discrimination
✦ Weak implementation of the Disability Act -Inaccessible infrastructure
✦ Lack of access to education and employment

Arising from that, specific recommendations for fostering inclusion of the various groups have been made.

In carrying out this research/study, we arrived at one inescapable fact: there is no magic bullet in nation-building. A lot will depend on the disposition of the political/administrative actors and the mindset of the larger populace. The recommended options presented here are products of a painstaking process, further lent credence by the triangulation of data from multiple sources and a convergence of opinions.

# Recommendations for Greater inclusion of Ethno-Religious Groups

✦ There is consensus that the best structure of government for Nigeria, like every other plural state, is federalism.

✦ Recognising that there is too much concentration of powers at the centre, the paper recommends the following:

i. Constitutional amendment to devolve more powers to the sub-national units – Specifically, devolution of powers in this instance means reducing the powers at the centre and giving more powers and responsibilities to the states and local governments.

ii. To ensure that states and local governments are able to fulfil their mandates, a sustained programme of capacity-building to reinvigorate states and local governments is recommended. The Local Government and State service commissions should be encouraged to deploy their allocations to develop and enhance the knowledge and skills of staff, at both levels, through in-school and in-service trainings and to build a system of accountability and probity.

iii. Equally recommended is an oversight system that holds public office holders to account and actively engages civil society organisations including NGOs, town unions, religious organisations and other groups at the state and local levels.
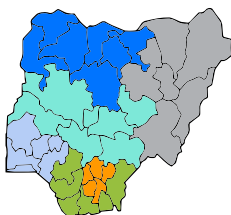
✦ Inclusion would be fostered if there is sufficient fidelity to the letters and spirit of the federal character principle as contained in Section 14 of the 1999 Constitution, and designed to ensure fair representation of all Nigerians in appointive positions. This entails reflecting the nation's geo-political diversities in appointments and other instances. This recommendation is anchored on the firm belief that every geo-political region has qualified persons to fill available positions. Such fair and equitable representation should, however, be primarily merit-based.

✦ Rotational Presidency - The idea of rotational presidency as an antidote to feelings of exclusion has always generated divergent views. Proponents often tend to cite as a good practice the Swiss model of "collective presidency" where leadership rotates periodically. However, given the multiplicity of ethnic groups in the country, a system that rotates the position of president among the geopolitical zones would be more manageable. This rotational presidency should be written into the constitution and not left to the prerogative of political parties or actors.

✦ Similar to rotational presidency is a proposal by some stakeholders on the need to have six Vice presidents drawn from each of the geo-political zones of the country at any given time. Proposals in this section are options for further consultations. The democratic experiment requires the testing of models as Nigeria's democracy evolves.

✦ Deepening National Integration through social re-orientation - Sixty two years after independence, the "diversity is strength" should no longer simply be a feel-good notion invoked by politicians, but which hardly reflects the country's reality. There needs to be a true process of social re-orientation to eliminate prejudices, and promote national integration and unity that is led by the National Orientation Agency (NOA), and driven by the media, civil society and educational institutions. Such programme should be integrated into formal and informal curricula at all levels.

✦ There should be a collective push from the Civil Society, the media, pressure groups and the electorate towards dismantling cronyism and enthroning a society with equal opportunities for citizens to actualise their potentials at the local, state and national levels. It is recommended that the government demonstrates greater respect for the rule of law, especially hinged on these three core principles: supremacy of the law, equality before the law (no sacred cows) and fundamental human rights. Although there are wide-ranging interpretations of the rule of law, the concept generally has the following features: existence of clear and easily accessible laws, an independent and impartial judiciary, respect for human rights, and prohibition of the exercise of arbitrary discretionary powers.

✦ National integration will be better served by an emphasis on citizenship as opposed to indigene-ship, a concept that is often exploited to exclude persons considered non-indigenes. Women tend to bear the brunt, especially with regards to standing for elections. Indigeneity is usually dubiously invoked to question women's legitimacy to represent their constituencies or their husbands' (with a few exceptions). The paper recommends that:

• The National Assembly amends the Constitution to clearly define the concept of indigeneity and to pass into law a Residency Bill of Rights that prohibits and criminalises discrimination against residents that have fulfilled minimum conditions (e.g. a specified number of years of residency; payment of taxes in the place of residence, etc).

• The National Assembly amends sections 31 and 318(1) to allow women claim their husbands' state of origin after marriage.[1]

✦ Civil society has a responsibility to monitor implementation of constitutional provisions and engage in public interest litigation to redress arbitrariness and flagrant disregard for the rule of law.

---

[1]This was one of the bills submitted to the National Assembly by the women's movement in Nigeria during the last constitution amendment exercise.

On Fostering Gender Equality and Socio-Political Inclusion, we recommend that:
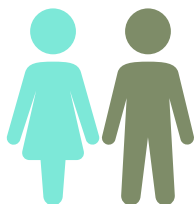
✦ A transformation of the legislative arm to a gender-responsive/transformative institution – one which creates laws that address the root causes of inequality (e.g. patriarchy and discriminatory traditions) and seeks to change existing social and cultural constructs of inequality. This requires dedicated infrastructure to ensure that bills and laws are read and analysed through a gender-sensitive lens. Some of these infrastructures are: Parliamentary committees, Women's parliamentary caucuses, a dedicated Gender Equality Committee, and a Gender Technical Unit (GTU). Some of these infrastructures already exist but they need to be further strengthened and

• For example, section 26 of the Constitution should be amended to allow Nigerian women's citizenship extend to their foreign husbands.

- On political inclusion, the paper presents two options for narrowing the gender gap:

Option 1 – A change of electoral system from Majoritarian to Proportional Representation

Option 2 – Introduction of Gender Quotas into the Current Majoritarian Electoral System

Many countries across the world use some sort of electoral quota as a vehicle to correct the historical marginalisation of women and to fast-track inclusion. The paper supports the three bills submitted by the women's movement to the National Assembly to promote women's political inclusion:

i. The Reserved Seats Bill, which seeks to, among others, amend sections 48, 49 and 91 of the constitution to create additional seats for women at the national and state legislatures;

Women

35%

ii. The Affirmative Action Bill to specifically amend Section 223 of the constitution to ensure women occupy at least 35% in political party administration and appointive positions;

iii. The Bill on Ministerial or Commissioner Nomination to, among others, amend sections 147 and 192 so that at least 35% of the nominees are women.

VOTE

In addition,
✦ It is recommended that the National Assembly amends Nigeria's electoral laws to insert gender equality and inclusion clauses. This would compel political parties to nominate and support qualified female candidates.

✦ Many laws that provide for equality have been in existence for many years (19 years for the Child Rights Act (CRA), 10 years of the National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, 7th year of the VAPP, 3rd year of the Disability Act and 16 years of the previous National Gender Policy). Yet, women and men, stratified by various categories, still suffer exclusion from economic and political participation.

✦ Government Ministries, Departments and agencies should take concrete steps to implement existing provisions, such as the National Gender Policy (2021-2026) with its 50:50 affirmative action provision, the new National Development Plan (2021-2025) which devotes a chapter to women, and other vulnerable groups, and the Constitution – particularly Chapter 4, Section 42 sub-sections (1) (2) and (3) which prohibits discrimination. This requires a system–wide approach, coordinated by the lead ministries.

 • As a good practice, the Legislative Advocacy Coalition on Violence Against Women (LACVAW) has developed a costed workplan/estimated budget for the implementation of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act in the FCT. LACVAW is currently embarking on advocacy and lobbying both at the National Assembly and to Chairpersons of Area Councils to include elements of the costed workplan in their budgets.

 • Also, Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA) is currently partnering with the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs, line ministries and their sub-national representatives to drive the implementation of the National Gender Policy (2021-2026).

✦ Civil society and development partners should support gender-responsive and inclusive budgeting within all government departments, as a step towards further promotion of gender equality and social inclusion. Budget and expenditure analyses through gender and diversity lenses are highly recommended as core government functions or in collaboration with CSOs with expertise in budget and expenditure tracking, such as BudgIT.

✦ Activate the architecture for gender equality and social inclusion. The National Gender Policy provides for the establishment of a Gender Management System (GMS) with four reinforcing components: the enabling environment, GMS structures, GMS mechanisms, and GMS processes. For this model to achieve desired results, we recommend a lead agency domiciled in the Presidency, endowed with authority to influence resource allocation.

Recommendations to Deepen Youth Inclusion

Nigeria's population consists largely of young people; the country has one of the largest percentages of young people in the world (74.22%: 28.76% below age 15 and 45.46% in the age range 15 -35).[2] Ironically, youth representation in political office is less than 6%. Although efforts have been made to promote political inclusion for the youth, notably through the Not-Too-Young-to-Run Act 2018 which reduced the minimum age qualification to run for certain offices, ageist attitudes continue to exclude youth.

Nigerian Youth

74.22%

Nigeria has one of the largest percentages of young people in the world

28.76%
below age 15

45.46%
age range 15 -35
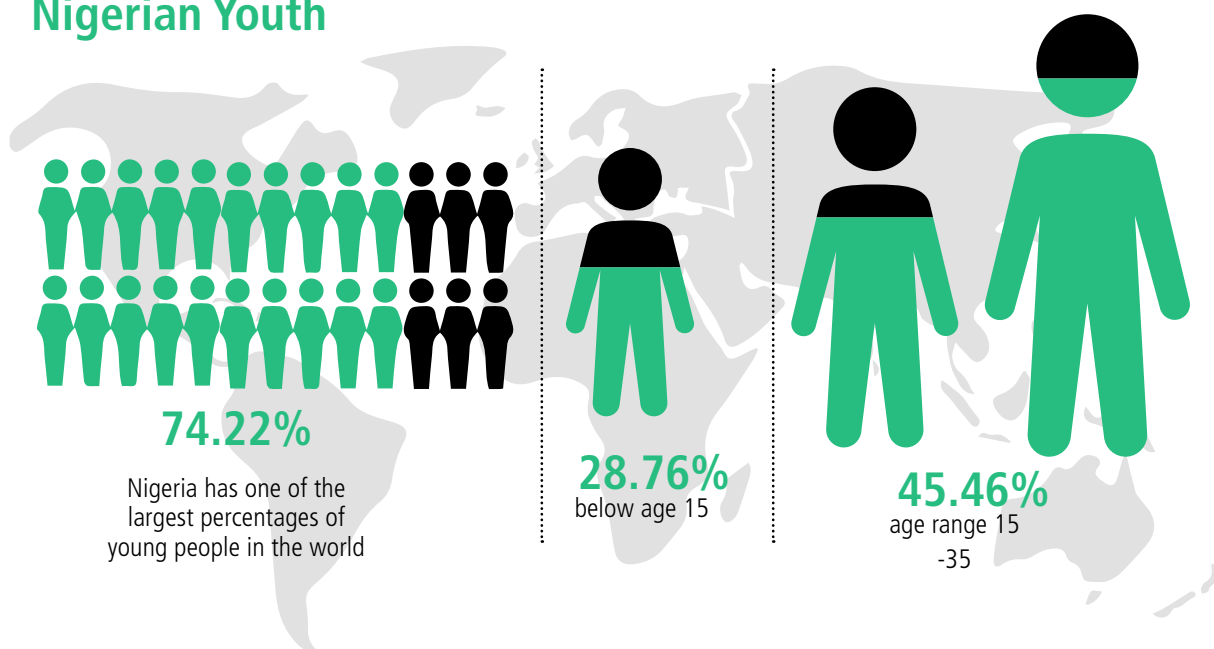
To deepen youth inclusion, we recommend the following:

Federal, State and local governments

✦ Ensure adequate youth representation in appointive positions beyond media or youth-focused roles.

✦ Establish a fund to promote youth leadership development, civic engagement and political participation through fellowships, internships and mentorship initiatives

✦ Promote civic education in schools

✦ Integrate youth-responsive budgeting in the design and implementation of annual appropriation bills to improve budget outcomes for youth.

✦ Create a policy framework to ensure coordination, harmonisation and monitoring of youth interventions aimed at addressing youth unemployment, and youth skills gaps.

---

[2] NBS (2020). National Youth Survey, 2020, Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development in Collaboration with the National Bureau of Statistics, file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/NYS%20Report%202020.pdf, accessed 15-10-2022

National and state legislatures

✦ Undertake legislative reforms to create a conducive legal environment for youth inclusion in decision making. For instance, the constitution should be amended to make provisions for youth quotas, and reduction of the age criteria for all executive bodies,

✦ Further amend the Not Too Young To Run Act, to reduce the minimum age qualification for contesting for Governor and Senate from 35 to 30 in line with the original demands of the proponents of the bill

✦ Enact legislations to impose strict limits on campaign expenses and reform the candidate nomination process in political parties

✦ Improve the quality and frequency of legislative oversight on youth development at the national and state levels.

Political parties

✦ Political parties should allocate voluntary quotas to youths (female and male) to contest elections and hold non-youth related positions in the party's leadership and organs.

✦ Review internal policy documents and constitution to define youth in line with the National Youth Policy or African Youth Charter

✦ Co-design and co-implement youth development programmes to improve leadership, political organising and mobilisation skills

✦ Establish youth wings to facilitate youth membership of parties, articulation and advancement of youth interest in parties.

Youth organizations and civil society

✦ Promote youth inclusion though strategic advocacy with key institutions, capacity building and research to harness and analyse trends and data on youth inclusion.

Media

✦ Review media coverage on youth to improve public perception on youth leadership in decision making. Positive attributes of the youth demography and their contributions to nation building should be showcased.

✦ Adopt the Positive Youth Development Framework (PYD)[3] as an organising frame for mutually reinforcing efforts to harness youth power.

---

[3] Positive Youth Development (PYD) is an approach that engages young people along with their families, communities, and government. This approach focuses on building skills, assets, and competencies in young people to foster healthy relationships, strengthen the environment and transform systems. It illustrates that to achieve the vision of healthy, productive, and engaged youth, programmes, interventions, and policies should improve young people's assets, agency, contribution, and environment. Source: https://leapafrica. org/positive-youth-development-towards-securing-africas-future/

✦ Recognising that youth development spans various thematic areas, a government/system-wide approach that deploys joint activities performed by various ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) targeting various thematic areas simultaneously and at all tiers of government is recommended. The Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports as custodian could play a coordinating role that establishes linkages among relevant MDAs.

- Promotive and Protective Environment for Youth Development: The government of Nigeria, through the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development and other stakeholders to ensure an enabling environment (laws, policies, processes and mechanisms) that is supportive of optimal development of youth and protective of their fundamental human rights, thereby ensuring inclusion, equal opportunities for development and freedom from abuse, violence, intimidation and discrimination.[4]

- The government of Nigeria, through the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development to invest in youth's human capital development - This includes access to quality formal and informal education, capacity-building and skills development, with emphasis on technical education resulting in the acquisition of marketable skills that provide access to a global market.

> • Encourage enrolment in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) courses by offering annual bursaries to eligible STEM undergraduates.

> • Government at all levels to allocate resources to implement the National Development Plan's policy objective and target to reduce the number of Nigerian youth ages 15-24 that are not in education, employment or training from a baseline of 20% to 10% by 2025.

✦ Governments at all levels Implement stringent measures to address youth unemployment – The National Youth Policy proposes job creation at an average of 3.7 million jobs per year with priority on youth employment. Also, the National Development Plan commits to driving massive job creation across sectors including the sports sector.

✦ Government's commitment to youth development should not be mere lip service. Initiatives such as the National Youth Investment Fund (NYIF) need to be strengthened and better implemented. An estimated N60 billion is allocated to youth development in the current National Development Plan.

-   A more deliberate implementation of the Not-Too-Young-to Run Act by all stakeholders is recommended.

The proponents of the Not Too Young To Run Act initially demanded a reduction of the age limits for President from 40 to 35, Senate and Governor from 35 to 30, and House of Representatives and State Houses of Assembly from 30 to 25. However, the proposals for Governor and Senate were rejected, the result being that a person must still be at least 35 to contest in senatorial or governorship elections.

✦ Capacity Building, Political Orientation and Mentorship of Youths –
> • The inclusion of civic education in schools' curricula at all levels by the Federal Ministry of Education is recommended.

> • Political parties and other stakeholders to facilitate mentoring of young, up and coming politicians. Particularly, the Nigerian Youth Parliament (NYP) as a Legislative and Developmental Training Institution has a strategic role to play in the political orientation and development of young people. Governments need to invest in the NYP, support its establishment in states and re-position it to become an electoral institute for young people.

---

[4]This is a core commitment of the National Youth Policy.

✦ The Media, National Orientation Agency and Civil Society organisations to promote the narrative of youth driving change – Profiling of young innovators and changemakers would encourage their peers. This is a role for the media, the National Orientation Agency and civil society organisations.

✦ Reduce the Influence of Money in Politics - A review of the Electoral Act 2022 to reduce the ceiling on election expenses to give the youth a better chance to contest on an equal footing with the older politicians.

✦ Ensure that the voices of youths are heard through various mechanisms including:

• Civil society organisations to strengthen the capacity of youth groups/organisations to make inputs into national discourse and decision-making processes;

• CSOs to create safe spaces for youth to build and practice the use of life skills;

• Government to implement the "5 for 5 demands" submitted during the nationwide #EndSARS protests in 2020. This is a commitment in the new National Development Policy (2021-2025)

Recommendations to Deepen PWD Inclusion

People with Disabilities (PWDs) face high levels of discrimination in Nigeria due to the widespread practice of 'ableism.' This is the discrimination of and social prejudice against PWDs based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. In some traditions, disability is seen as a curse or something to be ashamed of, and results in exclusion of PWDs. Also, some PWDs reportedly self-stigmatise for fear of embarrassment. Box 1 lists some other causes of PWDs' exclusion.

To foster greater inclusion of PWDs, the following recommendations are proposed:

✦ The National Bureau of Statistics and other critical stakeholders should address the data gap by ensuring robust disaggregation on the basis of number of PWDs per location, demographic distribution, type of disabilities and specific needs. This is necessary for adequate planning and budgetary allocations.

ONLY 19
OUT OF THE
36 STATES
IN NIGERIA
has adopted the Disability
Act into law

✦ Civil society organisations including organisations of persons with disabilities, the media and the National Orientation Agency to embark on widespread sensitisation and knowledge building to deconstruct myths surrounding disability as a curse or something to be ashamed of.

• Civil society organisations should massively mobilise states to adopt the Disability Act. Currently, the Disability Act has only been adopted - and therefore has force of law - in only 19 out of the 36 states in Nigeria.

✦ Promote the Implementation of the Disability Act at all Levels – The Disability Act has several provisions to protect the rights of PWDs and imposes sanctions on offenders, such as fines and imprisonment of persons who discriminate against PWDs,[5] but cases are rarely taken up.

• The National Disability Commission to collaborate with OPDs and CSOs to develop an

---

[5]Section 1, Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018

implementation plan and budget for implementing the Act.

• CSOs including OPDs and media to embark on monitoring implementation, budget release and expenditure and provide periodic reports.

• The Senate and House of Representatives Committees on PWDs to pragmatically facilitate budget allocation, oversight and public hearings on implementation of the Disability Act.

✦ A National Revolution to Ensure a Barrier-Free Society – Elimination of physical barriers in the environment (barriers related to roads, stations, buildings, etc.) is key to PWDs inclusion. In Nigeria, this would mean a complete overhaul of the current order and is achievable in the long term (e.g. by 2032) with annual milestones:

• Infrastructural Accessibility for PWDs- The Act provides for integration of PWDs into society by stipulating that public buildings, roadside walks, pedestrian crossings, and other special facilities be made accessible.[6] A transitory period of five years was given within which 'these structures shall be modified to become accessible to PWDs'.[7] The Act was passed in 2018, the five-year transitory period will end in 2023. As noted by the National Development Plan, 98.5% of public buildings are still not accessible to PWDs. A national policy that mandates all public buildings to be made accessible to PWDs with a specified period is recommended. This will entail a series of actions (among others.)

• Town Planning/Development Control to take the lead in incorporating time-bound guidelines for the modification of all public buildings to construct ramps, use of embossed tiles for public corridors, ensure that high-rise buildings have elevators fitted and appropriate and separate conveniences for PWDs.

• Town Planning/Development Control to ensure that new building plans meet specifications for PWDs' access as part of approval processes.

• Government to provide incentives (e.g. tax incentives) for private sector businesses that comply with guidelines for PWD inclusion.

98.5%
OF PUBLIC
BUILDINGS
ARE STILL NOT
ACCESSIBLE TO PWDS

✦ Ensure Barrier-free Mobility and Transportation – It is recommended that the Federal Ministry of Works and Housing and the Federal Ministry of Transportation collaborate on design of guidelines for barrier-free mobility and public transportation, including: barrier-free walkways; incorporation of car/bus models suitable for PWDs, including rail transport all equipped with lifting devices and tailored parking spaces for PWDs.

✦ Invest in PWDs Human Capital Development to Ensure PWDs Social and Political Inclusion – This would entail:

• The Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) and other competent OPDs and CSOs, with government and donor support to provide PWD-sensitivity training and orientation for service providers in all sectors, including schools, health facilities, recreational facilities, licensing authorities, banks, etc.

---

[6]Sections 3-5, Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018
[7]Section 6, Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018

• JONAPWD and other competent OPDs and CSOs, with government and donor support to provide training for sign language interpreters in service sectors. An expert interviewed mentioned that the Badagry Hospital in Lagos, Nigeria, has some trained doctors who understand sign language. This is a good practice that should be widely adopted.

• The Federal Ministry of Education should equip schools to deliver integrated/inclusive education, which includes training of teachers, modification of infrastructure, facilitating access to knowledge by making school books available in accessible formats – audio books, braille versions of textbooks; set up braille press in schools. An expert interviewed mentioned that Queen's College in Lagos has a braille press set up by the Old Students Association, making it possible for visually-impaired students to access brailled question papers.

• The Federal Ministry of Education to ensure PWDs have access to ICT training and equipment.

• Government at all levels to invest in local production of assistive devices. This will also contribute to job creation for PWDs and non-PWDs.

• Government at all levels to invest in the rehabilitation of PWDs by renovating existing centres and building new ones.

• Government at all levels should implement the 5% employment quota for PWDs enshrined in the Disability Act, and provide tax incentives for private sector organisations that make reasonable arrangements/adjustments to support inclusion of PWDs in the workplace.

• JONAPWD and the National Disability Commission to strengthen the hiring pipeline by tapping the talent pool of PWDs. Many PWDs self-stigmatise and would not apply for jobs for which they are qualified. Also, the recruitment system in many companies tends to undermine or exclude PWDs. Some companies are working to build a database of qualified PWDs by interacting more with the community. Some have adjusted recruitment procedures to make them accessible to qualified PWDs, e.g. Microsoft.

• The Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development in collaboration with other stakeholders should create programmes that enhance PWDs' self-esteem and give them some mainstream presence through talent hunts and sporting events, etc.

• JONAPWD in collaboration with appropriate government bodies to promote PWDs' access to credit and markets by engaging financial institutions to understand the business case for supporting PWD's inclusion. Recent economic modelling found a strong correlation between financial performance and well-developed disability-inclusion practices.

• Government at all levels to create a special funds for PWD development.
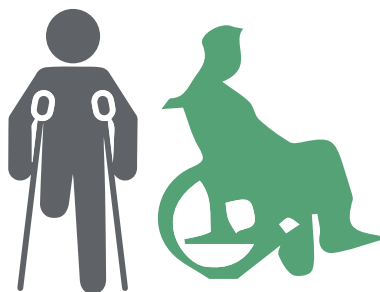
5% EMPLOYMENT
QUOTA FOR PWDS ENSHRINED
IN THE DISABILITY ACT

To Promote PWDs Inclusion in Politics

Political parties have a role to play in ensuring inclusion of PWDs, as do the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), its representatives at the state level and the National Assembly. We recommend that:

- JONAPWD and other relevant CSOs, embark on the training of party executives and members, INEC staff and management on disability sensitivity.

- Political parties should endeavour to include voluntary quotas in their constitutions to ensure substantive inclusion in activities and nomination as candidates. That would be a major step from the current tokenistic posturing.

- The National Assembly should make laws to enshrine quotas and other legislative measures for inclusion of PWDs.

- Implementation and monitoring (by CSOs including OPDs) of the PWD inclusion provisions of the Electoral Act and guidelines by INEC.

In sum, we recommend a system-wide approach that involves collaboration between all organs of government, the private sector and civil society to tackle the myriad of issues that result in PWDs' exclusion.
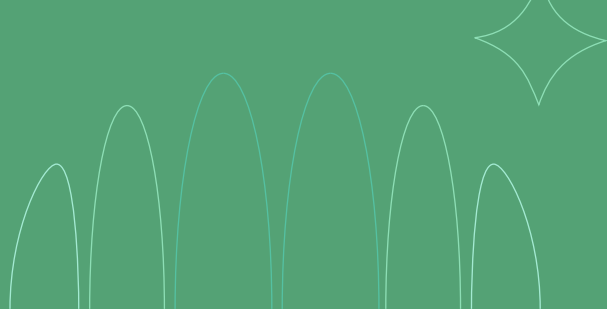
1 Introduction

1.0 Introduction

'Leave No One Behind' (LNOB) is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It represents the unequivocal commitment of all UN member states [Nigeria inclusive] to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that undermine the potential of individuals and of humanity as a whole.'[9] SDG 10 eloquently expresses this commitment: "empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status".[10]

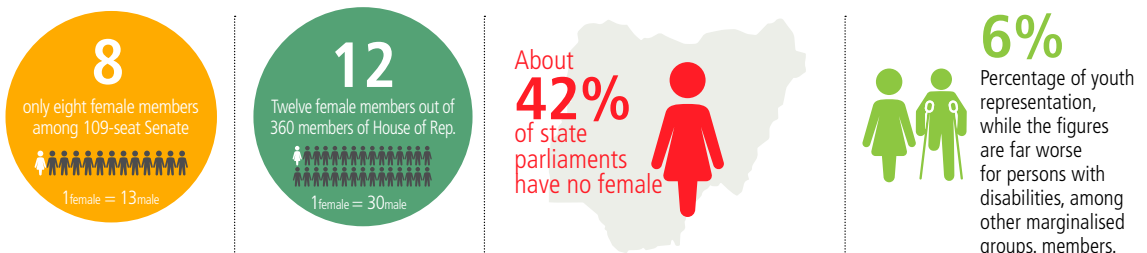Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) is a concept (strategy/transformational process/tool) that addresses unequal power relations arising from gender, wealth, ability, location, caste/ethnicity, language, agency, or a combination of these dimensions. It highlights the need for action to rebalance these power relations, reduce disparities, and ensure equal rights, opportunities, and respect for all individuals regardless of their social identity. The World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) describes an inclusive society as a society for all, in which every individual with rights and responsibilities has an active role. Social inclusion is therefore not a favour done to any segment of the population. It is a recognition of the rights and dignity of all people and an acknowledgement that each individual is endowed, in some way, with mental or physical resources or both to participate and contribute to the process of development for the benefit of all.

In the last three decades, women's representation in politics has increased in most countries, many with corresponding improvement in human development indices. While some African countries are listed among those with 30% - or more - women representation in parliament, the case in Nigeria is however different. The decline seen in women's representation in elective and appointive posts in Nigeria is an indication that the country has failed to sufficiently engage women in its development. The country's 109-seat Senate has only eight female members while the House of Representatives has only 12 females out of 360 members. About 42% of state parliaments have no female members. Youth representation is capped at 6%, while the figures are far worse for persons with disabilities, among other marginalised groups.

Nigerian women's representation in politics

8
only eight female members among 109-seat Senate
1female = 13male

12
Twelve female members out of 360 members of House of Rep.
1female = 30male

About **42%** of state parliaments have no female

6%
Percentage of youth representation, while the figures are far worse for persons with disabilities, among other marginalised groups. members.

---

9 UNSDG (n.d.) Leave No One Behind. Available at: https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind
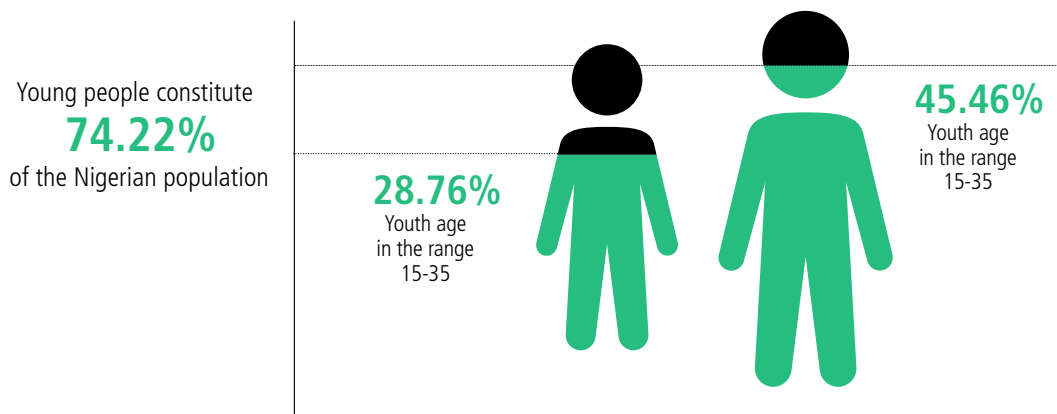
10 Silver, H. (2015) The Contexts of Social Inclusion Department of Economic & Social Affairs. DESA Working Paper No. 144 ST/ESA/2015/DWP/144 October 2015. Available at: https://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2015/wp144_2015.pdf

The 1999 Constitution as amended contains clauses that discriminate (overtly or covertly) against girls and women. An opportunity to address the constitutional bias was lost when five gender equality bills presented to the constitution review committee were rejected. There is evidence that women with disabilities were not adequately carried along. Nor were their peculiar concerns reflected in the protests and demands that followed the rejection of the bills.

The country's youth bulge is stark: Young people constitute 74.22% of the Nigerian population: 28.76% below age 15 and 45.46% are in the age range 15 -35.[11] This vibrant and energetic segment of society represents an untapped resource. But the high levels of unemployment and poverty have turned many into some sort of a 'reserve army of the unemployed' that could be easily manipulated to perpetrate electoral and other vices. Recent events have demonstrated that youth energy can be harnessed to bring immense positive changes to the polity. Evidence of this abound, beginning in 2016, when Nigerian youth mobilised massively and got legal backing that paved the way for young persons to vie for elective posts under the Not-too-Young-to Run Act, with promising improvements in youth participation in the 2019 general elections. The 2020 EndSARS Protest may have had some unpleasant sub-text, yet it represented an impactful and unprecedented youth-led movement to check police brutality and calls for reforms in the Nigeria Police. Despite all these, the size, energy and dynamism of youths are yet to be adequately harnessed to impact the development process.[12] Less than two years to the timeline set by the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act of 2018 to enforce the removal of infrastructural barriers to PWDs' access, 98.5% of public buildings remain inaccessible to PWDs.

Young people constitute
74.22%
of the Nigerian population

28.76%
Youth age
in the range
15-35

45.46%
Youth age
in the range
15-35

Low level of inclusion incapacitates not just the excluded groups but the country itself. Nigeria thus undermines itself by limiting the potentials of significant segments of its population: women, youths, people living with disabilities, ethnic and religious minorities etc. Deepening inclusion in Nigeria is therefore not a favour to the excluded groups but a sensible route to the overall national development. Continuing to leave substantial segments of the population behind amounts to Nigeria shooting itself in the foot or punching grossly below its weight. It is thus in Nigeria's enlightened self-interest to be a more inclusive society.

This study examined the causes of social exclusion and proffers policy actions to foster inclusion in all ramifications.

---

[11] NBS (2020). National Youth Survey, 2020, Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development in Collaboration with the National Bureau of Statistics, file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/NYS%20Report%202020.pdf, accessed 15-10-2022

[12] EIDS Limited (2013) Nigeria Country Entry and Business Case for Plan International, a consultancy report submitted by Emerald International Development Services Limited.

1.1   Objectives

The objectives of this assignment are outlined below:

- ✦ Highlight the status of gender, social and political inclusion/exclusion in Nigeria;
- ✦ Identify the causes of exclusion of selected groups in Nigeria;
- ✦ Highlight achievements and existing opportunities to deepen inclusion;
- ✦ Recommend specific policy actions to strengthen inclusion.

1.2   Task Approach/Methodology

This study is underpinned by the understanding that social exclusion as a process renders marginalised groups unable to participate fully in economic, social, political and cultural life. Their exclusion is driven by a complex layer of multiple factors - individual, interpersonal (family/peer), community and social/structural.

The study deployed a two-track approach:

Track 1 – Diagnosis to unearth the immediate and remote causes of gender, social and political exclusion in Nigeria

This track utilised mixed methods to conduct a diagnosis of the immediate and remote causes of gender inequality and social and political exclusion. Our method relied heavily on literature and desk review of key documents, complemented with strategic consultations with selected experts/key informants to further lend perspective to the work. This phase of the assignment was framed broadly by the six gender analysis and inclusive development domains: laws, policies, regulations, and institutional practice; cultural norms and beliefs; roles, responsibilities, time use; access to and control over resources; power and decision making; safety and security.

The research also deployed elements of other analytical frameworks such as the Social Institution and Gender Index (SIGI) to deepen the analysis. The intersectional lens was deployed to examine how different social stratifiers intersect to create different experiences of privilege, vulnerability, and marginalisation.

Track 2 – Suggested policy action to address identified gaps

Under this track, we conducted a stakeholder analysis and a power analysis, to determine the locus of change and the power brokers that have the mandate and/or influence to foster inclusion. Our analyses triangulated with findings from track 1 to inform the policy recommendations.
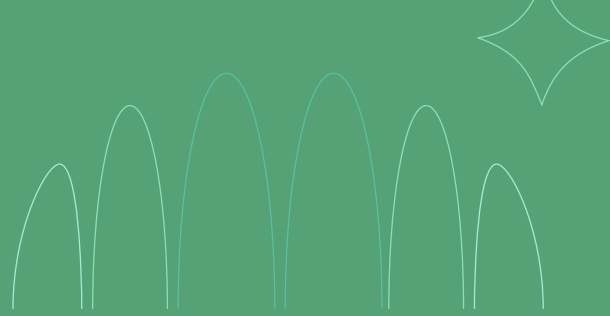
2 Contextualising Social and Political Inclusion

2.0 Contextualising Social and Political Inclusion

The fundamental question of "who belongs?" is becoming more pressing worldwide.[13] Societies are increasingly fractured and polarised around several axes: gender, ethnicity, religion, age, race, sexual orientation, ableism, HIV status, migrant status, or geographic location. People face barriers of acceptance and affirmation of their identities and in accessing resources and essential social services necessary for their survival and development. The excluded have no voice in the affairs of their society and are, consequently, rendered passive recipients of decisions and actions that have bearing on their individual or societal development (or under development), not by choice or 'accidents of fate'.[14] Exclusion results from discriminatory laws, policies, administrative processes, and practices at the macro level and informal sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions, and codes of conduct peculiar to local communities.

Social institutions, formal and/or informal regulate acceptable standards of behaviour and confer privileges or disadvantages on members of communities. Being female or male in patriarchal societies often translates to inequities in power and access; ageism or ageist attitudes dismiss/exclude the voices of young persons in critical decision-making processes. Their exclusion results in low agency and eventually translates to youth unemployment and low representation in politics.[15] Similarly, ableism, defined as social prejudice against persons with disabilities, results in their exclusion. They are among the most disenfranchised in a world built to unconsciously favour able-bodied persons. No matter its colouration, social exclusion leaves persons and groups (women, young or old persons, ethnic, religious or sexual minorities, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, undocumented migrants, persons living with HIV, sex workers and several others) further and further behind. Exclusionary processes render them unable to participate in the economic, social, cultural and political spheres.[16]

As noted earlier, 'Leave No One Behind (LNOB) is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It represents the unequivocal commitment of all UN member states to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind and undermine the potential of individuals and of humanity as a whole.'[17] Indeed, the following commitment was explicitly expressed by SDG 10: "empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity,

THE **EXCLUDED** HAVE NO VOICE IN THE AFFAIRS OF THEIR SOCIETY

Leave No One Behind

LNOB is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

[13] Othering and Belonging Institute. (2019). 2019 Inclusiveness Index Measuring. Berkeley: Othering and Belonging Institute. Retrieved from https://escholarship.org/uc/item/48t810tk

[14] UNSDG (n.d.) Leave No One Behind. Available at: https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values/leave-no-one-behind.

[15] WHO/INT (2021) Ageism is a global challenge: UN. Available at: https://www.who.int/news/item/18-03-2021-ageism-is-a-global-challenge-un

[16] Khan, S., Combaz, E. and Fraser, M. E. (2015) Social Exclusion. UK: Applied Knowledge Services. Available at: https://gsdrc.org/topic-guides/social-exclusion/overview/

[17] UNSDG (n.d.) op. cit.

origin, religion or economic or other status".[18] Social exclusion has several dimensions: social, political and economic, amongst others.[19]

The World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen 1995)[20] defines an inclusive society as a society for all, in which every individual with rights and responsibilities has an active role. An inclusive society is based on the fundamental values of equity, equality, social justice, human dignity, rights and freedoms, and diversity. A society for all is equipped with appropriate mechanisms that enable its citizens to participate in decision-making that affects their lives and ultimately shapes their shared future. Social inclusion acknowledges that each individual is endowed, in some way, with mental or physical resources or both to participate and contribute to the process of development.

Exclusion is both a cause and consequence of poverty, conflict and insecurity. Inclusive development demands that every person, irrespective of identity, is instrumental to the transformation of their own societies, and their inclusion throughout the development process leads to better outcomes for all.

2.1 Dimensions of Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is multidimensional as it encompasses social, political, cultural and economic dimensions, and operates at various social levels.[21] The economic dimension addresses access to and control of resources, including access to labour markets, credit and other forms of capital assets. It fosters poverty reduction, greater income equality, and decent employment. The social dimension focuses on narrowing and eventually eliminating discrimination on account of gender, ethnicity, ableism, and age and cultural exclusion (discrimination based on values, norms and ways of living e.g. caste system, shunning leprosy patients and persons with mental challenges).[22] The social dimension of inclusion creates access to human capital development and quality services, including education, health, water, sanitation and hygiene, among others. Political inclusion upholds citizenship rights: right to freedom of speech, religion, conscience, ideology, association (such as political participation, right to organise; right to vote and be voted for and to hold office; right to personal security, rule of law and equality of opportunity). It also entails the right to be safe from state violence and crime, and to move about as free and equal citizens.

2.2 Social Inclusion in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective

From amalgamation till date, Nigeria's history has been mired in agitations by several ethno-religious groups for inclusion. Some agitations have been peaceful, others have not. Several attempts have been made to address the feelings and claims (both real and imagined) of exclusion in Nigeria. In 1946, the Richard's Constitution initiated the move towards federalism as a suitable system of government for Nigeria and created three regions: the Eastern, Northern and Western regions. The Macpherson Constitution of 1951 and Lyttleton

[18] Silver, H. (2015) The Contexts of Social Inclusion Department of Economic & Social Affairs. DESA Working Paper No. 144 ST/ESA/2015/DWP/144 October 2015. Available at: https://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2015/wp144_2015.pdf

[19] Khan, S., Combaz, E., and Fraser, M. E. (2015) op. cit.

[20] UN.org, (1995). https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N95/116/51/IMG/N9511651.pdf?OpenElement

[21] World Bank (n.d.) Social Inclusion. Available at: https://www.shareweb.ch/site/DDLGN/topics/governance/socialinclusion/SitePages/Home.aspx

[22] Khan, S., Combaz, E., and Fraser, M. E. (2015) op. cit.

Constitution of 1954 progressively concretised the federal structure. The latter delineated a division of power between the central government and the regions and listed items on which the federal government could legislate, the exclusive legislative list; and a concurrent legislative list with items on which both the federal and regional governments could legislate.[23]

Constitution-making in Nigeria has been an elaborate bargain for inclusion. As some scholars put it, a good constitution is a necessary condition but not sufficient for good governance. So, though there is consensus that the federalism offers the best framework for the construction and management of powers in a plural state like Nigeria, minority ethnic groups continued to agitate for their own different states or constitutional safeguards as guarantees against their potential domination by majority ethnic groups in an independent Nigeria.[24]

In 1957, the Willink Minority Commission was set up to ascertain whether the agitations against exclusion or marginalisation by the minority were factual or baseless and to make recommendations.[25] The commission rejected the demands for the creation of separate states but recommended the incorporation of a "Bill of Rights" into the Independence Constitution as a way of guaranteeing minority rights through national integration. This recommendation gave rise to chapter four of the current constitution which guarantees the fundamental human rights of citizens. The Willink Commission also recommended, among other things, the expansion of the House of Representatives to 320 seats.

Nigeria's colonial legacy was federal, and the country, according to Egwu, 'enjoyed a brief spell of constitutional federalism marked by substantial decentralisation of powers to the regions'.[26] This was eroded by the military incursion of 1966 that suspended the 1963 Constitution and concentrated powers and fiscal control at the centre.

In 1963, the Mid-Western Region was carved out from the Western Region. Towards ensuring better inclusion, further territorial reconfigurations took place at various times. Regions were dissolved and twelve states were created in 1967 by the General Yakubu Gowon's military government; in 1976, General Murtala Mohammed created additional states to bring the number to nineteen; General Ibrahim Babangida created two additional states, making them twenty-one; another nine states were created in 1991 bringing the number to thirty while Sani Abacha created six more states, increasing the number to thirty six in 1996 with the Federal Capital Territory.

Administratively, Nigeria currently has 36 states grouped into six geopolitical zones: South South, South East, South West, North East, North West and North Central zones, in addition to a Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The states form the second tier of government and are further sub-divided into 774 local government areas (LGAs), which constitute the third tier of government. Local governments were created to bring government as close as possible to the people.[27]

South South
South East
South West
North East
North West
North Central zones
FCT Abuja
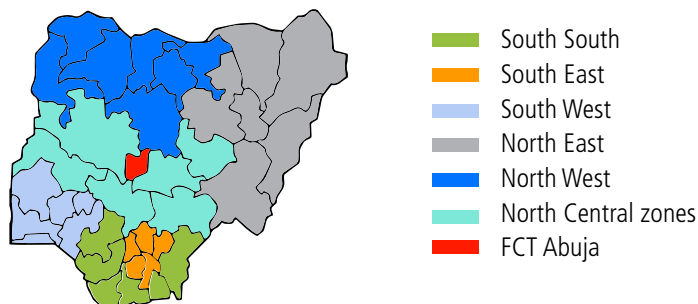
[23] Igbuzor, O. (2008). Perspectives on Democracy and Development in Nigeria, Joe-Tolalu Publishers, ISNB 978251591-X, p175

[24] Izuagie, L. (2015) 'The Willink Minority Commission and minority rights in Nigeria', African Journals Online, 5(1-2). Available at: https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ejotmas/article/view/141208

[25] Kofastudy.com (n.d.) Recommendations of Willink's Commission of Enquiry (1957). Available at: https://www.kofastudy.com/courses/ss2-government-3rd-term/lessons/minority-issues-and-the-creation-of-state-week-10/topic/recommendation-of-willinks-commission-of-enquiry-1957/

[26] Egwu, S., op cit

[27] Igbuzor, O. (2005) Perspectives on Democracy and Development in Nigeria. Lagos: Joe-Tolalu& Associates.

2.3 Towards Common Citizenship

The issues of indigeneity and citizenship in Nigeria are topical. Chapter III of the 1999 Constitution as amended sets out the criteria for becoming a citizen of Nigeria.

The constitution provides legal protection for citizens under the Right to Freedom from Discrimination:

42(1) - a citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion, shall not, by reason only that he is such a person

42(1)(a) be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application, of any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities, or restrictions to which citizen of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions, or political opinions are not made subject

42(1)(b) be accorded either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religions or political opinions.

Indigeneity, on the other hand, is not codified but plays a key role in exclusion of persons considered non-indigenes. The second and third tiers of government (states and local government areas) have been known to arbitrarily deploy indigeneity as a criterion for inclusion or exclusion. While indigenes, persons whose ancestral roots can be traced to a certain place, are accorded and are able to claim rights and entitlements, many non-indigenes, settlers or residents are often unable to enjoy these rights.[28] Denial of rights and outright discrimination against non-indigenes, settlers or residents have been documented across Nigeria: many states either do not employ non-indigenes in their civil service, or employ them as contract staff on non-pensionable basis.[29] For example in 2011, Abia State disengaged non-indigenes from its civil service including Igbo-speaking persons from neighbouring states and some women married to 'indigenes' of Abia.[30] Other examples abound.

BOX 2 - PROMOTING CITIZENSHIP ABOVE ETHNICITY: LESSONS FROM RWANDA

The 1994 genocide in **Rwanda** was largely an inter-tribal war. The post-genocide government in Rwanda has embarked on a reconciliatory and nation-building model that de-emphasises ethnicity, among other reforms. One of the country's social reconciliation policies is the prohibition of ethnic identification. Rwanda has laws against ethnic divisionism enshrined in the 2003 constitution. The law provides for hefty fines and lengthy prison sentences as punishment for offenders. In place of ethnic identification, Rwanda currently promotes (I am Rwandan") as the only acceptable identity. As a form of social re-engineering, Rwandans are now taught that divisions along ethnic lines was a divide and rule tactic by Belgian colonialists as the original Rwandan state was only stratified by socio-economic status and wealth in cows.

Source: Kamanzi, A. (2021). A nation without ethnicity: the Rwandan reconciliation model, https://www.iwgia.org/en/news/4556-a-nation-without-ethnicity-the-rwandan-reconciliation-model.html

---

[28] Ugochukwu, L. (2020). Indigeneity: A Highly Valued Policy of Exclusion in Nigeria, https://educliq.org/ARTICLE_DETAILS.php?az=1234567890&x=1586774729

[29] Ugochukwu, 2020, Ibid

[30] Ugochukwu, 2020, Ibid

Ojiji and Bassey, (2008:40) observe that: "Indigeneship has gained a prominent position because opportunities (like appointments into public offices) are tied to it. Section 147(2) (3) of the constitution provides for the appointment of a minister, one from each state who shall be an indigene of such a state. The federal character principle also ties appointments into public offices to the state of origin".[31]

The arbitrary use of indigeneship as a criterion for accessing rights deepens the feelings of exclusion and needs to be addressed.

Despite the perception of and actual discrimination regarding the treatment of citizens considered non-indigenes at the local levels, Nigerians are galvanised around common national symbols: the national anthem, pledge, flag, passport, currency, and national radio and television stations (FRCN and NTA). A palpable sense of patriotism is demonstrated by massive support for the national football team, the Super Eagles. 'From music to films, to sports, Nigerians parade a certain amount of dedication [to the nation state] that can't be found anywhere else'. Nigerians exude what Sanusi (2019) refers to as a 'flamboyant swagger' driven by what has become popularly called the 'Naija spirit'. Sanusi explains that 'Unlike the American Dream, the Naija Spirit … is a gut feeling', a drive that shows Nigerians off as a relentless people who, rather than let 'our economic woes hinder us from greatness', will always find a reason to move forward. [33]

Box 2 showcases a lesson from Rwanda on promoting citizenship above ethnicity. There are indications that within the geographic expanse called Nigeria today, there were chiefdoms, kingdoms and empires which, though independent in governance, related through trading, even in pre-colonial times. Intergroup and interregional trading was necessitated by the complementary nature of the geographical zones and regional specialisation. Fishing and salt-making were predominant in the coastal areas, while agricultural production, animal husbandry and extensive trading activities dominated in the savannah region, especially communities of the North. Farming and trading were also dominant in the southwest. Exchange was largely by barter and a variety of currencies where trade by barter became complicated.[34] The various peoples of Nigeria seemed to have lived harmoniously, complementing one another, developing their own resources and exchanging goods based on needs.

DISCRIMINATION
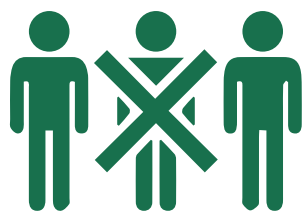
Many states either do not employ non-indigenes in their civil service, or employ them as contract staff on non-pensionable basis

---

[31] Ojiji& Bassey, Op cit

[32] Sanusi (31 July 2019),.The Naija Spirit: What Does it Mean?https://everyevery.ng/the-naija-spirit-what-does-it-mean/

[33] Sanusi (31 July 2019). Ibid

[34] Aboyade, S.A. (2013). Trade Across Frontiers; An Overview of International Trade before the Advent of Modern Economic System in Nigeria, http://eprints.abuad.edu.ng/702/

2.4 Politics of Federalism and Exclusion

The concept of federalism does not have a universally acceptable definition and no two federal systems look exactly the same. Many scholars accept Wheare's definition of federalism as the most fruitful. According to Wheare, federalism is the "method of dividing powers so that the general and regional governments are each within a sphere co-ordinate and independent."[35] Appadorai[36] provides deeper insight into federalism by suggesting that there is a central authority that takes decisions and actions on behalf of the whole on matters of external affairs and internal affairs. But in relation to the internal affairs, the central authority acts on the basis of the affairs that are of common interest. In such an arrangement, it is also envisaged that there are provincial or state authorities exercising powers of legislation and administration as provided in the constitution. It is the running of a country under a central authority with its parts exercising autonomous power as constitutionally determined, with the central authority exercising powers both internally and externally in the common interest of the levels that federate.[37] Elaigwu[38] posits that "federalism is essentially a compromise solution in a multinational state between two types of self-determination. The determination provided by a national government which guarantees security for all in the nation state on one hand and the self determination of component groups to retain their individual identities on the other."

The quest for political inclusion can be gleaned from the various agitations and protestations against decisions of government and political parties usually from ethnic, religious or regional groups all in the desire to see that federal character is reflected. The complaints from individuals, politicians and religious groups, for example, revolve around representations in appointive and elective positions. The Constitution provides for what is referred to as Federal Character designed to ensure fair representation for all Nigerians.[39] Concerns are raised on political representation and inclusion in appointive positions. It extends to issues of recruitment into the military and security services; structure of the country, distributive justice, quota for admissions into unity secondary schools (Federal Government Colleges) and tertiary institutions; the civil service, gender representation and lately, inclusion of youths and persons with disabilities, among others. These are issues discussed at the national level with intense, and in some cases, acrimonious exchanges that could deepen divisions. The Federal Character principle is enshrined in the Constitution with the aim of addressing these issues.

As articulated in the Third Schedule of the Constitution, this principle stipulates that:

8(1) in giving effect to the provisions of Section 14(3) and (4) of this Constitution, the Commission [referring to the Federal Character Commission] shall have the power to

(a) Work out an equitable formula subject to the approval of the National Assembly for the distribution of all Cadres of posts in the Public Service of the Federation and of the States, the armed forces of the Federation, the Nigeria Police Force and other government security agencies, government owned companies and parastatals of the State.

(b) Promote, monitor and enforce compliance with the principles of proportional sharing of all bureaucratic, economic, media and political posts at all levels of government

While the Constitution empowers the Federal Character Commission to take legal measures against failure to enforce the principle, it further provides a clarification in Section 14 (d) (2) that:

The posts mentioned in sub-paragraph (1)(a) and (b) of this paragraph shall include those of the Permanent Secretaries, Directors-General in Extra-Ministerial Departments and parastatals, Directors in Ministries and Extra-Ministerial Departments, senior military officers, senior diplomatic posts and managerial cadres in the Federal and State parastatals, bodies, agencies, and institutions.

---

[35] Wheare (1963). Federal Government Oxford University Press: Oxford pp. 10-11.

[36] Appadorai, A. (1975). The Substance of Politics Oxford University Press: Delhi

[37] In Nigeria, the term appears to be seen as coterminous with federal character. However, it is defined by Elaigwu, J.I. (2005) as "essentially a compromise solution in a multinational state between two types of self determination. The determination provided by a national government which guarantees security for all in the nation state on one hand and self determination of components groups to retain their individual identities on the other" in Elaiagwu, J.I. The Politics of Federalism in Nigeria. Jos: Aha Publishing House

[38] Elaigwu, J. I. (2005) The Politics of Federalism in Nigeria Aha Publishing House: Jos

[39] The Federal Character Principle is a subject of intense debates and disagreements over what it means: is it ethnic representation? bureaucratic representation? affirmative action? quota? etc. See the edited volume by Eke, P. and Osaghae, E.E. (1989) Federal Character and Federalism in Nigeria. Ibadan: Heinemann and Maduagwu; Michael, O. (2019) Federal Character and Affirmative Action. Ibadan: Safari Books

The idea of the federal character in a multi-ethnic and plural society like Nigeria is useful. However, it would seem that the Commission's mechanisms for monitoring implementation of its responsibilities in ensuring fair representation, non-discriminatory, affirmative action or equal opportunity principle (in its various senses) is weak. This weak monitoring and supervision may have contributed to the reasons for claims of marginalisation or exclusion by some.   It is important that anyone being employed or appointed into any office satisfies the prescribed qualification(s) required to occupy any office, a form of merit–based affirmative action.

Elected representatives in the National Assembly have the responsibility of exercising rigorous oversight on the activities of the Federal Character Commission and MDAs to ensure the protection of the interest of the people that they represent. This may help to strengthen the Commission and ensure that it exercises its responsibilities fully.

2.5   Politics of Ethno-Religious Representation

In the arena of practical politics, there are also concerns about issues of inclusion. Since the return to civil rule in 1999, one of the issues that have remained contentious is the zoning of party and elective offices. The two major political parties, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and All Progressives Congress (APC) – indeed, maybe all political parties – have a conscious, even if unwritten policy for fair representation and accommodation of the diverse interests in the party. The key concerns are about local, state, and national representations, usually centred on diversity issues: religious, ethnic and zonal/regional as being sensitive and in deference to the plural nature of Nigeria.

One moment in the practice of politics of representation was the transition from one civilian regime to another and concerns about the sustenance of the democracy project in Nigeria. General (Rtd) Olusegun Obasanjo was elected in 1999 as the civilian President of Nigeria and was again elected for a second term of office in 2003. It was the first time in the history of the country that such a transition happened. By 2007, based on the zoning arrangement in the PDP, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, former Governor of Katsina State, was elected the presidential candidate of the PDP and became the President in 2007. He did not complete his term of office, as he passed away as a result of illness. His successor, by constitutional arrangement, was the Vice President, Dr. Gooodluck Jonathan. However, this generated heated debates between two camps that can be characterised as the Zoning Group versus the Constitution Group. The Zoning Group felt that Dr. Jonathan, coming from the South, should not ascend to the presidential post but should rather allow someone else from the North to complete "the term of the north." Despite the heat that this generated in the polity, the Constitution Group won. Civil society groups under the umbrella of the Save Nigeria Group (SNG) organised, protested and demanded for the observance of the provisions of the Constitution in a transition of this nature.[40] The activism of the Save Nigeria Group contributed to Nigeria having a constitutional succession that helped to stabilise democratic practice and erased the notion that a so-called minority cannot become the president in Nigeria.

Similar debates on political inclusion in political parties are ongoing. The need to create space for minorities at the level of the states to occupy key positions is one subsisting issue. This includes issues of power rotation, for example, in Benue State between the Tiv and Idoma at the level of governorship and religious balance to give Deputy Gubernatorial position to either Christians or Muslims where they are minorities. The need for religious balance at the centre has also become a major issue in the current transition with the decision of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) to field a same-faith ticket.

The need to create space for minorities at the level of the states to occupy key positions is one subsisting issue.

---

[40] That type of transition occurred under the military, when President Abacha died on the throne in 1998. But that was treated as a military affair in which General Abdulsalam Abubakar emerged as the head of state. Prior to this, transitions occurred under political tensions and instability through violent coup against the civilian regime in the First Republic in 1967; the coup against the military regime of General Yakubu Gowon in 1975 and General Murtala Muhammed in 1976; civilian regime of President Shehu Aliyu Shagari on 31stDecember, 1983; and against the General Muhammadu Buhari-led military regime in 1985.

2.6   Agitations for Secession

Since independence, Nigeria has, at different historical junctures, experienced ethnic and political agitations to protest citizens' real and perceived exclusion and marginalisation. Although the Nigerian Constitution has a Bill of Rights for the protection of all citizens, the operations of the Constitution has not eliminated political and ethnic agitations. The political conflicts in the Western Region, culminating in *Operation Wetie*; the agitations for succession in the Niger Delta; the Tiv Riots; the Nigeria-Biafra Civil War; militancy in the Niger Delta, among other uprisings are all indications of the challenges and inadequacy of existing frameworks for social inclusion. Ethno-religious and communal violent conflicts, at some point, became a feature of the return to civilian rule in 1999. These conflicts all had political undertones as they relate to issues of recognition of identities, representations in elective and appointive offices and access to resources. The need to address individual and group grievances therefore cannot be over-emphasised. Perceptions must be addressed and corrected and opportunities for participation should be broadened to create a common feeling and acceptance.

Ethno-religious and communal violent conflicts, at some point, became a feature of the return to civilian rule in 1999

2.7 Some Measures Deployed to Promote Ethno-Religious Inclusion

In addition to the entrenchment of fundamental Human Rights provisions in the Constitution through recommendations by the Willink Commission in 1957, the adoption of a multi-party system was intended to give ethnic minorities an opportunity to protect their interests.

As opposed to what obtained in the First Republic when major political parties were allied to ethnic groups, there is currently a constitutional prohibition of ethnic and religious parties. Some scholars believe that the ethnic orientation of the political parties was one of the main reasons for the collapse of the republic.[41] To address this pitfall, the 1979 Constitution of the Second Republic prohibited the formation of political parties with ethnic or religious colourations. Section 202 of the constitution provided that "No association by whatever name called shall function as a political party unless-

- *The names and addresses of its national officers are registered with the Federal Electoral Commission;*
- *The membership of the association is open to every citizen of Nigeria irrespective of his place of origin, sex, religion or ethnic grouping;*
- *A copy of the constitution is registered in the principal office of the Commission in such a form as may be prescribed by the commission;*
- *Any alteration in its registered constitution is also registered in the principal office of the Commission within 30 days of the making of such alteration;*

---

41 Ibrahim, J. (April 14 2014). Following the National Conference: Regionalism, https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/158642-following-national-conference-regionalism-jibrin-ibrahim.html

- *The name of the association, its emblem or motto does not contain any ethnic or religious connotation or give the appearance that the activities of the association are confined to a part only of the geographical area of Nigeria; and*
- *The headquarters of the association is situated in the capital of the federation.*

This provision was repeated in Section 220 of the 1989 Constitution which was never used and in Section 221 of the 1999 Constitution.

Also, attempts to foster inclusion have resulted in the constitutional prohibition of state religion: Section 10 of both the 1979 and 1999 constitutions and Section 11 of the 1989 Constitution provide that 'The Government of the Federation or of a State shall not adopt any religion as state religion'.

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme was introduced in Nigeria partly to promote inclusion. Its objectives include, among others, "*to develop common ties among the Nigerian youths and promote national unity and integration; to remove prejudices, eliminate ignorance and confirm at first hand the many similarities among Nigerians of all ethnic groups and to develop a sense of corporate existence and common destiny of the people of Nigeria.*" But security concerns in the country have brought the NYSC scheme under scrutiny. There are also concerns about the ability and capacity of the scheme to handle the number of graduates churned out annually. There are suggestions on shortening the programme to a 6-month period or to change its focus. This would require an amendment of the NYSC Act.

2.8 Recommendations for Greater inclusion of Ethno-Religious Groups

2.8.1 More devolution of powers to the sub-national units

While acknowledging that there is no simple solution to the question of inclusion, findings from desk/literature review triangulated with data from strategic consultations indicate consensus that federalism is the best structure of government for Nigeria.

However, there is too much concentration of powers at the centre in Nigeria's federal structure. We therefore recommend greater devolution of powers to the subnational units. Devolution in itself is a contentious issue with many definitions and perceptions. In this instance, it means giving more powers and responsibilities to the states and local governments. The distribution of responsibilities is provided in the Second and Fourth Schedules of the 1999 Constitution—Part I of the Second Schedule contains the exclusive legislative list on which only the Federal Government can act; Part II contains the concurrent legislative list on which both the federal and state governments can act; the Fourth Schedule provides the list of functions of the Local Government Councils. It is important to note that that the third tier of government, namely local government, does not currently enjoy independent status. The LGAs are effectively under the states. The joint account between states and LGAs makes the latter appendages of the states.[42] President Buhari's Executive Order 10 of 2020, which grants financial autonomy to local governments (as well as state legislatures and judiciary), was rejected by state governors.[43]

Local governments are important as the tier of government closest to the people but are only useful if they have the capacity to fulfil their mandates. The existing local governments show gaps in human resources, knowledge

---

[42] Makinde, J., Hassan, A and Olaiya, (2016). Theory, Principles and Practice of Local Governance in Nigeria, Journal of Developing areas, 50 (1); 205-318.

[43] Fasan, O. (February 10 2022). How to guarantee local government autonomy in Nigeria, https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/02/how-to-guarantee-local-government-autonomy-in-nigeria/

and skills that evidently result in poor execution of mandates. The responsibility for primary school education, for instance, lies with local governments, one in which many have failed as evident in dilapidated school buildings, lack of provision of teaching and learning facilities, prevalence of unqualified teachers, poor enrolment, retention and completion, etc. These capacity gaps are also pronounced in the administration of the local governments and may explain why they are not able to construct and maintain roads, street lightings, etc. As noted by Page and Wando, 2022, local government councils in Nigeria are 'monumentally wasteful' and corrupt. [44]

The paper recommends a re-invigoration of state and local governments through a pragmatic programme of capacity building. The Local Government and State Service Commissions have allocations that could be deployed to develop and enhance the knowledge and skills of staff at both levels through in-school and in-service trainings and to build a system of accountability and probity.

In addition, an oversight system that includes monitoring by civil society organisations including NGOs, town unions, religious organisations and other groups active at the local levels is recommended.

2.8.2 Rotational Presidency

To address the feelings of exclusion, there have been arguments for and against rotational presidency, i.e. the argument for the position of the president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to rotate among the regions or geo-political zones. Proponents cite the Swiss model as a good practice. Similar to the Nigerian situation, Switzerland, though a small country has cleavages and operates a system of "collective presidency" in which leadership is rotated annually. Switzerland is one of the world's most democratic and stable nations.[45] Arguments against rotational Presidency are grounded in the beliefs that it would promote mediocrity, ethnicity and sectional politics.[46] The paper recommends that rotational presidency be given constitutional backing. This, of course, would require constitutional amendment.

Given the multiplicity of ethnic groups in the country, a system that rotates the position of president among geopolitical zones would be more manageable. An inclusive process by which a qualified person emerges from a particular zone can be worked out internally within the political parties.

Similar to rotational presidency is a proposal by some stakeholders on the need to have six vice presidents drawn from each of the geo-political zones of the country at any given time. Proposals in this section are options for further consultations. The democratic experiment requires the testing of models as Nigeria's democracy evolves.

Given the multiplicity of ethnic groups in the country, a system that rotates the position of president among geopolitical zones would be more manageable.

[44] Page, M.T and Wando, A.H. (2022). Halting the Kleptocratic Capture of Local Government in Nigeria, https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/07/18/halting-kleptocratic-capture-of-local-government-in-nigeria-pub-87513

[45] Akinola, A. (2009). Rotational Presidency can Stabilise Nigeria, https://www.nairaland.com/373857/powerful-argument-rotational-presidency-nigeria

[46] Titus, D.A. &Udoudoh, U. J. (2018). Rotational Presidency: Vehicle of National Integration in Nigeria, https://casirmediapublishing.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Pages-12-38-2018-3196.pdf

2.8.3 Enforcement of the federal character provisions of the constitution

Several scholars lament leaders' arbitrary inclination and a lack of equity, justice and fairness. Some experts opine that even the current arrangement might suffice for inclusion if the federal character provisions of the constitution were implemented as stated. There are perceptions that the feelings of exclusion and the separatist agitations are a result of nepotism and primordialism. Whilst some scholars perceive implementation of the federal character principle as the solution to ethno-religious exclusion, others believe that it has been manipulated to entrench prebendalism. As Suberu puts it, we run a system that 'abets, and is enmeshed and subsumed in an overall context of, prebendal, neopatrimonial politics'.[47] In his view, the "ethno-clientelistic networks of patronage, corruption, and rent seeking" have been entrenched and formalised by the federal character which demands that "the country's ethno-regional diversity must be reflected in all governmental appointments and disbursements". Recognising that most, if not every state in Nigeria has a crop of qualified persons to fill available positions in appointive posts, this paper proposes a "merit-based" implementation of the federal character principle.

Sixty-two years after independence, the narrative that "diversity is a strength" should not simply sound like platitude. The resilience of the Nigerian people, and their capacity to co-exist should never be in doubt. We need to reclaim the country's integrity and its status as a regional power. Like the Rwandan model highlighted in Box 2, a process of social re-orientation led by the National Orientation Agency (NOA), driven by the media/civil society and woven into formal and informal curricula at all levels is highly recommended.

In addition, civil society, the media, pressure groups and the electorate at large need to demand a system of governance that creates an enabling environment for citizens to actualise their potential at the local, state and national levels, a system where a citizen does not have to hold a political office or know someone who does to thrive. The paper proposes that government respects the rule of law hinged on three core principles: supremacy of the law, equality before the law (no sacred cows) and fundamental human rights.

Sixty-two years after independence, the narrative that "diversity is a strength" should not simply sound like platitude.

---

[47] Suberu, R.T. (2013). Prebendal Politics and Federal Governance in Nigeria. In: Adebanwi, W., Obadare, E. (eds) Democracy and Prebendalism in Nigeria. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, York

2.8.4 Residency versus Indigeneity

To deepen inclusion in Nigeria, the question of residency versus indigeneity needs to be resolved. The Constitution states that *"A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person, be subjected to any form of discrimination"*. That legal clause should ordinarily be sufficient to guarantee inclusion, but in practice, it is not. How such a general principle shall be applied, must be specified by special directives and laws, for instance, in the laws concerning elections, and directives for the public administration.[48]

There are no clear guidelines regulating indigeneship versus residency rights. Currently, states and local governments treat "indigenes" (original inhabitants) and non-indigenes differently. Indigeneship confers access to political power and resources: ownership of land, social protection, public sector jobs, among others.[49] In a country whose constitution promotes national integration, even long-term residency often does not confer privilege and access. Women bear the brunt, especially with regards to standing for elections. Indigeneity has been deployed to question women's legitimacy to represent their constituencies or their husbands' (with a few exceptions).

Key recommendations:

i.   Government to establish and implement guidelines to protect the rights of residents to be treated as full citizens no matter where they live.

ii.   The National Assembly to amend the Constitution to clearly define the concept of indigeneity and to pass into law a Residency Bill of Rights that prohibits and criminalises discrimination against residents that have fulfilled minimum conditions (e.g. a specified number of years of residency; payment of taxes in the place of residence, etc).

iii. The National Assembly to amend sections 31 and 318(1) to enable women claim their husbands' state of origin after marriage.[50]

Civil society has a responsibility to monitor implementation of constitutional provisions and engage in public interest litigation to redress arbitrariness and flagrant disregard for the rule of law.

---

[48] IPU Expert Report.

[49] Birchall, J. (2019). Overview of social exclusion in Nigeria. A K4D publication.

[50] This was one of the bills submitted to the National Assembly by the women's movement in Nigeria during the last constitution amendment exercise.
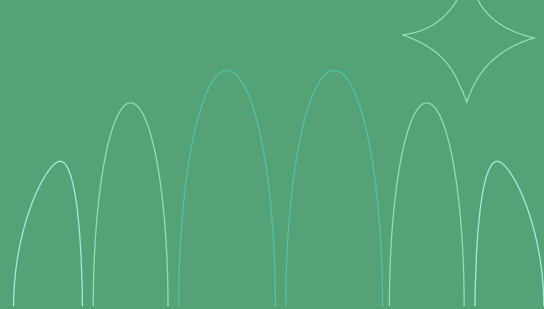
3 Overview of Gender Equality and Inclusion in Nigeria

3.0 Overview of Gender Equality and Inclusion in Nigeria

The discourse in this section is framed around three key themes: the Enabling Environment, Access to and Control over Resources, and Political Empowerment/Inclusion.

3.1 The Enabling Environment for Gender Equality, Social and Political Inclusion

Laws and policies are strong vehicles to drive inclusion at all levels. The global commitment to gender equality is expressed in several international covenants many of which emerged from strategic global and/or regional meetings mostly convened by the UN. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (adopted in 1993), the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995) and a host of others. The Beijing Platform for Action was heralded as a referendum on the human rights of women in twelve critical areas of concern, which range from women's socio-economic rights (such as equality in education, access to employment and income, elimination of poverty) to women's political participation and women's physical security. The Beijing Conference also established the centrality of gender equality to progress in development and democracy. Other instruments that provide for the human rights of women include the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1954), the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1967), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1981), and its Optional Protocol (2000), the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa (ratified by Nigeria in 2004), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (domesticated through the Child Rights Act, 2003), among others.

Nigeria developed a National Gender Policy with a "35% affirmative action for women" provision. Over a decade and a half after, there was no evidence of the impact of this provision on women's inclusion. A review leading up to the development of a successor gender policy adopted in 2022 documents poor implementation of the 2006 version as one of the reasons to explain the current gender gap. The new National Gender Policy (2021-2026) with a 50:50 affirmative action provision presents a window of opportunity to deepen inclusion and equality.

Affirmative action provisions for women

35%

50:50

2006

2022
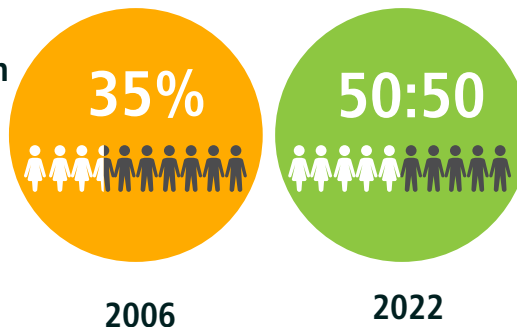
Significantly, a new National Development Plan (NDP, 2021-2025) was recently adopted. The document represents a positive move by the government to strengthen inclusion. Its development evidently paid attention to the prevailing gender inequality and exclusion. It devotes chapters to women and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). Chapter 25, dedicated to women's issues, recognises the need for inclusion, and states that - *"To meet ambitious inclusive development objectives, Nigeria will foster a policy environment that maximizes the potential of all Nigerian women and promotes their ability to productively contribute to the economy. Beyond gender parity, ensuring that women thrive in the Nigerian society also involves protecting vulnerable women from sexual and gender-based violence."*

Chapter 33 of the NDP, 2021-2025 is dedicated to PWDs and makes a commitment to prioritise improvement in the quality of life and access to economic and social opportunities for all Nigerians, irrespective of disabilities.

It is thus clear that Nigeria does not lack laws and policies that provide for inclusion. Weak implementation and inconsistencies in the country's tripartite legal system are part of the reasons for the current state of affairs. Chapter 2, Section 12 (2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) states that *"national integration shall be actively encouraged; whilst discrimination on the grounds of place of origin, sex, status, ethnic or linguistic association or ties shall be prohibited."*

However, the 1999 Constitution still harbours clauses that discriminate (overtly or covertly) against girls and women. Section 29(4) of the Constitution states that any woman who is married shall be deemed of full age. This constitutional provision is seen as covertly endorsing child marriage and implying that the age of adulthood for girls is different from that of boys.

Section 42(1)(b) of the Constitution indicates that no citizen of any extraction *shall be accorded either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any such executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religion or political opinions.*[51]

While the spirit of this sub-section might be to treat everyone as equals, it assumes a level playing field and is not informed by the reality of differential power and agency of various population groups imposed by differential levels of wealth, unequal power relations between the rich and the poor, gender identities, ageism, disability and locational differences that confer privilege or disadvantage. It is worthy of mention that the new National Gender Policy (2021-2026) utilizes Gender Equality, Empowerment of Women and Social Inclusion (GEESI) as a core principle.

The last constitutional amendment process in Nigeria was perceived as a window of opportunity to amend some discriminatory provisions of the Constitution. Nigerian women under a coalition known as WOMANIFESTO submitted five gender equality bills to the National Assembly: the Bill on citizenship seeks to amend Section 26 to grant citizenship to foreign husbands of Nigerian women as is currently guaranteed in Section 26(2)(a) for foreign wives of Nigerian men; the Indigeneity Bill is to among other issues, address sections 31 and 318(1) to enable women to claim their husbands' state of origin after marriage; the Affirmative Action Bill is to specifically amend Section 223 to ensure women occupy at least 35% in political party administration and appointive positions; the Bill on Ministerial or Commissioner Nomination is to, among others, amend sections 147 and 192 so that at least 35% of the nominees are women; the Reserved Seats Bill is to, among others, amend sections 48, 49 and 91 to create additional 37, 74, and 108 seats for women at the Senate, House of Representatives, and the state assemblies respectively.

35%
Amend Section 223 of Constitutional - to ensure women occupy at least 35% in political party administration and appointive positions

---

[51] Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended)

Unfortunately, all five bills were rejected. This resulted in the "Occupy NASS" protests by the Women's movement in Nigeria that resulted in the House of Representatives reversing its position and committing to re-considering three out of five of the bills. There is evidence that women with disabilities were not adequately carried along, neither were their peculiar issues included in the protests and demands that followed the rejection of the bills.

It is important to note that as part of the age-long struggles to increase women's representation in politics and governance, the women's movement in Nigeria represented by a counsel of the Falana and Falana Chambers embarked on a litigation process since 2020. Part of the reliefs sought include "A declaration that the failure of the 1st defendant to implement the 35% affirmative action policy of the Federal Government of Nigeria is illegal, unlawful, null and an arbitrary violation of the National Gender Policy, 2006." The Federal High Court, Abuja, on 6 April 2022, delivered judgement in favour of Nigerian women on the litigation process on affirmative action. It is also noteworthy that the judgement has been appealed by the Attorney General of the Federation.

Nigeria enacted the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act in 2018. The Act makes Discrimination against PWDs illegal in public transportation facilities, and service providers are required to accommodate those who are physically, visually, or audibly challenged as well as all other types of challenged people. This holds true for airport, railroad, and maritime facilities.

The Act makes provisions for PWDs to be given precedence in housing, education, and healthcare, in addition to a 5% (minimum) quota of all employment postings in public entities. Some existing policies beam the searchlight on the rights of specific disabilities, like the National Policy on Albinism (2012).

Disability laws and policies also exist at subnational (state) levels: Plateau, Kwara, Ondo, Ekiti, Nasarawa, Lagos, Enugu, and Bauchi, among others. The Lagos State Special Peoples Act (2010) seeks to safeguard the rights of such people. There is evidence that the Federal Government has strengthened documentation and reporting on human rights violations against persons with disabilities and has launched a school-based disability rights awareness campaign.[52]

5%

Minimum quota of all employment postings in public entities under the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act of 2018 - makes provisions for PWDs to be given precedence in housing, education, and healthcare

---

[52] EU (2021). EU ANNUAL REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN THE WORLD 2021 COUNTRY UPDATES, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/2021%20EU%20Annual%20Human%20Rights%20and%20Democracy%20Country%20Reports.pdf

Personal safety and security is a key concern in Nigeria. The country is ranked currently as one of the world's most unstable and terrorised countries with a Global Terrorism Index (GTI) of 8.230. GTI is a composite measure made up of four indicators: incidents, fatalities, injuries and property damage. To measure the impact of terrorism, a five-year weighted average is applied.[53] In addition to living in fear, many people in Nigeria have been uprooted from their communities. Nigeria has the third highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Africa, reported at 2.7 million in 2020. [54] The drivers of displacement in Nigeria are multi-faceted, complex, and often overlapping. [55] They include the following: terrorism, banditry, resource competition, land disputes, among others. The country currently faces a myriad of security threats: two Islamist terrorist groups, Boko Haram and the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP), are operating in the North East with recent spread into the North Central and the North West. Kidnapping is widespread. A preliminary report on the Abuja-Kaduna train attack which occurred on 28th March 2022 in Katari, Kaduna State indicated that it was perpetrated jointly by bandits and Boko Haram in what has been described as a lethal alliance.[56] The South East is plagued by unrest attributed to Biafran secessionist groups.[57] Militancy in the Niger Delta is linked to exploitation of its oil reserves by multinational companies and the consequent pollution and degradation of the environment in addition to the quest for resource control. The country has also recorded several incidents of ethnic and religious conflicts.

These conflicts and the resultant internal displacement deepen inequality and exclusion. Women, girls, children, the elderly and PWDs are worse hit. Young people are losing years of education. Many are orphaned by the crisis and are forced to fend for themselves too early in life. Several young girls have been kidnapped from schools (e.g. in Chibok and Dapchi) and violated as sex slaves. Many young boys have also been kidnapped but most have been recruited by terrorists, militants and secessionists.

Despite the enormity of the IDP situation in the country, the legal framework for the protection of IDPs is largely weak. The legal authority for the coordination and integration of disaster management in Nigeria is vested in the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). The agency's role covers overall disaster management in Nigeria, including the coordination of emergency relief operations and rehabilitation of victims. However, "though their operations cover the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons, the NEMA Act does not specifically make mention of internally displaced persons. It refers generally to victims of disaster".[58]

Nigeria has a National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons (2012). The third chapter of the of the policy provides for the rights and obligations of IDPs and includes: Rights to Protection from Displacement; Rights to Protection and Assistance during Displacement; Rights of Internally Displaced Children; Rights of Internally Displaced Women; Rights of Internally Displaced Persons with Disabilities; Rights of Internally Displaced Persons Living with HIV (PLHIV); Rights of Internally Displaced Elderly Persons; Rights of IDPs during Return; Resettlement and Re-integration.[59]

[53] Vision of Humanity, (2021). Nigeria, https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/g lobal-terrorism-index/#/

[54] Sasu, D.D. (2022) Number of internally displaced persons in Nigeria 2013-2020. Available: https://www.statista.com/statistics/1237374/number-of-internally-displaced-persons-in-nigeria/#statisticContainer

[55] IDMC (2022). Nigeria. Available at: https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/nigeria

[56] Owolabi, F. (2022) Kaduna train attack: Bandits collaborated with Boko Haram, says FG. Available at: https://www.thecable.ng/kaduna-train-attack-bandits-collaborated-with-boko-haram-says-fg

[57] Economist Intelligence Unit Limited (2021) Nigeria Country Report, July 2021.

[58] Codemint (2020) An Appraisal of the Legal Framework of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) in the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria. Available at:https://codemint.net/law/an-appraisal-of-the-legal-framework-of-the-national-emergency-management-agency-nema-in-the-protection-and-assistance-of-internally-displaced-persons-idps-in-nigeria/index.html

[59] FRN (2012) National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons. Available at:https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5a7ae2324.pdf

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) has a Framework for Voting by IDPs as part of the Commission's commitment to inclusiveness.

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) is widespread in Nigeria and is a key factor that drives exclusion of vulnerable groups. Nearly one in three women reportedly experience violence in one form or another.[60] After fourteen long years of advocacy and lobbying by the Legislative Advocacy Coalition on Violence against Women (LACVAW), the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act (VAPP) 2015 was enacted. The VAPP Act, which is the most comprehensive framework directly addressing SGBV, provides protection for all citizens (including marginalised groups) and contains punishment for perpetrators, beyond previous laws. The VAPP Act is also the first federal law which prohibits FGM across the country.

Some Nigerian states have laws in place to address domestic violence. Examples include the Domestic Violence Law of Lagos State of 2007; the Gender Based Violation Law of Ekiti State of 2011; the Enugu State of Nigeria 2001, No. 3 on The Prohibition of Infringement of a Widow's and Widower's Fundamental Rights Law; and Cross River has a Girl-Child Marriage and Female Circumcision (Prohibition) Law of 2000.

Many laws that provide for equality have been in existence for many years: 19 years for the Child Rights Act (CRA), 10 years of the National Policy on Internally Displaced Persons, seven years for the VAPP, three years for the Disability Act and 16 years of the previous National Gender Policy. Yet, women and men, stratified by various categories, still suffer exclusion from economic and political participation.

Sexual and Gender Based Violence
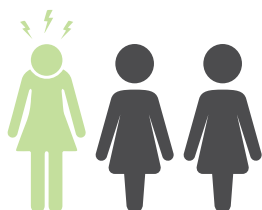
1 in 3

Nearly one in three women reportedly experience violence in one form or another.

States with laws on domestic violence

| Lagos	Domestic Violence Law of 2007
Ekiti	Gender Based Violation Law of 2011
Enugu	Widow's and Widower's Fundamental Rights Law
C/River	Girl-Child Marriage and Female Circumcision (Prohibition) Law of 2000

[60] Godoy, M. (2021). Nearly 1 In 3 Women Experience Violence: Landmark Report From WHO, https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2021/03/09/975358112/nearly-1-in-3-women-experience-violence-landmark-report-from-who

3.2 Access to and Control of Resources

The female half of the world's human capital/talent is undervalued; the world loses their potential contributions to economic advances, social progress and environmental protection. A recent World Bank report estimates that, globally, countries are losing $160 trillion in human capital wealth due to differences in lifetime earnings between men and women (the gender pay gap).[61] Better use of the world's female population could increase economic growth, reduce poverty, enhance societal well-being, and help ensure sustainable development in all countries. COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities and deteriorated economies and populations' overall well-being. The recovery process is a crucial and timely opportunity for countries to embark on a more sustainable and gender-equal development path. [62]

One of the most consistent data sources on women's inclusion is the Global Gender Gap report produced annually by the Women Economic Forum (WEF). The report measures the gender gap in critical development areas: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Health and Survival, Educational Attainment and Political Empowerment.

Figure 1 – Nigeria's Gender Gap Index Scores and Ranks for 2021 and 2022
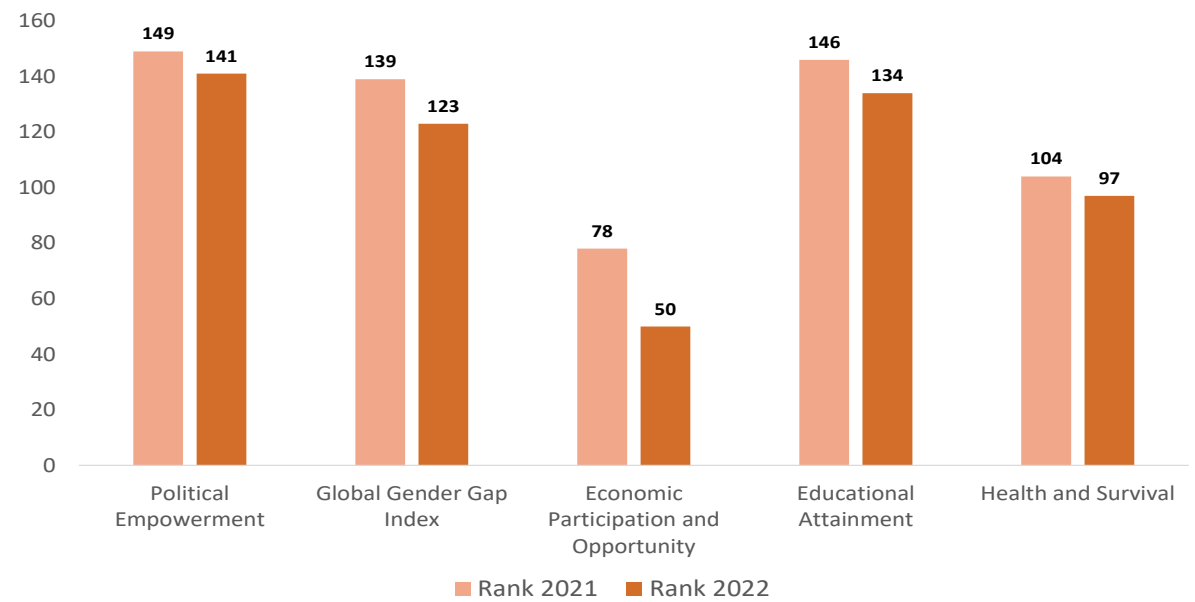
Source: Global Gender Gap Report, 2022
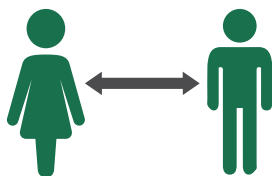
$160 trillion

A world bank report estimates that, globally, countries are losing $160 trillion in human capital wealth due to differences in lifetime earnings between men and women (the gender pay gap)

---

[61] Chaudhry, S. (2018) Gender pay gap could cost world $160 trillion: World Bank. Thomson Reuters Foundation. Available at:https://www.reuters.com/article/us-global-gender-pay-idUSKCN1IV2P7

[62] OECD Development Centre (2019) Social Institutions and Gender Index.Available at: https://www.genderindex.org/

Figure 1b - Nigeria's Gender Gap Index Scores
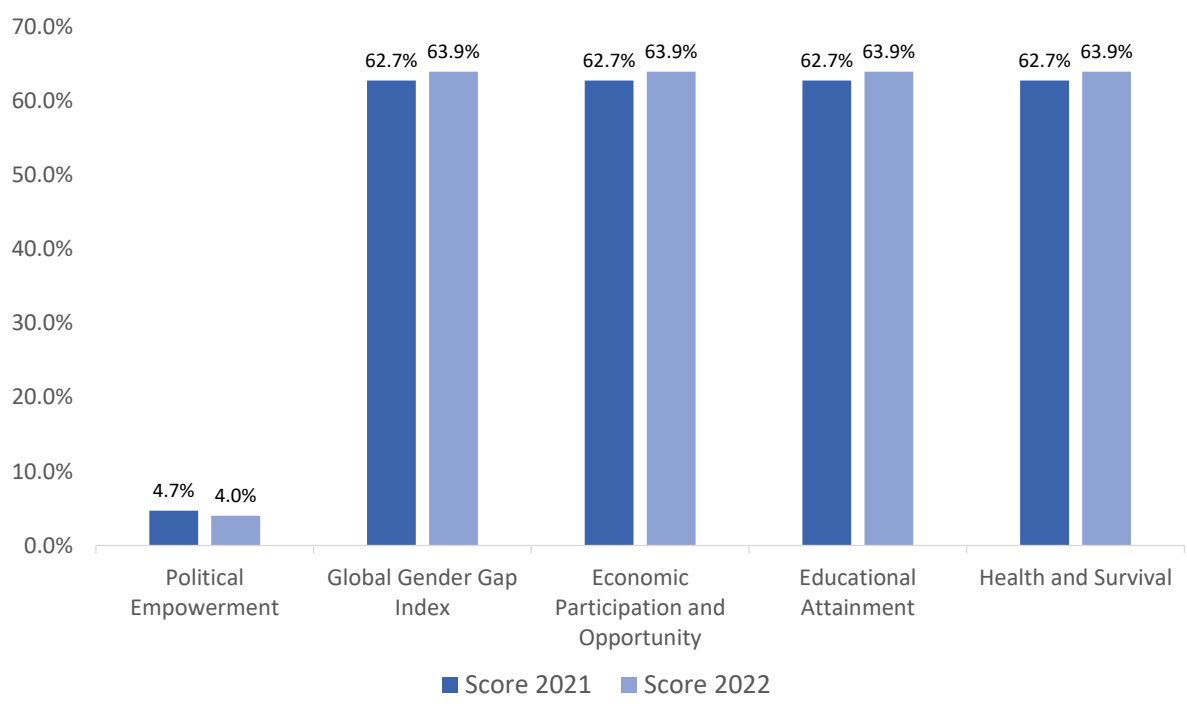
Source: Global Gender Gap Report, 2022

The 2022 Global Gender Gap Report shows that Nigeria has covered 63.9% of its gender gap, placing the country at 123rd out of 146 countries assessed. This implies progress after the country retrogressed in 2021. Positive changes were recorded in economic opportunities (0.687 in 2021; 0.724 in 2022) and education (0.806 in 2021 to 0.826 in 2022) rankings. The Health and Survival index stagnated at 0.967 while the Political Empowerment index recorded a decrease (0.047 in 2021 to 0.040 in 2022).

On Educational Attainment, Nigeria recorded higher levels of parity in secondary education and tertiary education enrolments.

63.9%

2022 Global Gender Gap Report shows that Nigeria has covered 63.9% of its gender gap, placing the country at 123rd out of 146 countries assessed

3.2.1 Cultural Norms Exclude Women and Girls from Wealth Creation

The prevalence of patriarchal cultural norms in Nigeria that fuel economic, legal, political, and social exclusion of women and girls within households and at the community level is a fact acknowledged in the National Development Plan (2021 – 2025).

Girls and boys acquire their gender identities through socialisation in families and communities. Much of that socialisation is regulated by family codes which are often discriminatory against girls. The gender division of labour in patriarchal societies assigns unpaid care work largely to girls and women. Conversely, boys and men work mostly outside the home to earn income. The Global Gender Gap report indicates that "life events relating to care had the most significant impact on gender wealth equity across nearly all the 39 countries included in the analysis – the impact of care work on women's capacity to create wealth was particularly large in Argentina, Nigeria and Mexico".[63]

Feminised poverty is a reality in Nigeria. Patriarchal norms largely govern access to land and patrilineal inheritance excludes many women from land and property ownership. Women thus have limited access to credit, as many do not have the requisite collateral. Women in Nigeria also face legal or customary barriers to financial services; some women require the approval of a male head of household to open a bank account or access credit. The latest National Development Plan, 2021-2025 recognises the following as factors that limit women's access to and control of resources:[64] a historically gender-neutral approach to development planning without taking biases against women, girls and children into account in policymaking; the rising insecurity in the country due to violent extremist organisation, Boko Haram, subjects women and girls to kidnapping, domestic servitude, forced labor and sex slavery. Many women have been uprooted from their communities and lost their means of livelihood.

In Nigeria, women's livelihood strategies are strongly influenced by various factors (apart from access to and ownership of land): knowledge and information; isolation from markets; limited access to education and social networks and limited adaptive/mitigative mechanisms that are women-friendly. When poor women do not have funds to spare for corrupt officials or persons holding positions of power, they risk being exposed to physical abuse, sexual extortion and exploitation; women's lower status and position in society makes them vulnerable to corruption.[65]

Thirty-nine

Number of countries included in the impact of care work on women's capacity to create wealth were particularly large in Argentina, Nigeria and Mexico

[63] WEF (2022). Global Gender Gap Report 2022,https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2022.pdf

[64] Federal Ministry of Finance, Budget and National Planning (2021) National Development Plan (NDP), 2021-2025.

[65] UNODC (2020). The Time is Now: Addressing the Gender Dimensions of Corruption, https://www.unodc.org/documents/corruption/Publications/2020/THE_TIME_IS_NOW_2020_12_08.pdf

3.2.2 Gender Gap in Access to ICT

Digitalisation of the global economy, especially post-covid, has made the digital divide a key determinant of social inclusion. Many businesses and learning are conducted online. Online learning is now widespread and a priority option for many in the light of the frequent and prolonged industrial actions by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) that culminate in missed educational opportunities and/or delays. But does Nigeria have the infrastructure and internet access to support long-term online learning leading to the acquisition of degrees? Do women and girls have the requisite skills/computer literacy and time (given their huge burden of care work) to participate effectively in online learning and trading? Research findings indicate Nigerian women and girls' have unequal access to ICT.[66]

The Global Gender Report, 2022 indicates that 'men continue to be overrepresented in fields typically characterised as "male-dominated", with two STEM fields reporting the highest gender gaps: Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Engineering.' A UNESCO Report[67] shows:

"Only 35 per cent of girls worldwide study STEM subjects … only three per cent of female students in higher education choose to study information and communication technologies (ICT). This gender disparity is all the more alarming as STEM careers are often referred to as the jobs of the future, the engine of innovation, social well-being, inclusive growth and sustainable development."

35%
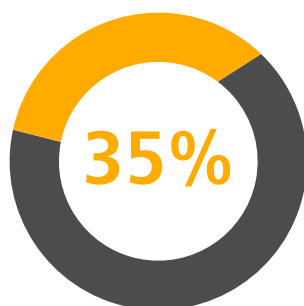
Only 35 per cent of girls worldwide study STEM subjects. STEM fields are Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and Engineering

[66] Equal Access International (2021).TECH4FAMILIES: ADDRESSING THE GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDEhttps://www.equalaccess.org/our-work/projects/closing-the-gender-digital-divide-tech4families/

[67] UNESCO (2017) Cracking the Code: Education of Girls and Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). Available at: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000253479

3.2.3 The Exclusion – Poverty Nexus

In Nigeria, the poverty statistics are grim and have been deteriorating over the years. Exclusionary processes lead to the production and reproduction of poverty as it denies access to productive resources.[68] The seeds of social exclusion are sown in societies where the rich and powerful have access to better education and other services.[69]

As a key driver of poverty, the costs and consequences of corruption are felt everywhere as it stunts economic growth and compromises service delivery. Corruption and social inequality are closely related and provide a source for popular discontent.[70] Corruption breeds conflict and uproots people from their communities and their livelihood sources. Women's livelihoods are usually tied to the ecosystem. They, along with other marginalised groups (children, youth, persons with disabilities, and the elderly) bear a disproportionate disadvantage of displacement.

As the Chair of Transparency International (1993-2005), Peter Eigen, correctly notes, "corruption doesn't just line the pockets of political and business elites; it leaves ordinary people without essential services such as life-saving medicines and deprives them of access to sanitation and housing. In short, corruption costs lives."[71]

Corruption undermines the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[72] SDG 16 seeks to 'Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.' Corruption, on the other hand, weakens and renders ineffective, unaccountable and exclusive the institutions charged with the responsibilities of eradicating poverty and hunger, improving access to housing, health, education, water and sanitation, reducing inequality and guaranteeing gender equality and other human rights, all of which form the SDGs. UNODC draws attention to three targets of SDG 16 – namely 16.4, 16.5 and 16.6 – which specifically call for reducing all forms of corruption, strengthening the recovery and return of stolen assets, and developing transparent institutions.[73]

A World Bank brief on anti-corruption puts some of the costs of corruption in context:[74]

• Corruption increases costs and reduces access to services, including health, education and justice.

• Corruption in the procurement of drugs and medical equipment drives up costs and can lead to sub-standard or harmful products. The human costs of counterfeit drugs and vaccinations on health outcomes and the life-long impacts on children far exceed the financial costs. Unofficial payments for services can have a particularly pernicious effect on poor people.

• Empirical studies have shown that the poor pay the highest percentage of their income in bribes. Some studies have suggested that the poor may even be preyed upon since they are seen as powerless to complain.

[68] Tilly, C. (2007) 'Poverty and the Politics of Exclusion', in Marayan, D. and Petesch, P. (eds) Moving Out of Poverty: Vol. 1 Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Mobility. DC: World Bank. Pp45-76.

[69] Reay, D. (2004) Exclusivity, Exclusion and Social Class in Urban Education Markets in the United Kingdom. UK: University of Cambridge.

[70] Heinrich, F. (2017) Corruption and Inequality: How Populists Mislead People. Available at: https://www.transparency.org/en/news/corruption-and-inequality-how-populists-mislead-people

[71] Eigen, P., in Igbuzor, O. (2019), op. cit.

[72] UNODC (n.d.) Effects of corruption. Available at: https://www.unodc.org/e4j/en/anti-corruption/module-1/key-issues/effects-of-corruption.html

[73] Ibid

[74] World Bank (2021)Combating Corruption. Available at:https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/governance/brief/anti-corruption

3.2.4 Financial Inclusion in Nigeria

Financial inclusion is the state of financial services delivery by a range of providers, mostly the private sector, to reach everyone who could use them. Specifically, it means a financial system that serves as many people as possible in a country.

A huge number of the population in Nigeria, about 40%, lives in extreme poverty. Unemployment rate stands at 33%, while 36% women and 24% men suffer financial exclusion. According to Eyinade, banking leads the way to financial inclusion, with nearly three in ten adults (29%) having bank accounts in Nigeria. Three in 100 adults (3%) have mobile money accounts and the same number (3%) have nonbank financial accounts.[75]

Nothing reflects Nigeria's grim financial inclusion statistics as starkly as the fact that the National Financial Inclusion Strategy's goal of financial inclusion for 80% of the country's adult population set in 2011 was not met as at 2020.

Several factors have been cited as the roots of financial exclusion: lack of income, lack of education, low trust in financial service providers, and the urban-rural divide. Interestingly, these factors also drive gender inequality. An assessment of women's financial inclusion by Enhancing Financial Innovation and Access (EFInA) shows that gender plays a role in formal financial inclusion. Lower levels of education breed lack of trust in financial systems. It also places a glass ceiling on women's earnings. As mentioned earlier, patrilineal inheritance in many parts of Nigeria denies women access to credit as many lack the collateral typically requested by financial institutions as preconditions. Thirty-seven percent of men own a house and 38% own land alone or jointly with someone, as compared with only 11% and 12% of women, respectively. These interesting patterns further highlight a disproportionate trend in property ownership:[77]:

- *The 2018 National Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) indicates that in Nigeria, men are more than three times as likely to own a house or land as women.*

- *House ownership among women is highest in the South East (27%) and lowest in the North West (4%).*

- *The proportion of women who own land is highest in the South East (31%) and lowest in the South West (5%).*

Financial inclusion is thus a policy imperative that helps create a level playing field for all.

In tandem with findings from the 2022 Gender Gap Index that showed improvements in women's economic participation in Nigeria, a World Bank report indicates that the percentage of Nigerian women with formal financial accounts in any financial institution increased from 27% in 2017 to 35% in 2021, the highest in 10 years.[78]

Figure 2 shows a historical trend of women's financial inclusion in Nigeria since 2011. The increase in women's financial inclusion is largely attributed to the availability of mobile money services in the last few years.

---

[75] Eyinade, D. (2022) Financial Inclusion in Nigeria. Available at: https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/511928-financial-inclusion-in-nigeria-1-by-dotun-eyinade.html

[76] NDHS, (2018). Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey 2018 [FR359https://www.dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR359/FR359.pdf

[77] NDHS (2018). Ibid

[78] World Bank (2021) The Global Findex Database 2021: Financial Inclusion, Digital Payments, and Resilience in the Age of COVID-19. Available at: https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/globalfindex

Figure 2 - Percentage of Women with Bank Accounts in Nigeria

Women with bank accounts in Nigeria (2011-2021)
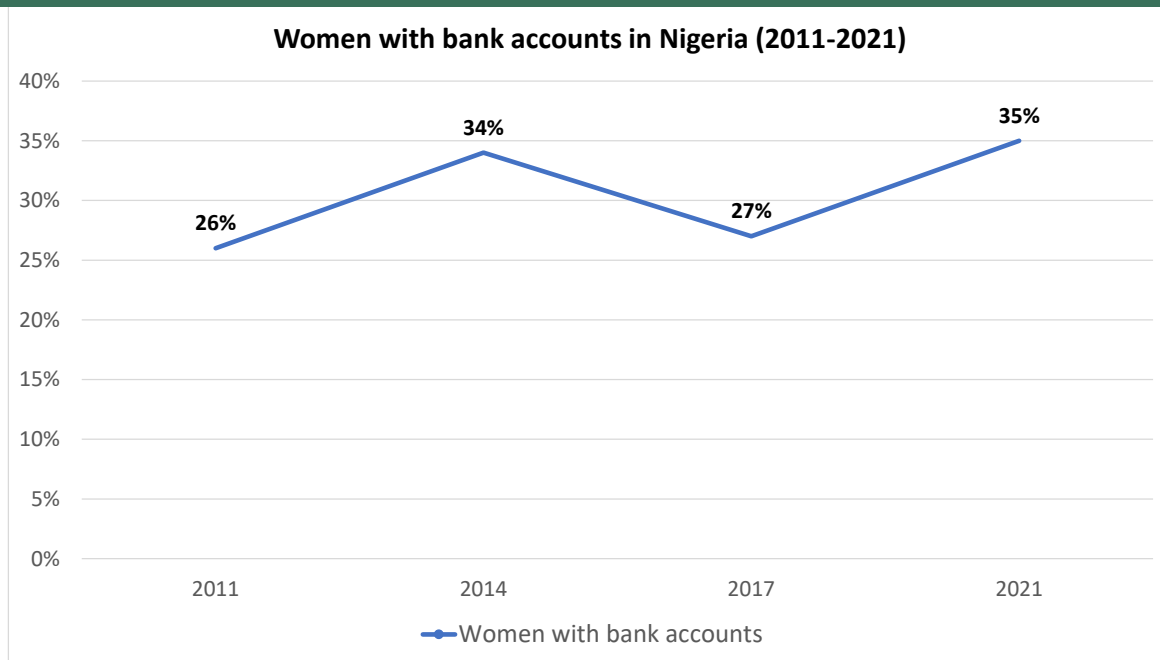
3.2.5 Gender Mainstreaming in the Budget Cycle

Budgets/fiscal allocation is an indicator of political priority as it practically translates commitment to action. Evidence arising from consultations with UN Women (during the Gender Assessment exercise conducted in 2021) indicate that the Ministry of Finance is working in collaboration with the National Assembly to mainstream gender in the budget cycle and budget templates. The Social Intervention Projects (SIP) budget line was introduced as part of the Federal Budget in 2016 with four components: the National Cash Transfer Programme; N-POWER; the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) and the National Home-Grown School Feeding programme (NHGSFP). It is a major milestone in macroeconomic planning with a large chunk of money set aside for initiatives that directly reduce inequality.

27%

House ownership among women is highest in the South East (27%) and lowest in the North West (4%)

31%

The proportion of women who own land is highest in the South East (31%) and lowest in the South West (5%)

3.3 Women's Political Inclusion in Nigeria

Like the rest of the world, Nigeria is beset with a series of crises in the last few years, many of which peaked in 2022. So here is the grim reality: the many gains previously made in closing the gender equality and socio-political inclusion gaps can potentially be reversed by economic stagnation, unchecked insecurity and frequent industrial actions.

As figure 1 above: shows, the subindex where Nigeria has the widest gap to close is Political Empowerment. This has been widening since 2012 and currently stands at 95.9%.[79] This puts Nigeria among countries that have more than 95% of the gap to close, the rest being Vanuatu (100%), Kuwait (97.8%), Brunei (96.9%), Qatar (96.7%), and Iran (96%).[80] In comparison, Rwanda and South Africa with scores of 0.56 and 0.50 respectively have closed more than 50% of their political empowerment gaps.

Table 1 is a comparative analysis of women's representation in parliament among selected African countries.

Country	Lower or Single House	Upper House or Senate
Rwanda	61.25%	38.46%
South Africa	46.35%	38.89%
Senegal	43.03%	-
Namibia	42.71%	23.81%
Mozambique	41.2%	-
Nigeria	3.6%	7.3%

Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2022[81]

Notably, there are fifteen states in Nigeria with no women in their state parliament.

Figure 3 is a historical snapshot of women's inclusion in appointive and elective posts in Nigeria. Women account f or 49.31% of the total Nigerian population.[82] Nigeria's average rate of female political participation in elected and appointed positions has remained at 6.7%, well behind the global average of 22.5%, the standard for Africa, at 23.4%, and the average for West Africa, at 15%.[83] As Figure 3 shows, men have dominated the Senate since the return of democracy in 1999. In 1999, there were only three women out of 109 senators (2.8% of the seats). In 2007, the figure rose to eight (7.3%). However, there was a decrease from eight female members (7.3%) in 2007 to seven (6.4%) in 2011, then to eight (7.3%) in 2015; and back to seven in 2019.

Women's representation in the House of Representatives has also had an undulating pattern: 12 or 3.3% of 360 members in 1999; an increase to 21 (5.8%) in 2003, and 26 (7.2 %) in 2011; a decrease in 2015 to19 (5.3%). In 2019, there was a further decrease to 13 (3.6%).[84]

As shown in Table 3, 15 states have no women in their houses of assembly. This is 42% of the states in Nigeria. The affected states are: Abia, Bauchi, Borno, Edo, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Kogi,

[79] WEF (2022). Op cit

[80] WEF (2022). Op cit

[81] IPU (2022). Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments, https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=9&year=2022

[82] Trading Economics (2022). Nigeria - Population, Female (% Of Total), https://tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/population-female-percent-of-total-wb-data.html

[83] NWTF, (2022). Nigerian Women in Politics Statistics, https://nigerianwomentrustfund.org/nigerian-women-in-governance-statistics/

[84] NWTF (2022). Ibid

Figure 3a – Historical trends in women's inclusion in elective and appointive posts, 1999-2019

House of Representatives (1999 - 2019)

	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
■ Women	7	21	27	25	23	13
■ Men	353	339	333	335	337	347
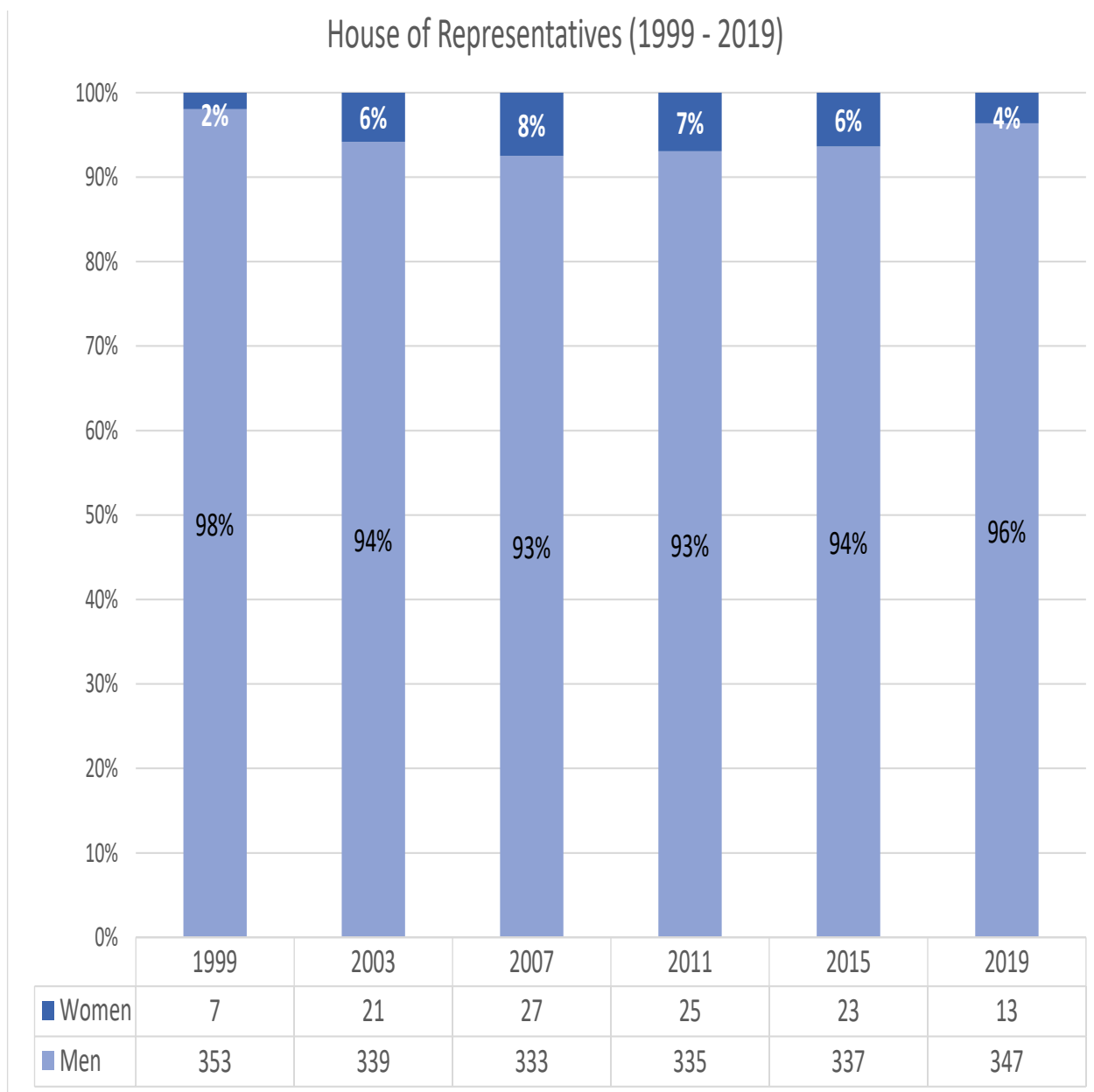
Figure 3b – Historical trends in women's inclusion in elective and appointive posts, 1999-2019

SHA Committee Chairpersons (1999-2015)

	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015
■ Women	18	32	52	52	33
■ Men	811	849	835	835	607

(Chart showing percentages: Women — 2% (1999), 4% (2003), 6% (2007), 6% (2011), 5% (2015); Men — 98% (1999), 96% (2003), 94% (2007), 94% (2011), 95% (2015))

State House of Assembly (SHA)(1999-2015)

	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015
Women	24	40	57	68	37
Men	966	950	933	922	659

Local Government Area Chairpersons (1999-2015)

	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015
Women	13	15	27	27	33
Men	697	759	713	713	607

Councilor (1999-2015)

	1999	2003	2007	N/A	2015
Women	69	267	235		603
Men	6299	6101	6133		9605

Percentages shown: 1999 — Women 1%, Men 99%; 2003 — Women 4%, Men 96%; 2007 — Women 4%, Men 96%; 2015 — Women 6%, Men 94%.

Senate (1999 -2019)

	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Women	3	4	9	7	8	7
Men	106	105	100	102	101	102

Percentages shown: 1999 — Women 3%, Men 97%; 2003 — Women 4%, Men 96%; 2007 — Women 8%, Men 92%; 2011 — Women 6%, Men 94%; 2015 — Women 7%, Men 93%; 2019 — Women 6%, Men 94%.

Presidents (1999-2019)

Women
0%

Men
100%

■ Women ■ Men

President	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Women	0	0	0	0	0	0
Men	1	1	1	1	1	1

Governors (1999-2019)

Women
0%

Men
100%

■ Women ■ Men
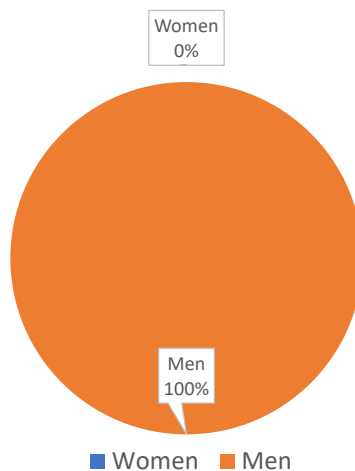
Governor	1999	2003	2007	2011	2015	2019
Women	0	0	0	0	0	0
Men	36	36	36	36	36	36

Data Sources: INEC, 2019, and National Centre for Women Development (1999-2005)

Table 2: Ranking of African countries on percentage of women in parliament

Rank	Country	Lower Chamber or Unicameral Legislature	Upper Chamber	Average or Total %
1st	Rwanda	0.613	0.346	47.95%
2nd	Senegal	0.442	-	44.20%
3rd	Mozambique	0.424	-	42.40%
4th	South Africa	0.462	0.37	41.60%
5th	Burundi	0.382	0.41	39.60%
6th	Cabo Verde	0.389	-	38.90%
7th	Zimbabwe	0.306	0.442	37.40%
8th	Tanzania	0.369	-	36.90%
9th	Ethiopia	0.415	0.306	36.05%
10th	Uganda	0.338	-	33.80%
11th	Angola	0.336	-	33.60%
12th	South Sudan	0.324	0.321	32.25%
13th	Chad	0.312	-	31.20%
14th	Sudan	0.305	-	30.50%
15th	Cameroon	0.339	0.26	29.95%
16th	Guinea	0.296	-	29.60%
17th	Namibia	0.442	0.143	29.25%
18th	Kenya	0.234	0.318	27.60%
19th	Eswatini	0.135	0.4	26.75%
20th	Mali	0.265	-	26.50%
21st	Tunisia	0.263	-	26.30%
22nd	Djibouti	0.262	-	26.20%
23rd	Niger	0.259	-	25.90%
24th	Seychelles	0.229	-	22.90%
25th	Malawi	0.229	-	22.90%
26th	Somalia	0.197	0.259	22.80%
27th	Lesotho	0.244	0.212	22.80%
28th	Eritrea	0.22	-	22.00%
29th	Egypt	0.277	0.133	20.50%
30th	Mauritania	0.203	-	20.30%
31st	Mauritius	0.2	-	20.00%
32nd	Burkina Faso	0.197	-	19.70%
33rd	Gabon	0.154	0.239	19.65%
34th	Equatorial Guinea	0.22	0.167	19.35%
35th	Togo	0.187	-	18.70%
36th	Democratic Republic of Congo	0.128	0.239	18.35%
37th	Morocco	0.241	0.125	18.30%
38th	Cote d'Ivoire	0.142	0.192	16.70%
39th	Republic of Congo	0.146	0.188	16.70%
40th	Comoros	0.167	-	16.70%
41st	Libya	0.165	-	16.50%
42nd	Zambia	0.151	-	15.10%
43rd	Madagascar	0.185	0.111	14.80%
44th	Ghana	0.146	-	14.60%
45th	Sao Tome and Principe	0.146	-	14.60%
46th	Guinea-Bissau	0.137	-	13.70%
47th	Central African Republic (CAR)	0.129		12.90%
48th	Sierra Leone	0.123		12.30%
49th	Botswana	0.111		11.10%
50th	Liberia	0.11		11.00%
51st	The Gambia	0.086		8.60%
52nd	Benin	0.074		7.40%
53rd	Algeria	0.081	0.043	6.20%
54th	Nigeria	0.036	0.073	5.45%

Source: Invictus Africa

Table 3: Ranking of Nigerian states according to percentage of women in parliament

Rank	State	Total No. of Seats	No. of Women	No. of Men	% of Women Representatio
1st	Cross-River	25	5	20	20.00%
2nd	Enugu	24	4	20	16.70%
3rd	Ekiti	26	4	22	15.40%
4th	Ogun	26	4	22	15.40%
5th	Bayelsa	24	3	21	12.50%
6th	Ebonyi	24	3	21	12.50%
7th	Akwa Ibom	26	2	24	7.70%
8th	Osun	26	2	24	7.70%
9th	Lagos	40	3	37	7.50%
10th	Imo	27	2	25	7.40%
11th	Delta	28	2	26	7.10%
12th	Benue	30	2	28	6.70%
13th	Gombe	24	1	23	4.20%
14th	Plateau	24	1	23	4.20%
15th	Adamawa	25	1	24	4.00%
16th	Ondo	26	1	25	3.80%
17th	Niger	27	1	26	3.70%
18th	Anambra	30	1	29	3.30%
19th	Oyo	32	1	31	3.10%
20th	Rivers	32	1	31	3.10%
21st	Kaduna	34	1	33	2.90%
22nd	Abia	24	0	24	0.00%
23rd	Bauchi	31	0	31	0.00%
24th	Borno	28	0	28	0.00%
25th	Edo	24	0	24	0.00%
26th	Jigawa	30	0	30	0.00%
27th	Kano	40	0	40	0.00%
28th	Katsina	34	0	34	0.00%
29th	Kebbi	24	0	24	0.00%
30th	Kogi	25	0	25	0.00%
31st	Kwara	24	0	24	0.00%
32nd	Nasarawa	24	0	24	0.00%
33rd	Sokoto	30	0	30	0.00%
34th	Taraba	24	0	24	0.00%
35th	Yobe	24	0	24	0.00%
36th	Zamfara	24	0	24	0.00%

Source: Invictus Africa

Kwara, Nasarawa, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara. This means that the states without female representation in their state assemblies are: six out of the seven states in the North West, three out of the six states in the North Central, three out of the six states in the North East, one out of the six states in the South South and one out of the five states in the South East.

The first quarter edition of the Nigerian Gender Statistical Bulletin (2022) shows the following gender gaps:

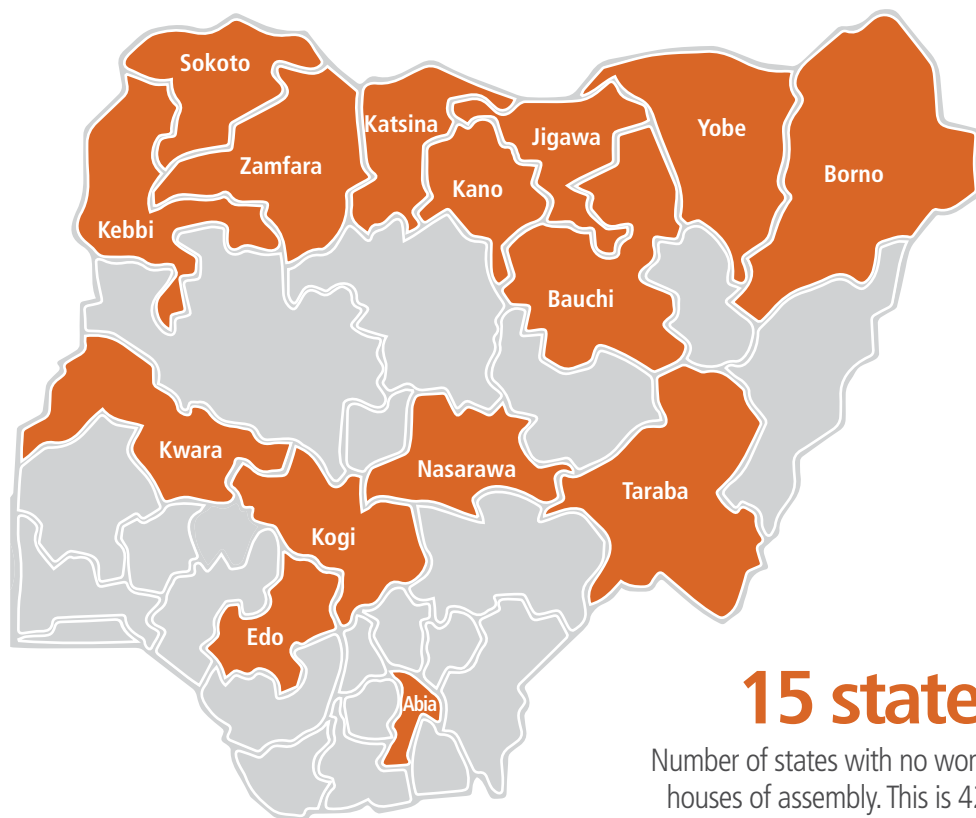## Map of states with zero female legislators in states assemblies

15 states

Number of states with no women in their houses of assembly. This is 42% of the states in Nigeria.

Table 4 – Government's Inclusiveness Outlook (2019-2022)[85, 86.]

Parameter measured	Female	Male
Aspirants for presidential race in 2019	8.22%	91.78%
Aspirants for vice presidential race in 2019	29.73%	70.27%
Aspirants for governorship in the 2019 election	7.52%	92.48%
Aspirants for deputy governorship in the 2019 election	25.57%	74.43%
Aspirants for senatorial positions in the 2019 election	12.43%	87.57%
Ministerial appointments from 1999 to 2021 (Percentage)	13.73%	86.27%
Secretaries to the Government of the Federation (Percentage)	0%	100%

3.3.1 Has Women's Participation in Politics Improved?

This euphemism sums up the state of women's participation in Nigeria toda: we are not where we used to be, but we are not where we ought to be. Though representation in appoitive and elective offices has declined, the level of women involvement / participation has improved.

The Beijing +25 report developed by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development in May 2019 suggests that women's participation in politics and elections has improved. In addition, several development partners, including Oxfam, have reported that in the communities where they work, women's agency has improved tremendously. In some communities in Enugu State, women have been included in traditional cabinets which hitherto were all male. In a Gender Audit of the Humanitarian response in the North East, a female community head was mentioned, a drastic shift from the norm.[87] It is surprising that better participation has not translated to better representation of women in elective and appointive posts in Nigeria. The political terrain is still highly polarised in favour of rich and powerful men backed by godfathers.

There are indeed increasing windows of opportunity for better inclusion with the promulgation, by more states, of the following: Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) (VAPP) Act, the Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, and the Not-Too-Young To Run Act, as well as the progressive domestication of the Child Rights Act (CRA) and the Administration of Criminal Justice Act (ACJA).

A greater involvement of men and boys in the fight for gender equality has also been seen. The Network of Men Against Violence, the HeForShe Campaign led by UN Women, the Side-by-Side Movement championed by Christian Aid and several other initiatives are working to deconstruct negative masculinity.

Affirmative action in the manifestoes and practices of political parties is beginning to gain ground. Both the APC and PDP, the two largest players in the current republic, have inclusive clauses in their manifestos. The APC manifesto states, 'No society can progress where half of its population suffers systemic discrimination'. It also mentions 'merit-based affirmative action policies in employment'. The PDP manifesto states that the party 'will ensure equitable representation of women in all aspects of national life including party organs by using affirmative action to ensure that at least 30% of the workforce are women'.

The Independent National Electoral Commission has demonstrated political commitment to women's inclusion in the political process and now has an updated Gender Policy (2021-2026). Gender Desk Officers are in place in the 36 states and they have been trained on the provisions and aspirations of the gender policy. Also, a Gender and Inclusivity Department (GID) was established in INEC in 2021. Its goal, according to the commission's Chairperson, is to ensure adherence to electoral equity, fairness and inclusion, especially the universally recognised rights of disadvantaged groups, including women.

Some efforts have been made to facilitate women's participation in politics and governance, including 'the establishment of Women Political Empowerment Office and Nigeria Women Trust Fund to support women political aspirants, and the Women Lobby Group; collection of evidence on women's participation by National Centre for Women Development and National Bureau of Statistics'.[88]

---

[85] National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) – Gender Statistical Quarterly Bulletin (Q1 2022)

[86] Premium Times (2022) In Nigeria, women don't have equal access to decision making – NBS. Available at:https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/527131-in-nigeria-women-don't-have-equal-access-to-decision-making-nbs.html

[87] Igbuzor, O. &Otive-Igbuzor, E. (2020). Context Analysis, consultancy report submitted to OXFAM, Abuja.

3.3.2 Political Participation: Why are Women Excluded?

3.3.2.1 Patriarchy

Gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls are well-known causes of social exclusion in Nigeria. As in most parts of Africa, patriarchy as a system of male domination defines women's relationships, inclusion, participation, representation, and access in all facets of development in the country. Patriarchy subsists and is sustained by men's control over women, labour and power. Discriminatory social norms and institutions construct, enforce and promote gender inequality. Patriarchy favours male superiority and celebrates women's subservience. Shy, docile, economically dependent and submissive/obedient women are projected as the ideal. Patriarchal systems equate women's achievement, assertiveness and quest for leadership to arrogance or stubbornness. Feminism is perceived as a plot to overthrow 'God-ordained' and nature-favoured male superiority. Institutions, families, schools, workplaces, health systems and the media promote, perpetuate and sustain patriarchy. This mindset influences men's perception of women as unfit for leadership and favours male inclusion and enables female exclusion. Through socialisation, the domestic domain becomes more and more perceived as the legitimate space for women while public space is associated with men.

Political leadership is gendered and though efforts have been made over the years to promote women's inclusion, men still dominate the political space. Women's exclusion manifests in their historic exclusion evident in the gender disparities in social indicators: education, poverty, health, employment and ownership of productive resources.

3.3.2.2 Political Corruption, Money Politics and Gendered Clientelism

Political corruption and 'money politics' continue to preclude women from breaking fully into the political system. One of the main political parties in Nigeria waived nomination fees for women, an affirmative action no doubt, albeit one which pales against the huge cost of electioneering. Merkle explains that "access to political office also requires access to informal, and frequently male-dominated, networks that exclude women".[89] What has been termed 'gendered clientelism'[90] excludes women and other marginalised groups from these networks of power and privilege which are often corrupt.

INSTITUTIONS, FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, WORKPLACES, HEALTH SYSTEMS AND THE MEDIA PROMOTE, PERPETUATE AND SUSTAIN PATRIARCHY

---

[88] OECD (2019). "Nigeria." https://www.oecd.org/countries/nigeria/

3.3.2.3 Political Violence Perpetrated against Women

Women experience violence when seeking political office. Political Violence Targeting Women (PVTW) is becoming more and more recognised globally. It is understood as 'the use of physical force by a group with a political purpose or motivation' in the public sphere in which women and girls are the only, the majority, or the primary targets.[91] They include violent attacks (non-sexual), sexual violence, abductions and forced disappearances (examples abound, including the kidnapping of the Chibok and Dapchi schoolgirls by Boko Haram in Nigeria in 2014 and 2018 respectively. Many girls are yet to return[92]). Consultations with female aspirants revealed gory stories of being threatened by political militias/thugs, being sexually harassed/sextorted, and being the subject of smear campaigns, among others. In many instances, the party 'owners' or power brokers asked women outright or threatened them to step down for men who are loyal to them.

3.3.2.4 Women's Inadequate Experience in the Politicking Game

Women in southern Nigeria were granted the right to vote in the 1950s, but universal suffrage only came to be in 1979. Women and men do not have a level-playing field in the political sphere, including in the knowledge and gimmicks of politics. Women are often outplayed and side-lined. The need for capacity building for women cannot be over-emphasised.

3.3.2.5 Other Barriers

Several party practices exclude or marginalise women. Political meetings held late at night systematically exclude women as they pose security threats and overlap with the time that they fulfil their assigned care roles.

3.4 Towards Narrowing the Gender Gap and Facilitating Greater Inclusion of Women

The gaping and historical inequality in women's representation in elective and appointive posts at national and sub-national levels calls for pragmatic action to enforce existing provisions for equality and inclusion. It also demands that new and radical legislations with potential to close the existing gaps be enacted. From the list of candidates for the 2023 elections, it is obvious that there would not be a significant change in women's representation in elective posts. Targeted advocacy and lobbying of persons that wield visible and hidden power within the polity, could lead to increase in the number of women that make the list of appointees. As many stakeholders opine, the fruit of any change would fully mature by the 2027 elections.

---

[89] Merkle, O. (2022) Anti-Corruption and Gender: The Role of Women's Political Participation. WFD Anti-Corruption and Integrity Series, 4. Available at: https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Anti-corruption%20and%20genderV2.pdf

[90] Wenyan, T. and Xiajuan, G. (2021) 'Gendered Clientelism and Corruption: Are Women Less Corrupt than Men in China?',International Feminist Journal of Politics. Available at:https://www.ifjpglobal.org/blog/2021/7/6/4un921o8k2o5dm2q4bw0wjoej619vt

[91] Roudabeh, K. and Olsson, L. (2019) How Does Political Violence Target Women? GPS Policy Brief 02/2019. Available at: https://www.prio.org/download/publicationfile/1887/Kishi,%20Roudabeh%20and%20Louise%20Olsson%20-%20How%20Does%20Political%20Violence%20Target%20Women,%20GPS%20Policy%20Brief%202-2019%20(1).pdf

[92] Ibid

3.4.1 Women's Inclusion: Political Parties Hold the Ace

Political parties wield absolute power to decide who emerges as candidate. Persons 'loyal' to the 'king makers', often a male collusive network, are favoured. Loyal persons include those trusted to remain beholden to powerful kingmakers and those related to them, including their wives and children. The primaries preceding the 2023 elections have seen many children and wives of former and current governors or senators emerge as candidates. Nigeria is a neo-patrimonial state and nepotism and cronyism are seen as normal, 'a way of life'.[93] Lessons from other countries indicate that political parties can be compelled to nominate and support qualified female candidates if the Electoral Act is amended with gender equality and inclusion clauses.

3.4.2 Options for Greater Inclusion of Women

Several countries have achieved greater inclusion of women in elective and appointive positions in various ways. Some options are presented below:

Option 1 – A Change of Electoral System – Majoritarian versus Proportional Representation Systems

Nigeria currently practices a majoritarian system based on single-member constituencies (a party nominates one candidate for each post and the winner takes all). In addition to political corruption and collusive networks that exclude women, experts opine that some political power brokers are concerned that nominating a woman might attract feelings of resentment from the electorate, many of whom are governed by a patriarchal mindset. In Proportional Representation Systems, each party presents a list with many candidates in each constituency. In PR-systems, a constituency typically has several seats to fill. The basic principles underlying proportional representation elections are that all voters deserve representation and that all political groups in society deserve to be represented in our legislatures in proportion to their strength in the electorate. Political party members and civil society could position women, youth, PWDs as constituencies that deserve to be represented in a proportional representation system.

Option 2 – Introduce Gender Quotas into the Current Majoritarian Electoral System

Electoral quotas are acknowledged as vehicles to correct the historical marginalisation of women and to fast-track inclusion. Three types of gender quotas are used: reserved seats, legal candidate quotas (constitutional and/or legislative), and political party quotas (voluntary).

Reserved Seats usually enshrined in the Constitution and/or electoral laws, serve to regulate the share by sex (or other parameter) of persons elected and guarantees a basic minimum for women, men, ethnic minorities, youth, persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups. Several countries across the world have adopted this method, including Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania, among others.

While reserved seats regulate the number of women elected, the other two forms set a minimum for the share of women (or other groups) on the candidate lists, either as a legal requirement in the case of legal candidate quotas or a measure written into the statutes of individual political parties (political party quotas).[94]

Legal Candidate Quotas require that political parties nominate a certain minimum of women or a minimum-maximum for both sexes. Defaulting parties are sanctioned or their lists rejected. Again, the bills submitted for constitutional amendment in 2022 in Nigeria included the Affirmative Action Bill to specifically amend Section 223 to ensure women occupy at least 35% in political party administration and appointive positions (in line with provisions of the previous National Gender Policy); and the Bill on Ministerial or Commissioner Nomination is to, among others, amend sections 147 and 192 so that at least 35% of the nominees are women. The new National Gender Policy provides for 50:50 representation.

---

[93] Zakari, M.B. and Button, M. (2021) 'Confronting the Monolith: Insider Accounts of the Nature and Techniques of Corruption in Nigeria', Journal of White Collar and Corporate Crime, 3(2), pp. 100–108. Available at https://doi.org/10.1177/2631309X211004567

Voluntary Political Party Quotas - In Scandinavian countries such as Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, political parties introduced gender quotas in the 1970s. These quotas are self-imposed and temporary measures adopted by political parties to redress many years of marginalisation and may be abandoned once a level-playing field is achieved. Danish left-wing parties, for example, cancelled the quota system in the mid-1990s. A political representation of about 40% women is now common there, and parties need no extra stimulus to add more women to their ranks.[95] Over 30 countries across the world currently use voluntary quotas to address gender inequality in representation including Norway, Sweden, Germany, ANC in South Africa, among others.

3.4.3 Embrace Lessons from Other Climes

Kenya

Kenya's legal framework provides for gender equality. Art. 27(3) of the constitution categorically states that women and men have the right to equal treatment, including the right to equal opportunities in political, economic, cultural and social spheres. Art. 27(6) states that to give full effect to the realisation of the rights guaranteed under this Article, the State shall take legislative and other measures, including affirmative action programmes and policies designed to redress any disadvantage suffered by individuals or groups because of past discrimination. Also, Art. 27(8) states that in addition to the measures contemplated in clause (6), the State shall take legislative and other measures to implement the principle that not more than two-thirds of the members of elective or appointive bodies shall be of the same gender. A party is not eligible for public funding if more than two-thirds of its of its elected officials are of one gender (Article 25(2) (b) Political Parties Act, 2011).[96]

The Kenyan National Assembly reserves 47 seats for women and the Senate reserves 16 for women. Also, two more Senate seats are reserved for women representing youth and persons with disabilities.[97]

The gender equality and inclusion provisions of the Constitution are binding and reflect in the composition of electoral bodies. Of the seven members of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, two are women; the head of the Commission is a man and the deputy is a woman. As observed by Ojo, three out of the four presidential candidates in the recent elections chose female running mates.[98] Also on inclusion, Kenyans in the diaspora (selected countries with concentration of Kenyans) are legally allowed to vote.

Rwanda

Rwanda clearly stands out as a trailblazer globally with regards to gender equality and inclusion. As of 1st February 2019, Rwanda had the highest percentage of women parliamentarians in the world at 61.3%. In 2018, Rwanda became the second African country to attain gender parity with at least 50% of cabinet members being women.

---

[94] Global Database of Quotas for Women, https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas

[95] Hoofar, H. &Tajali, M. (2011). Electoral Politics - Making Quotas Work for Women (final)_0.pdf, https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Electoral%20Politics%20-%20 Making%20Quotas%20Work%20for%20Women%20%28final%29_0.pdf

[96] IPU Expert report.

[97] Ojo, J. (2022). 'Lessons for Nigeria from Kenya 2022 general election', Punch. Available at: https://punchng.com/lessons-for-nigeria-from-kenya-2022-general-election/

[98] Ibid

Rwanda addresses equality of men and women in political life in various laws. The Constitution stipulates that all Rwandans have the right of equal access to public service in accordance with their competence and abilities. In addition, the Constitution provides for affirmative action aimed at reversing the historical discrimination against women by providing, as one of the fundamental principles of the Constitution, that women occupy at least thirty percent (30%) of positions in decision-making organs. 'The constitutional principle of equal participation in political life is also reflected in various laws. The Law on Political Organisations requires all political organisations to constantly reflect gender equality and complementarity, whether in the recruitment of members, leadership, and operations and activities.'[99]

Senegal

Senegal currently leads the way in West Africa with regards to women's inclusion in parliaments. The country with a unicameral parliament has achieved 43% (71 out of 165 seats in the Assemblée nationale) female inclusion through 'legislated quotas' for the single/lower house and at the sub-national level. The July 2022 elections was the third parliamentary election since adopting the gender parity law in 2010, which has led to a considerable increase in the proportion of women in parliament.[100]

Uganda

Women in Uganda have had the opportunity to participate in politics and governance through the policy of affirmative action and the principle of gender balance, both enshrined in the National Constitution of 1995. The Local Governments Act of 1997 provides for local governance with objectives of establishing a democratic, political and 'gender sensitive' administrative set up.[101] Article 78 of the Ugandan Constitution on Composition of Parliament expressly states that: *Parliament shall consist of (a) members directly elected to represent constituencies; (b) one woman representative for every district (c) such numbers of representatives of the army, youth, workers, persons with disabilities and other groups as Parliament may determine.* In addition, Section 180 (b) ensures that one third of the members of each local government council be women.[102] Women's inclusion has increased to 32.8% in parliament, 30% in local government councils and 20 to 30% in cabinet, as well as judicial and constitutional bodies. The composition of district councils according to the Local Government Act, 1997, includes women councilors directly forming one third of the council.

[99] Rwanda (2015). Rwanda's Constitution of 2003 with Amendments through 2015, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Rwanda_2015.
pdf?lang=en

[100] Ngom, S., Ba, S., Kioko, C. and Egelhof, N. (2022). Gender agenda: The big conundrum in the general elections in Kenya and Senegal, Available at:
https://www.boell.de/en/2022/07/18/gender-agenda-big-conundrum-general-elections-kenya-and-senegal

[101] OHCHCR (n.d.). JOINT SUBMISSION BY THE WOMEN RIGHTS CLUSTER FORUGANDA TO BE CONSIDERED AT THE TWELVETH SESSION OF THE HRC BY
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS IN UGANDA,

[102] ILO, (n.d.). CONSTITUTION OF UGANDA, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/lib-docs/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/session12/UG/JS7-
JointSubmission7-eng.pdfhttps://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/44038/90491/F206329993/UGA44038.pdf

3.4.4 Pass the Gender Equality Bills

This report endorses as recommendations, all of the five Gender Equality Bills submitted by the women's movement to the Constitution Review Committee in 2022. They are:

i.   The Bill on citizenship which seeks to amend Section 26 to grant citizenship to foreign husbands of Nigerian women as is currently guaranteed in Section 26(2)(a) of the 1999 Constitution for foreign wives of Nigerian men;

ii. The Indigeneity Bill is to among other issues, address sections 31 and 318(1) of the 1999 Constitution to allow women to claim their husbands' state of origin after at least five years of marriage;

iii. The Affirmative Action Bill is to specifically amend Section 223 of the 1999 Constitution to ensure women occupy at least 35% in political party administration and appointive positions;

iv. The Bill on Ministerial or Commissioner Nomination is to among others, amend Sections 147 and 192 of the 1999 Constitution so that at least 35% of the nominees are women;

v.   The Reserved Seats Bill is to among others, amend sections 48, 49 and 91 of the 1999 Constitution to create additional 37, 74, and 108 seats for women at the Senate, House of Representatives, and the State Assemblies respectively.

In addition to the above, we recommend:

vi. Pragmatic actions to enforce existing provisions is recommended. One of such actions is developing costed workplans for selected policies and embarking on budget advocacy for resource allocation to fund implementation. As a good practice, the Legislative Advocacy Coalition on Violence Against Women (LACVAW) has developed a costed workplan for the implementation of the Violence Against Women Bill.

vii. The budget provides unit costs for budget items under each thematic area and can be replicated approximately in other locations.

A transformation of the legislative arm to a gender-responsive/transformative institution is thus recommended,

BOX 3 - ABOUT THE GENDER TECHNICAL UNIT IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN NIGERIA

The Gender Technical Unit is a research and documentation centre which focuses on supporting the Legislature by providing capacity building, research on gender laws based on best practices around the world and building links between the legislature and civil society in Nigeria. The unit reportedly partners with 15 committees in the House of Representatives and 10 in the Nigerian Senate including Committees on Women Affairs, Women in Parliament, Human Rights, Judiciary, Health and Education.

The vantage position of the unit with its offices in the House of Representatives Building and as a key partner of the House Committee on Women Affairs, enables it to have access to all the relevant offices and officers of NASS while maintaining its link with civil society. Made up of 15 CSO organisations (including WRAPA, WACOL, FIDA and CISLAC) which comprises its steering committee, GTU is currently under the management of WRAPA. Members and CSOs around the country, are sent regular updates about gender-related legislation being presented or reviewed, public hearings and committee engagements of relevance.

The unit has partnered with LACVAW to lobby and advocate for the passage of the VAPP Bill which was passed into law in 2015, the Right to Food bill a constitutional amendment bill with the Food and Infrastructure Foundation supported by Oxfam and currently with NCAA to push for the passage of the Gender and Equal Opportunities (GEO Bill) 2020. The bill has been presented concurrently in the House and Senate. A very important bill which would ensure the domestication of the CEDAW; it does not enjoy the support of legislators due to its context of promotion of certain statutes perceived to conflict with cultural and religious beliefs.

The GTU is located on the ground floor of the new House of Representatives Building and is made up of three room offices which includes a 20-seater conference room.

as the existing laws are inadequate to foster equality. There is need for new and radical legislations with better potential to close the existing gaps. We have recommended legislated quotas and reserved seats above. In addition, a shift towards gender transformative legislations as a matter of sustained legislative commitment is recommended. Gender-transformative laws address the root causes of inequality and seek to change existing social and cultural constructs of inequality.

Transforming the legislative branch into a gender-responsive institution requires the concerted effort of its members. A crucial step in the institutionalization of gender – responsive legislation is the establishment of dedicated infrastructure to ensure that bills and laws are read and analysed through a gender lens, including tapping on the expertise of relevant civil society groups to expunge discriminatory clauses and fine-tune them with the right content and language. Some GRL infrastructure are: Parliamentary committees, dedicated Gender Equality Committees, Women's parliamentary caucuses – across party lines, Gender Technical Units. A Gender Technical Unit exists at the National Assembly (See Box 3) and provides support for legislators. There is the need to increase its visibility to create demand among legislators and committees.
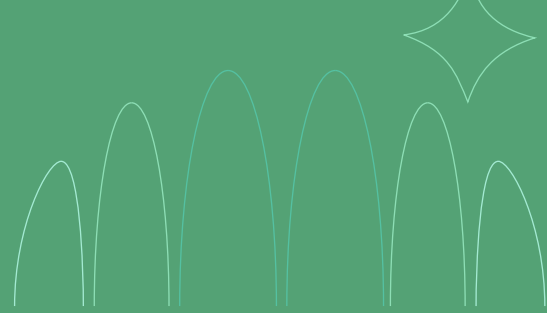
Gender-responsive and inclusive budgeting represents a practical step in demonstrating commitment to gender equality and social inclusion. Budget and expenditure tracking are the forte of some CSOs. For example, BudgIT conducts budget analysis and develops infographs to highlight distribution. Budget and expenditure analyses can be done along gender and diversity lines to demonstrate inclusion/exclusion and further indicate those who public policy benefits. There are indications that the Federal Ministry of Finance is collaborating with the National Assembly and UN Women to mainstream gender into the budget cycle in Nigeria.

3.4.5 Activate the architecture for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

The National Gender Policy provides for the establishment of a Gender Management System (GMS) with four reinforcing components. A Gender Management System is an integrated web of structures, mechanisms and procedures put in place within a given institutional framework for the purpose of guiding, managing and monitoring the process of gender integration into mainstream culture, policies and programmes in order to bring about gender equality and equity within the context of sustainable development. Its four components include:

- **The Enabling Environment**– laws, policies, that promote gender equality.

- **GMS Structures** – These are structures required to coordinate and drive the functioning of the Gender Management System. The core elements include a Lead Agency (e.g. the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs), a Gender Management Team (GMT), Gender Focal Points (GFP)/Inter - Ministerial Committees, Parliamentary Gender Caucus and Gender Equality Commission/Council.

- **GMS Mechanisms** – GMS mechanisms have four core elements – gender analysis, gender training, management information systems and performance appraisal systems.

- **GMS Processes** – GMS processes entail setting up GMS Structures and Mechanisms, development and implementation of a national gender action plan and mainstreaming gender in the national/sectoral and organisational plans.

Elements of these exist. Linkages need to be established or reinforced with a clear activation process to ensure effectiveness. A GMS ensures that all stakeholders promoting gender equality are linked and are not working in silos. For this model to achieve desired results, we recommend a lead agency domiciled in the Presidency, endowed with authority to influence resource allocation.

4 Politics of Generational Representation

4.0 Politics of Generational Representation

The African Youth Charter defines youth as "any individual between the ages of 15 and 35, and seeks to resolve long-standing debates about defining youth within the African context and based on Africa's development realities." In Nigeria's 2019 National Youth Policy, youth is defined as young women and men between the ages of 15 to 29[104] . This revised classification of youth deviates from age definition in previous versions of the policy which fixed the youth age bracket as 18 to 35. What is not in dispute is that Nigeria has a very youthful population: the median age is 18.1 years. 74.22% of the population are under 35, distributed as follows: 28.76% below age 15 and 45.46% in the age range 15 -35. [105]

However, youth representation in Nigeria at all levels of government stands at 6%, according to a recent study by Yiaga Africa. The political landscape is thus dominated by the older generation. Some of the politicians that have been holding political offices since the 1970s have continued to dominate the political space. Following campaigns led by Yiaga Africa and other youth-focused organisations under the banner of Not-Too-Young-To-Run, the age qualification has been lowered to allow people in their late twenties or thirties to contest for elective offices. But concerns relating to the weak resource capacity of the youth to compete on equal footing remain.

The Not-Too-Young-To-Run Act amended the Constitution to reduce the age qualifications for members of House of Representatives and States' Houses of Assembly to 25 and President to 35.

Even with the amendment, this means that people in their 20s and 30s cannot become president as of right. Practically speaking, it is critical for young persons and indeed new entrants into politics to earn ample experience through politics at the local levels to improve their effectiveness at other levels. The cost of nomination forms for contesting to become a political party candidate is still prohibitive and beyond what most youths can afford. Though they may satisfy the age qualification, many young people would still be excluded for lack of resources to obtain nomination forms.

Youth inclusion in the economic, social and political life of the nation seems to have stalled. The constructive engagement of youths has given way largely to restiveness. Some youths have become a 'reserve army of the unemployed', manipulated and used by politicians and religious bigots to perpetuate violence, thuggery, banditry and terrorism.

74.22%
About 74.22% of the population are under 35

---

[103] AU (2009) African Youth Charter. Available at: https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7789-treaty-0033_-_african_youth_charter_e.pdf

[104] 2019 National Youth Policy.

[105] NBS (2020). National Youth Survey, 2020, Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development in Collaboration with the National Bureau of Statistics, file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/NYS%20Report%202020.pdf, accessed 15-10-2022

[106] Yiaga Africa is a youth-led NGO that campaigned for lowering the age for contesting elective positions to provide a space for the youth to participate in politics and decision making. The Not-Too-Young-To-Run campaign is one of the successes influenced by the youth to open up the political space and further promote the implementation of the National Youth Policy.

4.1 Causes of Youth Exclusion

A study by Social Development Direct (2009) showed structural factors underlying youth exclusion to include: unemployment and lack of opportunities; unequal and inappropriate education; poor governance and weak political participation; gender inequalities and socialisation; and a legacy of past violence.[107] The report mentioned, in addition, that 'proximate factors, such as recruitment, coercion and indoctrination, identity politics and ideology, leadership and organisational dynamics and trigger events' are important issues in youth exclusion. In politics, the same systems that exclude women also exclude youth. Ishola recognises 'the adverse effect of money politics' as 'a major official and unofficial barrier to youths' inclusion in politics.'[108]

Youth exclusion has fuelled distrust in democratic institutions and decision-making process. Young people are unwilling to engage in decision-making process due to lack of trust that public leaders and policy makers will respond to their needs. This distrust is further compounded by the reluctance to vest young people with leadership responsibilities due to inexperience.

Nigeria's population structure is potentially an economic asset.[109] Through ICT skills/innovation, creativity and civil society organising, youth energy and dynamism have been harnessed positively in recent times. Youths' voices have defied ageist exclusionary attitudes to make positive inputs into the development process in Nigeria. Some key examples serve to buttress this point:

- *Young Nigerians creating innovative solutions – E.g. the fintech company, Paystack, founded by Shola Akinlade and Ezra Olubi, which was acquired in 2020 by Stripe for $200 million.[110]*

- *Nigerian youths contributed to the building of a massive film industry, Nollywood, ranked as the third largest movie industry in the world.*

- *'The Nigerian art scene over the years has grown and expanded in grandeur within and outside the country. From painting to literature, arts as a collective system is not left out.'[111] Young Nigerians are taking the world by storm, telling our story of strength and resilience through excellent literary works. For example, the award-winning author, Chimamanda Adichie's creative work are ranked highly globally.*

- *Nigerian music is making waves across the globe. Burna Boy won a Grammy Award, the first home-based Nigerian to do so as an individual and the first African to sell out Madison Square Garden, New York. Other young music stars, including Asake, Wizkid, Davido, Kizz Daniels, among others are making enviable achievements, and getting recognition and awards internationally. Social media is abuzz with creative skits on Tik Tok, with jigs and twists to the rhythm.[112]*

- *Nigerian youths have continued to make a difference and distinguish themselves in sports. The recent record-setting exploits in athletics by Tobi Amusan is one example.*

---

[107] Hilker, L.M. and Fraser E.M. (2009)Youth Exclusion, Violence, Conflict and Fragile States. Report prepared for DFID by Social Development Direct. London.

[108] Ishola, E.B. (2021) "Not Too Young to Run' Law and Political Participation among Youths in Nigeria', Africa's Radicalisms and Conservatisms (Volume I: Politics, Poverty, Marginalization and Education). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004445079_005

[109] Akinyemi, A.I. and Mobolaji, J. (2022) Nigeria's large, youthful population could be an asset or a burden. Available at: https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/544043-nigerias-large-youthful-population-could-be-an-asset-or-a-burden.html

[110] Daniels, J. (2022) 'Why we should drive it home for the Nigerian youth'. Vanguard. Available at: https://www.vanguardngr.com/2022/01/why-we-should-drive-it-home-for-the-nigerian-youth/

[111] Adebowale, O., (2021). Celebrating the Exploits of Nigerian Women in Arts, https://guardian.ng/life/celebrating-the-exploits-of-nigerian-women-in-arts/

[112] The Sun, (05 June 2022). Kizz Daniel's Buga makes waves globally, https://www.sunnewsonline.com/kizz-daniels-buga-makes-waves-globally/

- *A socio-political protest tagged 'Occupy Nigeria' began on Monday, 2 January 2012 in response to the fuel subsidy removal by the Federal Government of President Goodluck Jonathan on Sunday, 1 January 2012. Protests took place across the country, including in the cities of Kano, Lagos, Abuja, Minna, and at the Nigerian High Commission in London.[113]*

- *In what started as a Twitter campaign to protest police brutality, a youth-led, #ENDSARS social movement was birthed in 2017. It culminated in a massive street protest calling for the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and a reform of the Police.*

- In addition, youth organising and campaign has resulted in the passage of the Not-Too-Young-To-Run Act.

According to a 2022 article by Yiaga Africa, 'the signing into law of the Not Too Young To Run legislation addressed a major impediment to youth participation in politics. It was a positive action towards closing the representation gap and represented a shift towards inclusiveness'.[114]

The 'Not too Young to Run' law started as a campaign in 2016 to amend the Nigerian Constitution to reduce the age limit for running for elective offices. It was eventually signed into law on May 29, 2018. The 2019 general elections presented an opportunity to test the usefulness of the new law. 'For the first time in Nigeria's post-independence history, young people between the ages of 25-30 were legally empowered to contest for seats in the House of Representatives and State Houses of Assembly.[115] Nigerian youths took advantage of the inclusive environment to demonstrate their credibility and commitment to nation-building.[116] Yiaga Africa and other stakeholders have noted that youths constituted the bulk of the electorate, accounting for 51.11% of a total voter population of 84,004,084 as at 2019. INEC's voters list showed that 46.3% of young registered voters turned out to vote in the 2019 Presidential and National Assembly elections. Yiaga Africa further highlights that 'the list of all candidates in 2019 indicated that the passage of the Not Too Young To Run law opened up the political space for increased youth participation in the House of Representatives and Presidential elections, because it reduced the age for the President from 40 to 35 years, House of Representatives from 30 to 25 years and State House of Assembly from 30 to 25 years.

Youths accounted for 23% of candidates that contested for seats in the National Assembly in the 2019 elections.

Figure 4 shows the geopolitical spread of youth candidacy in the House of Representatives in 2019
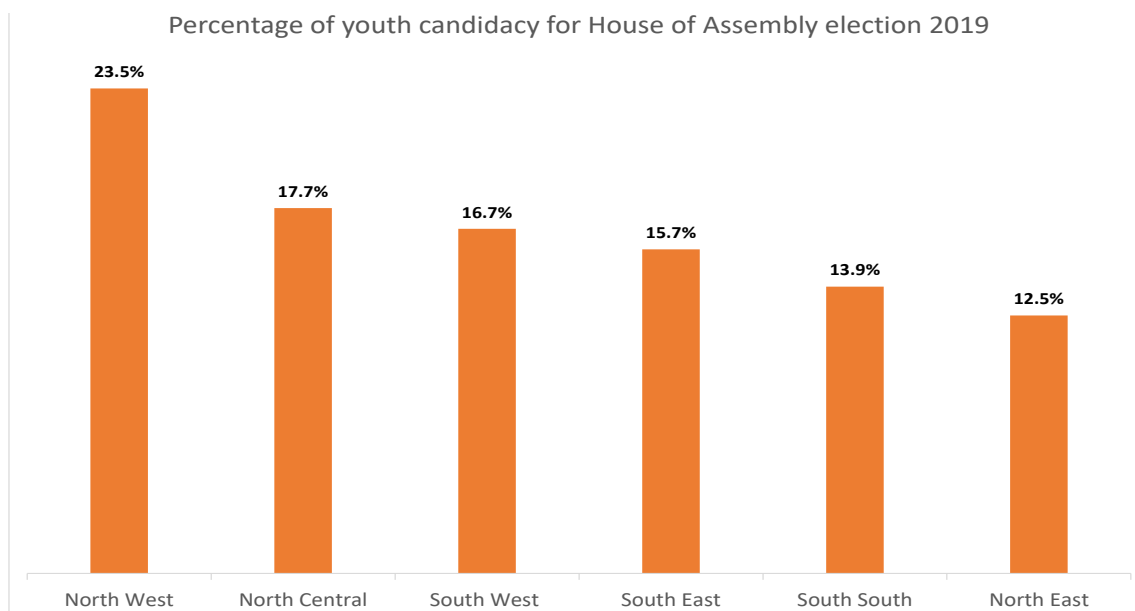

51.11%

51.11% of a total voter population of 84,004,084 as at 2019
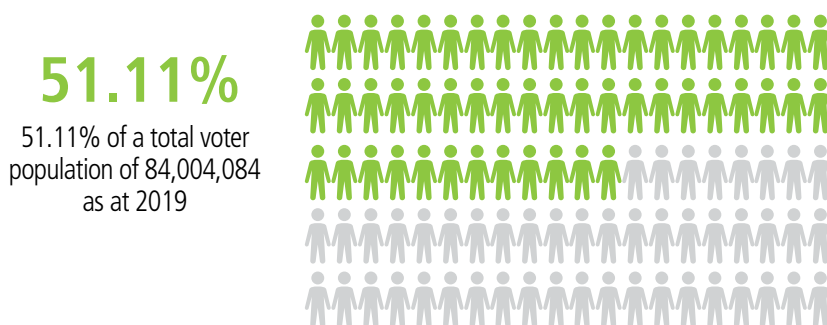
[113] Mark, M. (2012) 'Nigeria faces mass strike and protests over discontinued state fuel subsidy', The Guardian. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/jan/08/nigeria-fuel-strike-seun-kuti

[114] Yiaga Africa (2020) How Youth Fared in the 2019 General Elections. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342898118_How_Youth_Fared_in_the_2019_General_Elections
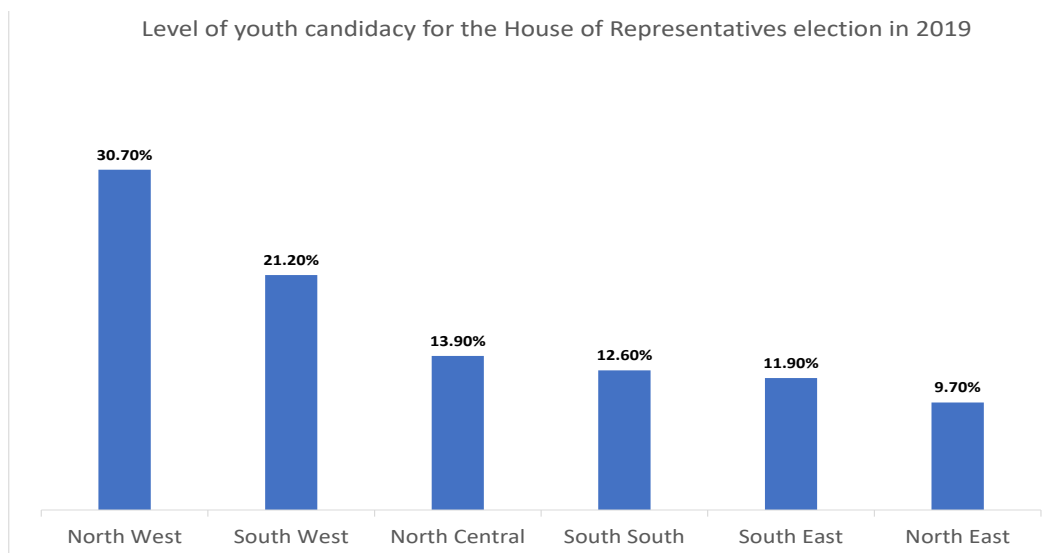
[115] YIAGA Africa (2020). Ibid

[116] Ibid

Figure 4: Level of Youth Candidacy for the House of Representatives Election in 2019

Percentage of youth candidacy for House of Assembly election 2019

Region	Percentage
North West	23.5%
North Central	17.7%
South West	16.7%
South East	15.7%
South South	13.9%
North East	12.5%

Source: Yiaga Africa

INEC's database shows that 5,914 people vied for 991 State House of Assembly seats across 36 states, across the 91 political parties. Figure 5 shows the geographical spread of youth candidates for state assembly elections.

Figure 5: Percentage of Youth Candidacy for House of Assembly Election

Level of youth candidacy for the House of Representatives election in 2019

Region	Percentage
North West	30.70%
South West	21.20%
North Central	13.90%
South South	12.60%
South East	11.90%
North East	9.70%

Source: Yiaga Africa

Yiaga Africa's analysis indicates that there were 22 direct beneficiaries of the Not Too Young To Run Act in the State Houses of Assembly between the ages of 25-30, persons who would not otherwise be qualified to run.[117] In addition to the above, 14% of the Presidential candidates in the 2019 elections were aged between 35-40 years.

[117] Ibid

In a recent report on youth candidacy for the 2023 election, Yiaga Africa reports a decline in youth candidacy from 34% in 2019 to 28.6% in 2023. Of the 15,336 candidates in the 2023 elections, 4,398 are youth candidates. Interesting, 43.2% these youth candidates are direct beneficiaries of the Not Too Young To Run Act (25 -30 years) while 11% are female. High cost of nomination forms, obscenely monetised primaries, and substitution of candidates, account for the decline in youth candidates. Although, political parties introduced discounts and waivers for young aspirants, it failed to translate into victory at the primaries. Recent data released by INEC reveal a high youth turnout for voter registration as 71% of newly registered voters are young people.[118] The high turnout indicates increased interest and enthusiasm of youth to participate in electoral process.

4.2   Towards Greater Inclusion for Youths

It is recommended that the Positive Youth Development Framework (PYD) is adopted as an organising framework for mutually reinforcing and intentional efforts by government and the rest of society to harness youth power and agency. The sheer number of Nigerian youths, their credibility and dynamism represent great potential for the country's growth and development. If undermined, that huge population could become a ticking timebomb. The PYD framework presents a holistic approach that builds skills, assets and competencies. In addition, it fosters healthy relationships, strengthens the environment and transforms systems.

Recognising that youth development spans various thematic areas, an entire government/system-wide approach that deploys joint activities performed by various ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) targeting various thematic areas simultaneously and at all tiers of government is recommended. The Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports as custodian could play a coordinating role that establishes linkages among relevant MDAs.

Some other specific recommendations include:

- **Promotive and Protective Environment for Youth Development:** The government of Nigeria, through the Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development and other stakeholders to ensure an enabling environment (laws, policies, processes and mechanisms) that is supportive of optimal development of youth and protective of their fundamental human rights, thereby ensuring inclusion, equal opportunities for development and freedom from abuse, violence, intimidation and discrimination. [119]

- **Invest in youth's human capital development.** This recommendation is multi-faceted and covers access to quality formal and informal education, capacity-building and skills development: The National Youth Policy breaks this down into various components but in the light of current realities, there is some emphasis on technical education resulting in the acquisition of marketable skills that provide access to a global market. Encouraging enrolment in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) courses by offering annual bursaries to eligible STEM undergraduates is quite important. The National Development Plan (2021-2025) has as a policy objective and target a reduction in the number of Nigerian youth within the 15-24 age bracket that are not in education, employment or training from a baseline of 20% to 10% by 2025. Attaining this target should be considered a priority.

- **Implement stringent measures to address youth unemployment** – The National Youth Policy proposes job creation at an average of 3.7 million jobs per year with priority on youth employment. Also, the National Development Plan commits to driving massive job creation across sectors including the sports sector.

---

[118] https://www.icirnigeria.org/pvc-youths-make-up-71-of-12-million-new-applicants-inec/

[119] This is a core commitment of the National Youth Policy.

-   **Strengthen the implementation of initiatives and policies targeted at youth development** such as the National Youth Investment Fund (NYIF). An estimated N60 billion is allocated to youth development in the current National Development Plan.

-   **A more deliberate implementation of the Not-Too-Young-to-Run Act**

The proponents of the Not Too Young To Run Act initially demanded a reduction of the age limits for President from 40 to 35, Senate and Governor from 35 to 30, and House of Representatives and State Houses of Assembly from 30 to 25. However, the proposals for Governor and Senate were rejected. This means that a person must still be at least 35 to contest in senatorial or governorship elections.

-   • **Further Reduction in Age Qualification** - We recommend that the age limits for these positions be reduced to 30. That would be a bold demonstration of the government's commitment to open every door of opportunities to the youth, including governance.

-   • **Capacity Building, Political Orientation and Mentorship of Youths** - Although the youth constitute the majority of Nigeria's population, ample political orientation is required to encourage them to utilise the power in their numbers and to improve the quality of their participation. Some NGOs are already devoting time and resources to this initiative. Further commitment and action by other critical players, including political parties are recommended. The inclusion of civic education in schools' curricula at all levels by the Federal Ministry of Education is recommended as well. Also, political parties and other stakeholders could facilitate mentoring of young, up-and-coming politicians. Particularly, the Nigerian Youth Parliament (NYP) as a Legislative and Developmental Training Institution has a strategic role to play in the political orientation and development of young people. Governments need to invest in the NYP, support its establishment in states and position it to become an electoral institute for young people.

-   **Allocate Voluntary Quotas to youths** - Political parties could support the effectiveness of the Act by allocating voluntary quotas to youths (female and male).

-   **Promote the Narrative of Youth Driving Change** - Profiling of young innovators and changemakers would encourage their peers. This is a role for the media, the National Orientation Agency and civil society organisations.

-   **Reduce the Influence of Money in Politics** - Young people are at a major disadvantage in politics compared to their older peers, because they are less likely to have access to the large sums of money required to run elections and/ or sponsorship. It is therefore recommended that steps be taken to strengthen laws and regulations on campaign finance limits, improve mechanisms to monitor compliance with these limits, and sanction defaulters. A review of the Electoral Act 2022 to reduce the limits on election expenses would go a long way as it would have an indirect effect on youth, giving them a better chance to contest on an equal footing with the older politicians.

-   **Ensure that the voices of youths are heard through various mechanisms including:**

• Civil Society Organisations to strengthen the capacity of youth groups/organisations to input into national discourse and decision-making processes;
• Creating safe spaces for youth (female and male) to build and practice the use of life skills;
• implementing the "5 for 5 demands" submitted during the nationwide #EndSARS protests in 2020. This is a commitment in the new National Development Policy (2021-2025)

4.3 Additional and Targeted Recommendations:

Federal, state and local governments should:

• Ensure adequate youth representation in appointive positions beyond media or youth-focused roles.

• Establish a fund to promote youth leadership development, civic engagement and political participation through fellowships, internships and mentorship initiatives.

• Promote civic education in schools.

• Integrate youth-responsive budgeting in the design and implementation of annual appropriation bills to improve budget outcomes for youth.

• Create a policy framework to ensure coordination, harmonization and monitoring of youth interventions aimed at addressing youth unemployment, and youth skills gaps.

National and state legislatures should

• Undertake legislative reforms to create a conducive legal environment for youth inclusion in decision-making. For instance, the constitution should be amended to make provisions for youth quotas, and reduction of the age criteria for all executive bodies.

• Further amend the Not Too Young To Run Act, to reduce the minimum age qualification for contesting for Governor and Senate from 35 to 30 in line with the original demands of the proponents of the bill.

• Enact legislations to impose strict limits on campaign expenses and reform the candidate nomination process in political parties.

• Improve the quality and frequency of legislative oversight on youth development at the national and state levels.
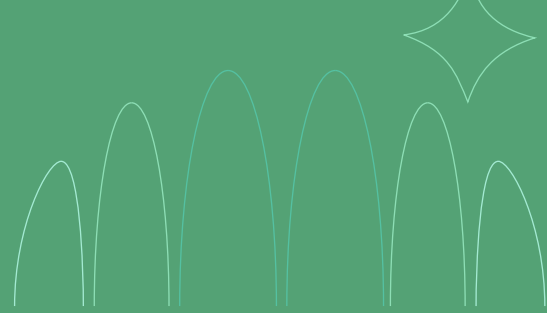
Political parties should:

• Political parties should allocate voluntary quotas to youths (female and male) to contest elections and hold non-youth related positions in the party's leadership and organs.

• Review internal policy documents and constitution to define youth in line with the National Youth Policy or African Youth Charter.

• Co-design and co-implement youth development programmes to improve leadership, political organising and mobilisation skills.

• Establish youth wings to facilitate youth membership of parties, articulation and advancement of youth interest in parties.

Youth organisations and civil society

• Promote youth inclusion though strategic advocacy with key institutions, capacity building and research to harness and analyse trends and data on youth inclusion

Media

• Review media coverage on youth to improve public perception on youth leadership in decision-making. Positive attributes of the youth demography and their contributions to nation building should be showcased.

5 Status of Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria

5.0 Status of Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria

Critical to the discussions on social inclusion is the subject of 'ableism', the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that typical abilities are superior. Ableism, according to Eisenmenger, is 'rooted in the assumption that physically challenged people require 'fixing' and defines people by their disability. Like racism and sexism, ableism classifies entire groups of people as 'less than,' and includes harmful stereotypes, misconceptions, and generalisations of people with disabilities.'[120]

Various data sources parade disparate statistics regarding the number of persons with disabilities in Nigeria. The World Health Organization (WHO), in 2018, estimated that about 29 million people in Nigeria were living with a disability. The WHO report also refers to data from the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) which reported that an estimated 7% of household members above the age of five (as well as 9% of those aged 60 or older) 'have some level of difficulty in at least one functional domain, seeing, hearing, communication, cognition, walking, or self-care; and 1% either have a lot of difficulty or cannot function at all in at least one domain'.[121]

Data on the demographic distribution of disability in Nigeria are scanty but there are indications that there are significantly more women with disabilities (15%) than men in the country and that due to the insurgency in the North-East, the region hosts the highest number of people with disabilities in the country.[122] One thing is certain, disability touches every demographic category – gender, age, race, sexual orientation, etc and PWDs face the following barriers: Physical or architectural, informational or communicational, technological, organisational and attitudinal.

9% OF THOSE AGED 60 OR OLDER) 'HAVE SOME LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY IN AT LEAST ONE FUNCTIONAL DOMAIN

ABOUT **29million** PEOPLE IN NIGERIA WERE LIVING WITH A DISABILITY, ACCORDING TO THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO), IN 2018

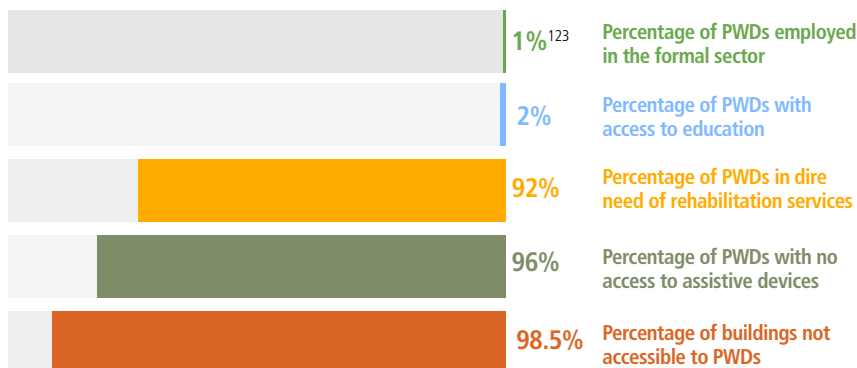**15%** MORE WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES THAN MEN IN THE COUNTRY

[120] Eisenmenger, A. (2019) Ableism 101: What it is, what it looks like, and what we can do to fix it. Available at:https://www.accessliving.org/newsroom/blog/ableism-101/

[121] World Bank (2020) Disability Inclusion in Nigeria: A Rapid Assessment. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at:https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34073

[122] Uduu, O. (2020) Over 25 Million Nigerians Excluded Due To Disability. Available at:https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/governance/over-25-million-nigerians-excluded-due-to-disability/

5.1 Causes of Exclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria

The National Development Plan, 2021-2025 recognises that PWDs are among the most excluded in Nigeria. The view is buttressed by several assessments. Data on disability inclusion is sparse but the following realities of exclusion are documented:

1%[123]   **Percentage of PWDs employed in the formal sector**

2%   **Percentage of PWDs with access to education**

92%   **Percentage of PWDs in dire need of rehabilitation services**

96%   **Percentage of PWDs with no access to assistive devices**

98.5%   **Percentage of buildings not accessible to PWDs**

Causes of exclusion of PWDs are multivariate. They include but are not limited to 'prejudice, social isolation, and discrimination' like elsewhere in the world. Discrimination is a consequence of a gross misunderstanding of the disability situation. Many cultures and religions perceive disability as a curse or repercussion for wrongdoing. This explains why in many communities, spiritual solutions are sought, a person with disability is isolated, sometimes hidden by their families out of 'shame'. Many PWDs, through their socialisation, learn to self-stigmatise and isolate for fear of negative reactions and exclusion by their community members. Children with disabilities are body-shamed by their peers, girls and women with disabilities are sexually violated and their complaints, when made, are often dismissed by law enforcement agents.[124]

Data is critical to inclusion. Scarcity of data renders PWDs largely invisible and this could translate directly to non-inclusion in planning and budgeting.[125] The existence of a Disability Act presents a window of opportunity for PWD inclusion. A National Commission for Persons with Disabilities exists but its operations have yet to translate to significant inclusion for PWDs. Poverty has both a cause and an effect on disability.

PWDs' lack of access to education, employment, appropriate technology/assistive devices all contribute to high poverty levels. Poverty, in turn fuels their exclusion, in a vicious cycle.

On political inclusion, PWDs are still largely excluded. It is gratifying though that some civil society organisations have begun to beam the searchlight on this issue. In the last few elections, the Gender Situation Room coordinated by the Nigeria Women Trust Fund (NWTF) and PLAC reported on the level and ease of PWDs participation on election days. In the current dispensation, the APC has reportedly elected seven PWDs into its National Working Committee.[126] But significantly, only three out of eighteen political parties' constitutions have provisions for inclusion of PWDs.

---

[123] The Disabilities Act (2018) requires by law that all public organisations reserve at least 5% of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

[124] Cedar Seed Foundation (2021) Qualitative Research Study on the Impact of Corruption on Persons with Disabilities in the Federal Capital Territory.

[125] World Health Organization (2011) World Report on Disability , Available at:https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/sensory-functions-disability-and-rehabilitation/world-report-on-disability

[126] Babalola, O. (2022) 'Convention: NGO hails APC for electing PWD leaders', Punch. Available at:https://punchng.com/convention-ngo-hails-apc-for-electing-pwd-leaders/

5.2 PWDs Inclusion Clauses in the Electoral Act

The Electoral Act, 2022 makes provisions for the inclusion of PWDs[127] :

- Section 9(1)(b) states that INEC's register of voters is to be disaggregated by disability status and type of disability.

- Section 54(2) mandates INEC to take reasonable steps to ensure PWDs – persons with disabilities, persons with special needs and vulnerable persons – are assisted during voting and provided with suitable means of communication during polls.

- Section 54(1) provides that a visually-impaired and incapacitated voter may be accompanied into the polling unit by a person chosen by him or her.

- The terms PWD, special needs and vulnerable person are defined in the new Act. PWDs include persons who have received a temporary or permanent certificate of disability.

5.3 Towards Greater Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities

To foster greater inclusion of PWDs, we recommend the following:

- **Address the Data Gap by Ensuring Robust Disaggregation** – Robust data disaggregation will provide information on the number of persons with disabilities per location, their demographic distribution, type of disabilities and specific needs. This is necessary for adequate planning and budgetary allocations.

- **Embark on Widespread Sensitisation and Knowledge Building** – This will help to deconstruct myths (many communities misconstrue disability as a curse or something to be ashamed of). Both the communities and the PWDs themselves need to be sensitised, to foster inclusion and reduce self-stigmatisation on the part of PWDs. Sensitisation should be done in schools, at the community level through civil society organisations, and at the state and national levels through government agencies.

- **Mobilise States to Adopt the Disability Act** – Currently, 23 states are yet to adopt the Disability Act. Only the following 19 states have adopted the act: Abia, Anambra, Bauchi, Cross River, Edo, Ekiti, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Kogi, Kwara, Lagos, Nasarawa, Niger, Ondo, Oyo, Plateau, Sokoto and Zamfara. Civil society groups, including Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), need to increase momentum around adoption of the Act.

Map of states that have adopted the Disability Act
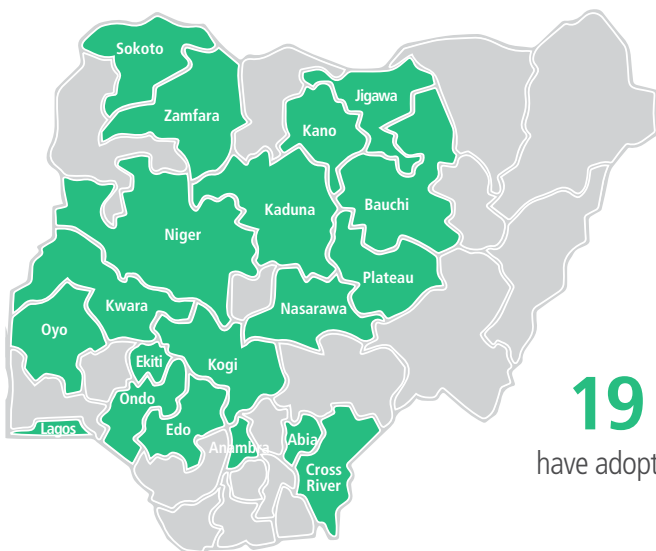
19 states
have adopted the Disability Act

- **Promote the Implementation of the Disability Act at all Levels** – The Disability Act makes several provisions to protect the rights of PWDs and imposes sanctions on offenders, such as fines and imprisonment of persons who discriminate against PWDs,[128] but cases are rarely taken up.

    • The National Disability Commission to collaborate with OPDs and CSOs to develop an implementation plan and budget for the implementation the Act.

    • CSOs including OPDs and the media to embark on monitoring implementation, budget release and expenditure and to provide periodic reports.

    • The Senate and House of Representatives Committees on PWDs to pragmatically facilitate budget allocation, oversight and public hearings on implementation of the Disability Act.

- **A National Revolution to Ensure a Barrier-Free Society** – Elimination of physical barriers in the environment (barriers related to roads, stations, buildings, etc.) is key to PWDs inclusion. In Nigeria, this would mean a complete overhaul of the current order and is achievable in the long term (e.g. by 2032) with annual milestones:

i. Infrastructural Accessibility for PWDs- The Act provides for integration of PWDs into society by stipulating that public buildings, roadside walks, pedestrian crossings, and other special facilities be made PWD-accessible[129]. A transitory period of five years was given within which 'these structures shall be modified to become accessible to PWDs'[130]. The Act was passed in 2018, the five-year transitory period will end in 2023. As noted by the National Development Plan, 98.5% of public buildings are still not accessible to PWDs. A national revolution to make all public buildings accessible to PWDs with a specified period is recommended. This will entail a series of actions (among others)

    • Town Planning/Development Control to take the lead in incorporating time-bound guidelines for the modification of all public buildings to construct ramps, use of embossed tiles for public corridors, ensure that high rise buildings have elevators fitted and appropriate and separate conveniences for PWDs.

    • Ensure that new building plans meet specifications for PWD-access as part of approval processes.

    • Provide tax incentives for private sector businesses that comply with guidelines for PWD inclusion.

ii. Ensure Barrier-free Mobility and Transportation – The Federal Ministry of Works and Housing and the Federal Ministry of Transportation should work together to design guidelines for barrier-free mobility and public transportation, including: barrier-free walkways; incorporation of car/bus models suitable for PWDs, including rail transport all equipped with lifting devices and tailored parking spaces for PWDs.

- Invest in PWDs Human Capital Development to Ensure PWDs Social and Political Inclusion – This will entail:

    • The Joint National Association of Persons with Disabilities (JONAPWD) and other competent OPDs and CSOs, with government and donor support to provide PWD-Sensitivity training and orientation for service providers in all sectors, including schools, health facilities, recreational facilities, licensing authorities, banks, etc.

    • JONAPWD and other competent OPDs and CSOs, with government and donor support to provide training of sign-language interpreters in service sectors. An expert interviewed mentioned that the Badagry Hospital in Lagos, Nigeria has some doctors that have been trained and understand sign language. This is a good practice that should be mainstreamed.

    • The Federal Ministry of Education should equip schools to deliver integrated/inclusive education including training of teachers, modification of infrastructure, facilitating access to knowledge by making school books available in accessible formats – audio books, braille versions of textbooks; and set up Braille Press in Schools. An expert interviewed mentioned that Queen's College in Lagos has a Braille Press set up by the Old Students Association making it possible for visually-impaired students to access brailled question papers.

---

[127] PLAC (2022) Key Provisions of the Electoral Act, 2022. Available at: https://placng.org/i/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Key-Provisions-in-the-Electoral-Act-2022.pdf

[128] Section 1, Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018

[129] Sections 3-5, Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018

[130] Section 6, Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act 2018

- The Federal Ministry of Education should ensure PWDs access to ICT training and equipment.

- Government at all levels should invest in local production of assistive devices. This will also contribute to job creation for PWDs and non-PWDs.

- Government at all levels should invest in the rehabilitation of PWDs by renovating existing centres and building new ones.

- Government at all levels should implement the 5% employment quota for PWDs enshrined in the Disability Act and provide tax incentives for private sector organisations that make reasonable accommodation arrangements/adjustments to support inclusion of PWDs in the workplace.

- JONAPWD and the National Disability Commission should strengthen the hiring pipeline by tapping the talent pool of PWDs. Many PWDs self-stigmatise and would not apply for jobs for which they are qualified. Also, the recruitment system in many companies tend to undermine or exclude PWDS. Some companies are working to build a database of qualified PWDs by interacting more with the community; some have adjusted recruitment procedures to make them accessible to qualified PWDS, e.g. Microsoft.

- The Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development in collaboration with other stakeholders should make PWDs visible through talent hunts and sporting events, etc

- JONAPWD in collaboration with appropriate government bodies should promote PWDs' access to credit and markets by engaging financial institutions to understand the business case for supporting PWD inclusion. Recent economic modelling found a strong correlation between financial performance and well-developed disability-inclusion practices.[131]

- Government at all levels should create a special funds for PWD development.

To Promote PWDs Inclusion in Politics

Political parties have a role to play in ensuring PWD inclusion. So do the Independent National Electoral Commission, its state-level representatives, and the National Assembly. We recommend that:

- JONAPWD and other relevant CSOs, should embark on the training of party executives and members, INEC staff and management on disability sensitivity.

- Voluntary Quotas should be created in the constitutions of political parties to ensure substantive inclusion in activities and nomination as candidates as opposed to token inclusion.

- The National Assembly should enshrine legislated quotas and other legislations mandating PWDs inclusion.

- CSOs, including OPDs, should monitor the implementation of PWD-inclusion provisions of the Electoral Act and guidelines by INEC.

- All in all, we recommend that a system-wide approach that involves collaboration between all organs of government, the private sector and civil society be implemented to tackle the myriad of issues that result in PWDs' exclusion.

---

[131] Kennedy, Jr. T., Jerdee, C., and Henneborn, L., (2019). 4 Ways to Improve Your Company's Disability-Inclusion Practices, https://hbr.org/2019/06/4-ways-to-improve-your-companys-disability-inclusion-practices
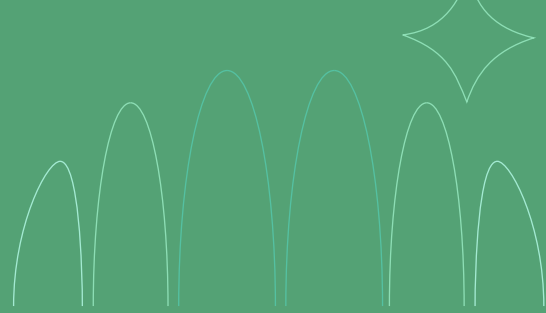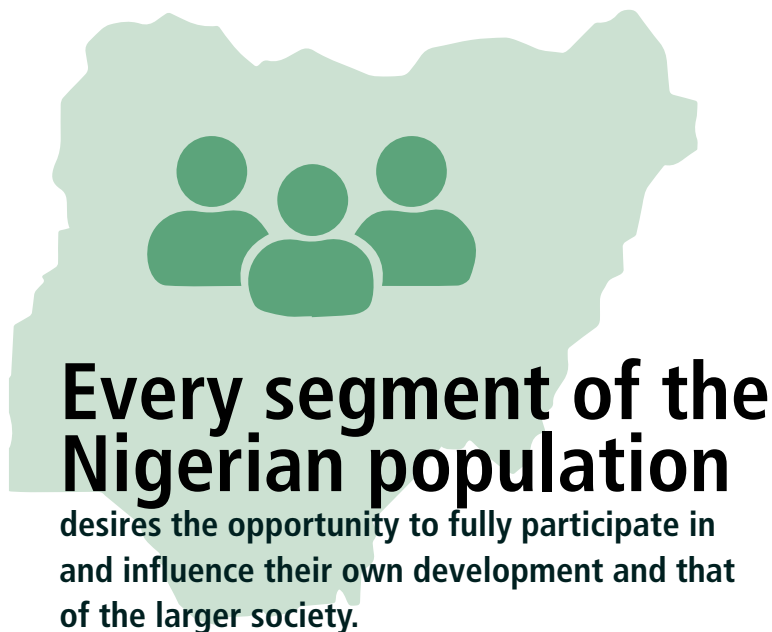
6 Conclusion

6.0 Conclusion

This paper has explored the concept of gender, social and political inclusion in Nigeria and gives a status report. It also identifies the causes of exclusion of various segments of the population. There are indications that the claims of exclusion reflect a quest for a sense of belonging. Every segment of the Nigerian population desires the opportunity to fully participate in and influence their own development and that of the larger society. The journey to 2023 and its presaging of a new democratic cycle represent a defining moment. More and more, the country has witnessed remarkable leaps above primordial cleavages as Nigerians from various backgrounds coalesce/galvanise to address issues of common interest. The Occupy NASS protests, following the rejection by the National Assembly of the five gender equality bills, and the #EndSARS protests were signs that Nigerians are ready to embrace a common citizenship. Also, the media were awash with reports of what it tagged, fittingly, 'the rush by Nigerians', especially young eligible voters, to register and collect their permanent voter cards. This represents a new awakening, a firm belief in the ballot by a people ready to take their destiny in their hands.

Deepening national integration to create a polity where citizens participate and have the enabling environment to achieve their full potential, irrespective of identities or conditions, requires concerted efforts of all players. This paper sets the tone by making policy recommendations to address inequality, upend exclusionary processes and foster inclusion.

Every segment of the Nigerian population
desires the opportunity to fully participate in and influence their own development and that of the larger society.

Authors' Bios

Ejiro Joyce Otive-Igbuzor is a Gender and Social Inclusion Expert and a Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist. Among others, she had previously worked as: the Nigeria Country Director of the Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA); the Gender and HIV/AIDS Programme Coordinator for UNIFEM (now UN Women) covering Anglophone West Africa; the Research Lead at Voices for Change; Research Fellow at the Nigerian Institute of Medical Research; and Lecturer, Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri.

She is currently the Managing Director/CEO of Emerald International Development Services (EIDS) Limited, a development consulting firm that provides services globally. She has provided consultancy services to local and international clients in several thematic areas. She coordinates a GESI and M&E Community of Practice, coaching and mentoring women interested in strengthening their professional skills and building careers in these thematic areas.

She holds a PhD in Microbiology. She is the Director of Studies at the Centre LSD Leadership School. In addition, she coordinates the Gals Global Hangout, a share and learn platform with over 2000 women across the globe. She also sits on the board of several organisations. She is a seasoned writer with several publications to her credit, including four novels using the edutainment approach to bring clarity to the importance of GESI in development.

Abubakar Mu'azu teaches Mass Communication at the University of Maiduguri. He was the Secretary of ASUU, UNIMAID Chapter (1994-98) and has been active in the civil sector with focus on governance and human rights, police and conflict management. His research interests are in media, culture and society. He also engages in peace building work in communities in areas affected by the Boko Haram insurgency in Borno State.

Comrade Martins Abantlehe is an award-winning communication specialist with over 15 years of communications and media experience. He has worked in broadcast and online media. He is a fellow of International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ) and has also held/won the Oxfam Investigative Reporting Fellowship, the United Nations Foundation Climate Change and Migration Fellowship, the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution's Peace Reporting Award and the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control's Health Correspondents Award in Nigeria, among others.

Comrade Martins has an M.A in Development Communication and currently runs his PhD. Development Communication. In addition, he holds post graduate diplomas in Customer Service Relationship Management, and Gender Studies. He currently leads a team of 40 "Development Journalists on Community Journalism for Change ", a group committed to reducing rural poverty through investigative Journalism in communities in Nigeria.

He has reported from Nigeria and the United States for Aso Radio and Television and International Centre for Journalists (ICFJ) respectively. He is a celebrated motivational speaker and writer. He is the author of several publications and books including his most recent, "The Limits Breaker" and "The Turning Point" etc.

Chioma Agwuegbo is Executive Director at TechHerNG and Convener of the #StateofEmergencyGBV Movement, a coalition of organisations igniting citizens to advocate for an urgent, comprehensive, and sustainable response to SGBV. She believes in applying digital solutions to societal problems, whether chaperoning young, first-time women politicians, co-creating solutions for sexual and gender-based violence, or curating digital freedoms/security sessions.

She has delivered research pieces for the MacArthur Foundation, Paris Peace Forum, Digital Defenders Partnerships, etc. TechHer currently delivers its flagship digital literacy project in 14 secondary schools in peri-urban communities and has a robust body of work around online gender-based violence. TechHer also administers Nigeria's first SGBV Emergency Response Fund with Education as A Vaccine (EVA), with a 24-hour turnaround time for supporting survivors.

She has a Master's Degree in Social Media and a first degree in Mass Communication. She serves on the boards of PLAN International Nigeria and OXFAM International.

About Agora Policy

Agora Policy is a Nigerian think tank and non-profit committed to finding practical solutions to urgent national challenges. We conduct policy research, facilitate frank and purposeful dialogues, and build capacity for governance, policy and advocacy.

About the IIAPP Project

The Informed, Inclusive and Accountable Public Policies (IIAPP) project is designed to achieve three things: one, to maximise the opportunity provided by the electioneering and transition periods and beyond to sustain attention on and further mainstream transparency, accountability, gender equity and social inclusion into policy and governance discourse in Nigeria; two, to generate original and credible evidence before, during and after the 2023 elections to focus the attention of the country on key policy areas and, ultimately, the adoption of sensible, inclusive and effective policies on key national challenges; and three, to deepen the capacity of state and non-state actors to undertake evidence-driven policy analysis, design, implementation and advocacy. The IIAPP is supported by the MacArthur Foundation.

AGORA POLICY

With Support of   MacArthur Foundation